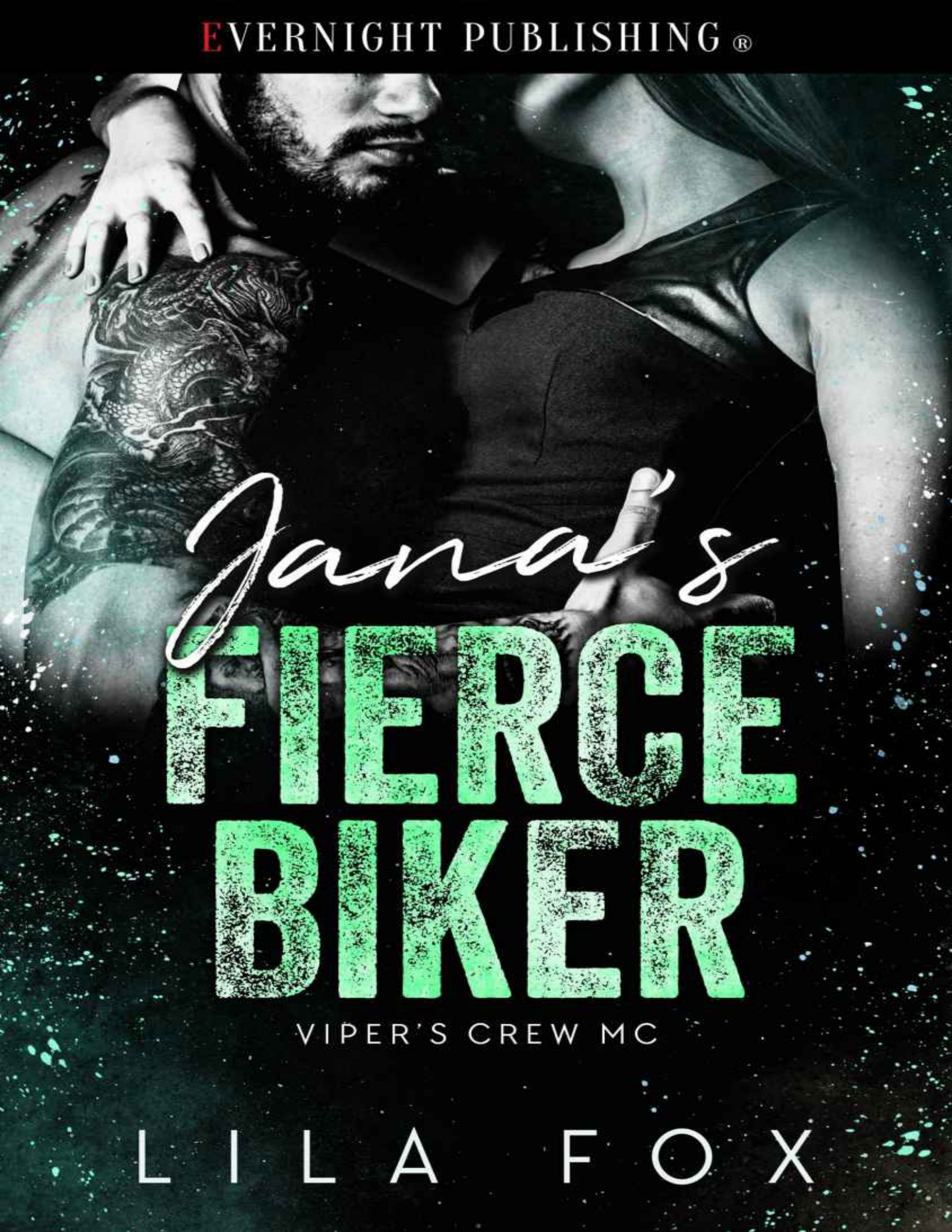


EVERNIGHT PUBLISHING®



Jana's
**FIERCE
BIKER**

VIPER'S CREW MC

LILA FOX

EVERNIGHT PUBLISHING®

Jana's
**FIERCE
BIKER**

VIPER'S CREW MC

L I L A F O X



EVERNIGHT PUBLISHING ®

www.evernightpublishing.com

Copyright© 2023 Lila Fox

ISBN: 978-0-3695-0921-5

Cover Artist: Jay Aheer

Editor: Lisa Petrocelli

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

WARNING: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. No part of this book may be used or reproduced electronically or in print without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

This is a work of fiction. All names, characters, and places are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

JANA ' S FIERCE BIKER

Viper's Crew MC, 7

Lila Fox

Copyright © 2023



Chapter One

Jana was digging another hole for flowers, and her head jerked up when she heard yelling from her next-door neighbor's backyard. The one voice she knew belonged to a thirteen-year-old kid who lived there. The other was an adult male, no one she knew, and she could tell he was extremely angry about something. The wood fence was six feet tall, so she couldn't see anything.

Without thinking, she stood and went toward the neighbor's house. She looked over the gate to see the boy facing off with a man who had scraggly gray hair, tattoos all over his face, and piercings in his ears and nose. He was leaning down shouting in the boy's face.

She opened the gate and raced toward the two. She got in between them and pushed the man away.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" she yelled. She would have laughed at the expression on the guy's face if she wasn't so scared.

The man scowled. "Bitch, get out of the way. This is none of your fucking business."

"I make it my business when I see an adult abusing a child."

"Jana, I'm thirteen. I'm not a child anymore."

She looked over her shoulder at the boy, Cody. "I know. I'm sorry. I'm just pissed."

Cody grabbed her shoulders. "You need to move. I don't want you getting hurt."

She shook her head. "No. I will not allow this..." — she sneered at the stranger — "man, to yell at you like that."

Cody sighed. "This is my mom's boyfriend. He won't lay a hand on me because he knows my mom would kill him."

Jana narrowed her eyes as she studied the guy. He looked like he was high on something, which made him unpredictable. She'd seen it countless times in the ER where she worked as an RN.

"How about you stop yelling at Cody, and then when his mom gets home, you guys can talk it over with her?"

The man took a threatening step toward her. "Cunt, if you don't leave, I'll tear you up."

Jana raised the shovel she still held. "You better think again. I will have the cops on you before you make it home."

“Not if I mess you up enough that you can’t walk,” he growled. “I need to talk to this bastard, and a little whore like you isn’t going to stop me.”

Cody continued to pull her back or try to walk around to get in front of her.

“Jana!” Cody pleaded.

With more courage than brains at that moment, she took a threatening step toward the guy and raised the shovel some more. “Listen up, fuck face. I know every place on the human body where one prick from this, and you’ll bleed out in a few minutes.”

The scowl turned darker before his face went blank. She almost smiled smugly when the bastard stepped back and raised his hands.

“Hey, I don’t want no trouble,” the druggy said.

“Well, you’ll be getting in trouble if you mess with Cody again. Do you understand me?” she said.

“Yeah. Whatever, bit ... lady.”

Jana nodded her head. “You need to go right now. I’ll be talking to Penny about her poor choice of men. She can do a lot better than you.”

The man’s face darkened, and then it looked like he went pale. He growled and walked away from them.

Jana made sure he was gone before she turned around to face Cody. Her heart dropped when she saw another man standing several feet behind Cody. She thought she had a slight chance with the other guy, but this one could kill her with one blow.

He stood several inches above six feet. He had short dark hair and light-brown eyes. They were almost a caramel color. This guy had tattoos like the other guy, but instead of his neck and face, he had them on his arms, and she saw one peeking out the top of his t-shirt.

It was not only his height but the massive muscles he had. She thought the black t-shirt would surely tear from how it stretched over his biceps. He wore one of those vests that a motorcycle man would wear. His jeans were clean but faded, and his boots were black.

She grabbed onto Cody’s arm. “Run into the house and lock the door, Cody. Now.”

Cody chuckled, making her look at him in shock.

“You don’t have to be afraid of him. He’s my uncle,” Cody said.

Her mouth dropped open. “Uncle?” she asked. She didn’t know Penny had a brother. Since his mother had no idea who Cody’s father was, it

had to be her family.

The man's lips tilted on the sides. If she wasn't mistaken, he might be smiling.

It dawned on Jana that the dirtball that just left was terrified of the uncle and not her, as she thought. Anyone who had a brain cell would run from him. She admitted to herself she was a little pissed. She thought she was a badass for a brief moment, and now she knew it hadn't been her.

Jana cleared her throat. "So. Um. I'm Cody's next-door neighbor. I'm not usually violent, but the man threatened him, and I wouldn't stand for it."

"Lady, do you have a death wish?"

Jesus, his voice's low, rough timbre sent a shiver down her spine.

She frowned. "No."

"Do you think it might have been better to call the cops?" he asked.

"Oh, well, I didn't think..."

"Yeah, you could say that," the uncle said.

Jana gasped and scowled. "Listen, Mister..."

"Gunner," the man said.

Jana stuttered. "What?"

"Gunner. My name is Gunner."

"Oh. Okay. So, well, what was I saying?" she asked. The man was scrambling her brain, making it hard to think.

Gunner grinned. For some reason, his straight white teeth confused her, or maybe it had dazzled her? She tried to think of a reason why, and all she could come up with was she didn't expect a biker to take care of his teeth. It sounded ridiculous.

"You told me to listen," he replied helpfully.

She shook her head. For the life of her, she couldn't remember. "So, I ... I think I'll go home now." She ignored the man's laughter, turned to Cody, and touched his arm. "You're okay?"

Cody smiled. "Yes. Thanks for the rescue."

Her eyes narrowed because she could tell he was teasing her. "Watch it, Buster, or no more brownies for you."

He held up his hands in surrender. "I'll be a good boy. I swear."

Jana looked at Gunner when he snorted. Her brows snapped together. "He is a good boy."

Gunner hooked his thumbs into the front pocket of his jeans. "Yeah. I know. I've known him since he was born. But he's a teenager, so it wouldn't

surprise me if he acted up.” Gunner looked at Cody. “Although he knows what would happen if it was bad.”

He raised a brow when Cody laughed.

Cody rolled his eyes. “Jesus. There’s no way I’ll ever be able to get in trouble with you two around.”

Jana smiled. “Now that I know your uncle, I can call him.”

“Damn,” Cody cursed under his breath.

“I better go.” She looked at the man. “It was nice to meet you.”

“I’m just glad I got here when I did,” Gunner said.

“Yes. Thank you.” Jana walked over to the gate and could feel the man’s gaze on her back. She almost snorted. Now, why would the thought of his eyes on her make her happy and hot? She’d never seen herself with a biker before, but then again, the ones she met mainly came to the ER because of fighting.

She had to put him out of her head because she wouldn’t have to deal with him again unless Cody needed him. Only that would get the two together again, and she wasn’t sure that was a good idea but couldn’t do anything about it at the moment. She needed to get her mind off of him. Easier said than done.

Chapter Two

After she closed and locked the patio door behind herself, her adrenaline rush from fear disappeared, leaving her shaking and dizzy.

She decided that a shower would help and made her way into her bathroom. She stripped and stood under the spray for a long time. Only when the water started to cool did she wash quickly and then turn it off.

After drying, she pulled on her soft summer pajamas. She made herself a cup of tea and sat on the sofa, and her cat, Snookie, jumped up to sit by her. “Hey, there’s my baby. How was your day?”

The cat meowed a few times like he was answering her, making her smile as she petted his soft fur.

Her thoughts turned back to what happened, and she had to admit it had been a stupid move on her part to take on a large man high on drugs and with a shovel, no less. She thought she was getting better at thinking before reacting.

She knew some of it had to do with Cody. He had a special place in her heart. He had from the day they met about four months ago when she moved in.

Jana had been carrying boxes in with the help of another nurse, and Cody and a few of his friends had come to ask if they could help. With their help, everything was in the house and in the room in no time. She thought it would take hours for her and McKinley, better known as Mick, a nurse she worked with in the ER, to get everything done.

She bought pizzas for the group and made brownies. Jana had a blast listening to the teenagers rib each other as they stuffed their faces.

Jana had glanced at her watch and saw it was close to eleven. “Don’t you boys have a curfew?”

The boys froze, looked at each other, and then burst out laughing. Jana rolled her eyes while Mick laughed, too.

Cody wiped his eyes as he tried to calm his laughter. “Jana, we’re all thirteen and fourteen. We don’t have curfews anymore.”

Jana knew this was the best time in these boys’ lives to set rules and curfews because they tended to get wild when left alone, but she wasn’t his mother.

When everyone left that night, she remembered feeling lonely, which was crazy since she’d been alone since she was seventeen. Jana could

remember feeling this way as a child even though her mother and father were there. They were so caught up in each other they sometimes forgot they had a daughter.

Snookie jumped up on the mattress and made himself comfortable against her side.

“There’s my sweetheart,” she said and hugged the cat. She had to admit, her cat made her life fuller and less lonely, and she loved the thing so much. She’d found her behind a dumpster. She was a tiny kitten, and Jana could tell she was in bad shape. She was skin and bones and dehydrated, so weak, and could hardly meow. Fortunately, Jana had been close enough to find her. If she hadn’t, the kitten would have been dead by morning.

Jana had taken her directly to a vet hospital, and they rushed to save her life. It had taken a few days of fluids and food for the kitten to be strong enough to stand. Now, she couldn’t keep her still.

She lay in bed staring up at the ceiling and trying to blank her mind out enough to sleep. But Gunner was a hard man to ignore. When she finally did fall asleep, she dreamed of him.

The next few days, she worked and came home. Alone. And it stayed that way until work the next day. It was a cycle she’d been unable to change.

Jana was dragging herself home Saturday late afternoon, wishing she’d never gotten out of bed that morning. The day had been a bitch. They’d lost two patients in the ER, and one had been a child.

The fact that the child was in the hospital in the first place was due to his parents’ abuse. The staff had seen that the boy had been abused for a long time. She’ll never forget all the bruises and contusions on the little boy’s body. She hoped the parents would get arrested and put away for a long time. It would be even better if they got the same treatment in prison as they had given their child.

Jana showered, dressed in shorts and a t-shirt, and made herself a ham sandwich for dinner. She didn’t have the energy for anything more. It was too early to go to bed, so she grabbed the book she was reading and a throw blanket to take out on the back porch. She cuddled into her favorite padded lounger and started reading.

“Hey, Jana.”

She heard her name being called, blinked open her eyes, and turned her head to see Gunner. It took her a moment to realize he wasn’t a dream and was crouched beside her lounger.

“Hey, there she is,” Gunner said and laughed. “You must be wiped out, Babe. It took me a minute to get you awake.”

Jana pushed herself up to a sitting position and yawned. “What are you doing here?”

Gunner tossed his head toward his sister’s house. “We’re BBQing and wondered if you wanted to come over.”

Jana looked toward the high fence, and that’s when she heard all the voices. She would have said yes any other time, but she wasn’t in the mood to be around people.

“Thank you for the invitation, but I really am tired.”

He moved to sit on the edge of the lounge facing her. “I’m guessing it was a bad day?”

Jana didn’t want to talk about work right then. She closed the book that had fallen to the side. “How have you been?”

He smirked at her, but he thankfully let his question go.

“Good. I’ve been helping a few of my brothers with a project.”

“How many brothers do you have?” Jana had thought Penny only had one brother.

“At last count, I think there were forty-two of us.”

Her eyes widened.

He grinned. “I’m talking about the club, Babe. We consider each other brothers.”

“Oh.” She hadn’t even thought of that. “I think that’s wonderful.”

“It is most of the time,” Gunner said.

They heard Gunner’s name called out.

“I guess you have to go?” she said.

“Yeah, I better. I can’t leave Chains or Tony to do it, or the meat will be black and inedible.”

Jana smiled and wrinkled her nose. “Yes, you better.”

He squeezed her leg before he stood. “I’ll be seeing you around.”

“Stay safe.”

He grinned. “I always try to.”

Jana snorted and shook her head before watching him walk away. Damn, that man had a nice butt.

She gathered the book she’d been reading and her blanket before walking into the house, closing and locking the door.

She looked at her bedside clock to see it was later than expected. She

had to have been asleep for close to two hours.

After brushing her teeth, she slid into bed and grinned when Snookie immediately jumped on. She used her fingers to comb through the cat's fur, making her purr.

"You always make me feel better. Why is that, do you think?" she asked the cat. She just blinked at her before making her bed next to Jana.

She thought it funny that the cat was the only one she'd ever slept next to in her whole life, and she made a pretty great bedmate.

It was the best she could do, and she wouldn't complain. Her life was ten times better than she ever thought it would be.

Chapter Three

Gunner carried his friend and brother into the ER.

“Fucking bastard,” Iron said in disgust.

Gunner agreed. Their friend, Snake, was always reckless, but this time, he’d gone too far and ended up in the hospital because the wound was too severe for Alicia to take care of back at the compound.

“This way,” a woman said, rushing them into a cubicle where Gunner lay him on the bed. They had taken his boots and club vest and left them at home, so he was in just a t-shirt and jeans. Gunner stood at the head of the bed and watched a woman and a man he guessed was an orderly cut the clothing off Snake.

He and Iron listened as they talked but couldn’t understand half of what they said.

“Someone get Hudson in here!” the nurse yelled.

He heard running feet, and then the curtain was pushed to the side to admit who he guessed was Hudson, but he knew her as his nephew’s hot next-door neighbor.

She had her hair up in a messy bun and was dressed in scrubs that hid her figure and a stethoscope around her neck. He stood back and waited for her to see him, but all her attention was on Snake.

“What are the stats?” Jana said as she moved the blanket to the side to examine his wound.

“What happened?” she asked Iron and him but still hadn’t looked up.

“He was racing and wiped out. Something ripped open his side.” He almost laughed at the look of pure shock on her face. “Close your mouth, Babe.”

Her teeth snapped together, and she turned her attention back to Snake. She was all business from then on.

An older man with a white coat walked in, and it took a second for Gunner to know he didn’t like the guy. Maybe it was the fact that Jana tensed when the guy came up next to her, or the doctor’s eyes had been plastered to her ass.

Jana and the doctor worked on Snake. It was hilarious when the butthead woke up. He was naked in a hospital, surrounded by people he didn’t know.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” Snake yelled. “Get the fuck away from me.”

Gunner watched as the medical team ignored him and kept working. At one point, Jana set her hand on Snake's shoulder, and I had an urge to bark at her to get her hand off of him but gritted my teeth instead.

"Sir, my name is Jana, and we're here to help you. You have a really bad gash on your side. If you stay still, we can stitch it up and get you out of here. How's that?"

Gunner almost laughed at the shock on Snake's face as he stared at Jana. When Snake reached out to her, Gunner grabbed his hand.

"No touching."

Snake looked at him. "Why the fuck not?"

Gunner narrowed his eyes and growled. "Do you really want to do that here?"

Snake rolled his eyes but closed his mouth and rested.

Gunner was used to blood. He'd seen more in his life than some armies, but seeing it on Jana made him furious.

The doctor finished the stitches, stood from the stool, and removed his gloves. "Take over, Hudson."

The group watched the arrogant bastard walk out.

"Hey, you want me to kill him?" Gunner asked.

Jana snorted. "No, thank you. He's harmless."

"He's a prick," the nurse said.

"Sadie, he could get you fired, and I would hate that," Jana said as she wiped off the blood.

"You're a hell of a better doctor than him," Sadie said.

Jana grinned. "I'm not a doctor."

Gunner guessed she'd heard that comment before.

"What are you then?" he asked her.

"I'm a Physician Assistant," Jana said.

"A damn good one," Sadie said.

Jana dumped the bloody rags on the rolling table and removed her gloves.

"Sadie, could you get Mr..." She looked at me.

"Snake," Gunner said and then laughed at the shock on her face.

"Oh. Okay, please get some clothing for him to wear home."

Sadie left the room, and Jana grabbed the clipboard and started writing things down.

"Do you know if he's had a tetanus shot lately?" she asked.

Gunner looked at Iron and saw him shake his head.

“No. Sorry.”

“That’s okay. I’ll give him one when Sadie gets back.”

“When can we take him home?” Iron asked.

“After the IV bag is empty and he wakes up from the sedative we gave him,” Jana said.

Gunner almost laughed. He knew his friend would be pissed she snuck it in, but Snake had been getting riled up.

Sadie came back with clothing and booties. “This was the only stuff I could find that might fit him. The man is huge.”

“We could have someone bring us some clothing,” Gunner said. He couldn’t take his eyes off her. He could tell she knew what she was doing and was damn good at it. He could also tell she cared about the patient. He gritted his teeth when Jana touched Snake’s forehead and then wiped a bit of blood off the side of his face. She was doing it professionally, but he still didn’t like it. He knew it was because he’d already claimed her in his head, but he was the only one with that information.

“If they don’t fit, we might have you do that. It’s against the rules to let naked people leave the ER.”

Sadie started laughing, and the two men smiled.

“Sadie, could you get three syringes and these meds for me?”

“Sure.” Sadie left.

“He should wait to shower for twenty-four hours, and even then, I’ll want him to wear a waterproof bandage over the stitches. You’ll also have to bring him back in ten days so the stitches can be taken out. If there’s any redness or it gets swollen, come back.”

Jana went on to talk about fevers and things to look for that might be enough to have him checked out. Gunner only heard half of it, but he wasn’t worried. They would send home the instructions, and he’d hand them off to Alicia, the club’s medical person who took care of them. He thought he could see them as friends if or when Alicia and Jana met. It was something that might happen in the future after he made her aware of the situation.

He smiled. He couldn’t wait to see what she did. He watched her give Snake three shots.

“One is for tetanus, the other an antibiotic, and the last is for pain,” she explained. “I’ll send home some pain pills with you.”

Gunner nodded. “It will be taken care of.” The people in the room

watched as Snake woke. He was groggy, but Gunner knew if there was danger, Snake would fight through it.

Jana said something to the nurse and then turned to him. "Sadie will take out the IV and get him ready to go. If there's a problem, she'll call me back."

"Thank you," Gunner said.

Jana smiled. "You're welcome."

Gunner watched as the curtain was pulled over for privacy, but he could hear her voice in the room as they got Snake dressed.

When they were walking out, he looked around and couldn't see her. Even though he was disappointed, he knew where she lived and worked, so she couldn't hide from him if she tried.

Chapter Four

Jana sighed when she pulled into her driveway. It had been one of those days when nothing seemed to go right. The fact that the doctor on call was rarely there made her job even harder.

She walked to the back of the house and saw a box by the back door. She tried to remember if she'd ordered anything, but she couldn't come up with an answer. Once she opened it, she'd know.

She lifted the box and held it against her as she unlocked the door. After she closed the door behind her, she set the box on the kitchen table. Only then did she notice the blood on her arms. She tilted the box to the side to see the whole bottom saturated with blood.

“What the hell?”

She set her purse and keys to the side and ripped open the box. It took her a few minutes to recognize the collar she'd put on her cat, Snookie.

“What ... no...”

She raced through the house, calling out her name. The fact that she hadn't come to greet her like she normally did was a bad sign. She looked in every hiding place in her house. When she couldn't find her, she walked back into the kitchen and stared down at the mangled mess that used to be her cat. She stood frozen, unable to grab a thought or feel anything because she was numb with shock.

“God, Baby, I'm so sorry. I'll find who did this to you.”

Since Jana found the cat, she'd never ventured out of the house, so the person had to have broken in and caught her.

The sad thing was her cat probably walked up to the person, purring, and the son of a bitch grabbed her and tortured her before killing her.

What kind of sick fuck did that kind of thing? What had Snookie ever done to them?

Jana finally shook off some of the shock and concentrated on what she needed to do. After she placed the call to the police station, she sat down on one of her chairs and stared at the box.

Jana jerked when the doorbell rang. She opened her door to two police officers.

“Hello. Come in,” she said. “I'm Jana Hudson.”

“I'm Officer Richards, and my partner is Officer Johnson.”

She tried to smile. “I would say it's nice to meet you, but you'll

understand in a minute.”

After she closed the door, she heard one of the men curse.

“Lady, are you injured?”

She shook her head in confusion. “No.”

“You’ve got blood all over you,” he said.

She looked down at her arms. She’d forgotten about the blood from the box.

“No. It’s what I wanted to show you.”

The two men followed her into the kitchen.

“Jesus, fuck!” one yelled at his first look in the box. He looked embarrassed. “I’m sorry about the language, ma’am.”

“I work in the ER. That’s nothing.” She tried to smile.

The other officer took out his pen and pushed down the flap. “What the hell is it?”

“My ca...” She cleared her throat. “My cat.”

Both men looked sympathetic.

“Tell us what happened.” The officer took out a pad of paper and started writing.

“I got home from work and found the box in front of my back door. I picked it up, brought it into the kitchen, and set it down. That’s when I noticed the blood on me. I opened the box, and I didn’t know ... I didn’t know what it was at first until I saw the collar and some of the fur.”

“The thing is, the person would have had to break into my house and grab her. She didn’t like going outside.”

“She would have gone to them?” Johnson asked.

She nodded and had to bite her lip to keep from sobbing.

“Richards, call in a few more cars and get some detectives here.”

Richards walked off and pulled out his phone.

“Miss Hudson, is there anyone you could think of that was angry enough to do this?”

She thought about it for a moment and shook her head. “No. I make some people angry in the ER, but I’ve never had threats.”

She watched the officer write things down as he asked questions. Within thirty minutes, her house was full of men—some in uniform and some in suits. There was also one in overalls trying to get fingerprints.

They asked so many questions, but she knew it was to help. The ones they asked again and again were making her anxious.

The box was bagged and taken away.

“I’ll get her back, won’t I? I want to bury her in the backyard,” she said.

Richards nodded. “I’ll make sure you get her back.”

Jana nodded. “Thank you.”

She tried to wash off the blood, but there were still smudges and stains on her clothing. She knew from experience that she’d have to shower and scrub herself. Now, she just concentrated on keeping calm and patient because the people seemed to want to stay and ask more questions.

She had no idea how much more she could take.

Chapter Five

Gunner relaxed in a chair before a fire, drinking and talking to his brothers. He was laughing at something one of the men said when his phone rang.

He pulled it out. "Yeah."

"Uncle Gunner, It's me, Cody."

Gunner straightened immediately. "What's wrong?" He'd never heard that tone of voice from the boy before.

"It's Jana. My next-door neighbor."

"What about her?" Gunner asked.

"There are a bunch of cops at her house."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I tried listening, but I couldn't make out a lot of words. Do you think I should go over there?"

"No. I'm headed that way. I'll see what's going on."

He heard the boy sigh in relief.

"Thank you."

Gunner immediately walked toward his bike.

"Hey, man, where are you going?" Striker, his prez, called out.

"A friend might be in trouble, and I want to go check on her."

Striker nodded. "Take a few men with you."

Gunner turned toward the fire. "Who's able to ride?"

Three men stood and approached him. They got on their bikes and headed out. Gunner concentrated on riding, but different scenarios were running through his head.

He gritted his teeth when he pulled up to see three cop cars and a detective car at her place. He parked and knew his guys were behind him. Every eye on the place turned their way when they walked in.

"What the fuck?" one of the cops said.

"I'm a friend," Gunner said.

They all looked doubtful, but they didn't try to throw them out. Mainly because they knew they couldn't.

His men stood by the front door with their arms crossed as he made his way into the kitchen, where he heard his voice.

"Who the hell are you?" one of the detectives barked.

"I'm a friend, so back the fuck off."

Gunner walked to Jana and could tell she'd been through some kind of trauma. When he caught sight of the blood on her, he cursed.

"What the fuck happened?" he asked her. When she didn't respond, he curled his hand behind her back and squeezed enough to get her attention. The grip would also help with her shock for a moment.

"Baby, what happened?" Gunner asked.

She cleared her throat. "Hi."

"Hi. Now tell me."

"Someone k-killed my cat," she said.

He could tell she was barely hanging on, so he turned to one of the officers. He saw the shock in his eyes but ignored it.

"Tell me," he asked the detective.

Few people would argue with him, and the people in the house were apprehensive about having four MC members around them.

"Someone broke into her house, grabbed and tortured her cat."

Gunner felt Jana flinch and tightened his grip on her. "No idea who?"

The cop shook his head. "We can't find anything stolen or messed up, so we are guessing the only reason the person broke in was for..." The cop nodded at the box.

Gunner hadn't really seen it because his attention was on Jana. He released her and walked over to the box.

"Don't touch anything," one of the detectives barked.

Gunner narrowed his eyes. "I'm not a fucking idiot." He used a pencil one of the cops gave him and lifted the lid. "What the fuck." How the hell could they tell it was a cat? It looked like a pile of blood, bones, and fur. Just by looking, he could tell the cat had been tortured in horrible ways, and he wanted the fucker that did it. He'd show him how everything felt to the cat by doing the same to them. And then he'd kill the fucker.

He walked back to Jana. He didn't like how still she was or the fact she wouldn't look any of them in the eyes. He wrapped an arm around her waist before looking at the cops.

"Is there anything else you need from her?" Gunner asked. He watched some cops lift the box into a plastic bag before carting it off.

"Not at this time. We might have more questions later," the detective said.

Gunner nodded. "That's fine."

"Are you staying with her?" one of the cops asked.

Gunner nodded. There was no way he'd leave her like this.

One of the men reached for her arm but jerked it back when Gunner growled.

"Jana, is it okay to leave you with this guy?"

She blinked a few times before she nodded. "Yes. He won't hurt me."

"Damn right, I won't."

He watched the police leave one by one until there was just Jana, him, and his brothers.

"What do you need from us?" Chains asked.

"Stick around for a bit. I'll get her clean and settled, and then you can leave," Gunner said.

"I think it would be a good idea to at least keep one of us here with you," Mad Dog said.

Gunner nodded. "That's fine. I'm not leaving her tonight." Nothing could pull him away from her.

Chapter Six

“Let’s go, Baby.”

She walked docilely beside him without a word. He found her bathroom and closed the door.

“Let’s get you into the shower.”

Jana nodded.

“Do you need help?” Gunner asked.

Jana thought about it a moment and then shook her head. “No, I think I’ll be fine.”

“I’ll stay in here just in case.” The fact that she didn’t fight or try to argue concerned him. He turned on the shower and ensured it was warm and not hot before returning to her. “Let’s get you out of these clothes.”

He gritted his teeth as each body part came into view. He’d only seen her in her baggy jeans and scrubs at the hospital. Now, he was seeing what she’d been hiding, and he loved what he saw. Light skin. She had curves that made his mouth water. He tugged the band from her hair to see it fall down her back before taking off the last few things—her bra and panties.

When she stood before him naked, it took everything in him not to pull her into his arms and kiss her the way he wanted to. Jesus, he needed to get this over with. “Let’s get you in.”

He waited until she stood under the water. “How are you doing?” he asked.

“I think I’m okay.”

“I’ll be here just in case. I’ll get you something to wear.”

“Okay.”

He shut the shower door and walked back into her bedroom. No one had to tell him this was her room. Not only did it smell like her, but the soothing colors reminded him of her.

He scrounged around in her dresser and came up with a pair of panties and a short nightgown. It would torture him, but he wouldn’t leave her like this, so he’d have to suck it up.

The water turned off, so he grabbed a towel and opened the door. She was squeezing the water from her long hair.

“I’ll help you get it dry, Baby.”

She nodded and walked to him. He wrapped the towel around her middle and lifted her. He set her on the counter and grabbed another towel to

work on her hair.

He had no idea what the hell he was doing, but he used some common sense. When he thought he'd done what he could with the towel, he bent and pulled out drawers, looking for the blow-dryer.

"It's in the cupboard," she murmured.

He pulled it out and plugged it in. She held up her hand before he turned the dryer on.

"I need the spray-in conditioner and get a comb through my hair before I can dry it. If I don't, I'll have knots in my hair."

He nodded. "This is good to know."

He followed her instructions and could tell it was helping to get her mind off her cat. When her hair was dry, he pulled the nightgown over her head. He tugged on the towel and lifted her to her feet.

"Now, the panties, Baby."

She laid her hand on his shoulder to balance herself while he crouched before her. He tried his best to keep from inhaling her scent, but her cunt smelled like cotton candy, and he wanted a taste so badly.

He cleared his throat as he stood. "How about your teeth?"

He watched as she took care of her teeth. When she was finished, he brought her into the bedroom and pulled down the covers. "Hop in."

Jana slid in and let him tuck the blanket up to her chin. "Thank you for your help."

"You sound like I'm leaving, and I'm not. I'll be here all night. You won't be left alone."

He saw her relax and then nod. "Close your eyes. I'll be right back."

"Okay." She rolled to her side and closed her eyes. He didn't think she was sleeping, but her body and emotions had taken some hits, so she might just pass out.

He crept out of the bedroom and shut the door until it was mostly closed. He wanted to be able to hear her if she called out for him.

He walked into the living room to see the guys sprawled out on the furniture. It definitely wasn't big enough for them, but they made do. His eyes widened when he got to the kitchen. He'd been ready to clean the blood off everything, but the kitchen was spotless.

"Thanks, guys."

"No problem. How's she doing?" Chains asked.

"She's holding it together," Gunner said.

“Fuck. I heard the cat looked like it was mangled,” Mad Dog said.
“Who the fuck does that kind of shit?”

“Some fucked-up people,” Chains said.

“You all don’t need to stay here,” Gunner said.

“We waited to talk to you before a few of us left. Chains is going to stay here.”

Gunner nodded. “Sounds good. Tell Striker and Feral what’s going on.”

Snake nodded. “You got it.”

Gunner waited until the two left before locking the door. He checked the other doors and windows. He guessed which room the fucker broke into, seeing all the black powder the cops used to get fingerprints and the screen that was flapping in the wind. God, he’d like to have the bastard in front of him. He’d have a great time making him pay for what he did.

Gunner checked into a closet and pulled out a blanket and pillow. “Here you go. The sofa won’t be the most comfortable, but we’ve slept on much worse.”

Chains snorted. “You’re fucking right about that.”

“I’ll be in with her.”

Chains nodded. “I figured. Call out if you need me.”

“You got it.” Gunner got to the door in the hall when Chains stopped him.

“Later, you’ll have to tell me about her. I had no idea you had a woman.”

“Sure. I’ll tell you later. Don’t say anything in front of her, though, because she doesn’t know it yet.”

Chains laughed.

Gunner smiled as he closed the door to the bedroom. He pulled off his vest, boots, and t-shirt but kept his jeans on before lying beside her on top of the blanket.

He took a few minutes just to stare at her. Her breathing was deep and steady. He just hoped she’d make it through the night without breaking down. It would help tomorrow if she were rested.

Chapter Seven

“No!” Jana cried out in her sleep, instantly waking up. She sat up in bed as she tried to calm her heart down.

Her pulse jumped when a hot hand pressed against her back. She looked over her shoulder. It took a moment to realize that Gunner was lying in her bed.

“Easy, Baby.”

A shiver ran down her spine when his hand moved up and down her back. She knew he was trying to soothe her, but instead, it was making her hot and needy.

“What are you doing in my bed, Gunner?”

He propped himself up and balanced his head on his hand. “I didn’t want to leave you.”

Jana didn’t know what to say. She never would have suspected this man would be sensitive or think about her welfare.

“Thank you. I’m sorry for taking up your time,” she said.

Gunner rolled out of bed, and she thought he was going to leave. Instead, he walked into the bathroom, and she heard the water in the sink turn on and off. He surprised her even more when he returned with a glass of water and handed it to her.

“Drink.”

The cool water felt wonderful in her throat. When she finished, she handed him the empty glass. “Thank you.”

Gunner set the glass on the nightstand and sat beside and faced her on the mattress. That was when she noticed the washcloth in his hands.

She felt tears sting her eyes when he cupped her chin and gently wiped the sweat off her face. When he finished, he tossed the washcloth into the bathroom sink before lying beside her.

He held out his hand. “Come here.”

She hesitated briefly before she slid over next to him and let him pull her into his arms. She rested her head on his shoulder and her hand on his naked chest. She had been trying to ignore him being half naked, but laying there with her nose pressed against his chest made it impossible.

His skin was tan, like he spent much time outdoors without a shirt on. There was no hair, just tattoos that covered his body. She had to admit they were beautiful. The eagle on his chest was a work of art. It was so colorful

and detailed. He also had other ones. She saw the name of his club on his left pectoral and other ones she didn't understand. She was almost tempted to trace them with her finger.

“Do you think you can go back to sleep?” he asked.

She thought about it for a moment and then nodded. “I want to try.”

He pulled her tighter against his side. “Close your eyes.”

She tilted her head up to see his face. “You're kind of bossy, aren't you?”

He snorted without opening his eyes. “Get used to it.”

Her mouth dropped open. What the hell did he mean? She rolled her eyes when he cupped the back of her head and smashed her head against him.

She listened to his breathing deepen. It was a soothing sound, but she couldn't hold back the images she'd seen earlier. Dammit. Snookie had been such a sweet cat. Jana remembered finding her in a kitchen on the side of the road. She was emaciated and covered with fleas.

Jana had rushed her to the vet. The vet examined the kitten and pointed out a few things. They immediately started an IV and several shots. Jana was amazed and felt herself cringe when the needle went in. She saw and gave thousands of shots while in the medical field. But seeing it happen to a tiny kitten made her wince in sympathy.

They helped her bathe and cover it in medicine to care for the fleas and ticks. The good part was when the doctor said the kitten would survive with care, and it made it even more meaningful when he told her the kitten probably wouldn't have made it through another night without her. It was like it was meant to be. She thought about getting a cat but hadn't had the time to look for one.

The vet's office gave her what she would need to care for the cat for a few days, so she wouldn't have to run to the store immediately.

She immediately set up the litter box and a water bowl when she got home that night. They couldn't determine the kitten's exact age, so they gave her a bottle and formula to feed her until she got stronger.

They had bonded that night while she fed her. Holding her like a baby, the kitten stared up at her with bright eyes while she sucked the milk down. When she finished, she immediately fell asleep in Jana's lap. Jana carried her to her bed and sat next to her. Within a few seconds, the cat pressed against her body.

Jana had been astounded when she realized she'd already fallen in

love with the cat and couldn't see her life without her. She had given her the name from a television show. Since the cat was getting more playful and energetic, the healthier she got, Jana had to give her a name that would match her personality. Snookie. It fit her from the beginning.

Jana sometimes wondered how she could feel so deeply about another living thing. She'd always been standoffish, and it always took her a while to warm up to people.

After Snookie, Jana thought it would never happen again. She was wrong. Her feelings for this big biker were becoming stronger than she anticipated, making her uneasy. The more he cared for her, the deeper she fell.

She knew it was probably a stupid move. There was no way a biker would ever settle into a relationship when he had naked women around him all the time. Jana guessed every club had a group of women whose only job was to fuck the guys. She'd never be able to compete with that. She even thought she wouldn't want to try, but that was rapidly changing, and it scared her.

She was falling hard and didn't know how to deal with it.

She woke up crying a few times that night, and Gunner was always right there holding her. It made her grief so much easier because she knew she wasn't alone.

Chapter Eight

Gunner opened his eyes the next morning. He wanted to groan when the muscles in his back started to cramp, because sleeping on a queen-sized mattress was hell on him. Besides, the fact he'd gotten little sleep made his disposition even darker.

Jana started to move around. He gave her a minute to awaken before talking to her.

"Baby, do you have to work today?"

She tilted her head up to look at him, and his breath caught in his chest. Even with blotchy skin and swollen red eyes from crying, he still found her to be the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen.

He smoothed the hair off her face. "Hey, do you work today?" he repeated.

She nodded. "I have to work a double shift because I'm taking another person's day so they can be with family."

"How many hours?" He didn't like the sound of that.

"Around eighteen hours."

"Fuck, woman. That can't be healthy for you."

"I don't do it often, so it doesn't hurt me. I'll be able to take a few breaks so I can crash and get naps in. It helps."

That made him feel a little better.

"I have to shower and get dressed," she said.

He lifted his arm. "Go, I'll make coffee."

She smiled. "That would be wonderful."

Gunner watched her get out of bed and walk into the bathroom before he stood, dressed, and walked out to the living room.

He smelled the coffee and cinnamon right away. He saw Chains pulling out food and drinks from a sack.

"Oh, hell. Thanks, man," Gunner said.

"I figured you'd both need it."

Gunner picked up a cup and took a long drink. He could feel the caffeine immediately perk him up. Jana walked into the kitchen as he unwrapped one of the rolls.

She looked so prim and professional in her scrubs, her hair pulled back into a tight ponytail, and her stethoscope around her neck.

Her eyes widened when she saw the array of food on her table.

“Wow, this is wonderful.” She looked at Chains. “I’m sorry, I don’t think I caught your name?”

“Chains.”

Gunner bit his lip to keep from laughing at the confused look on her face. “Come here and sit down.”

She looked at her watch. “I don’t have a lot of time.”

“Then eat fast,” Gunner said and grinned when she rolled her eyes.

She managed to drink a cup of coffee and a whole roll. He suspected she hadn’t eaten the night before, but he wouldn’t ask.

Jana threw her garbage away and grabbed her purse. “I have to leave, so can you guys lock up when you’re ready to go?”

Gunner was a bit shocked. He couldn’t remember anyone trusting them enough to leave them alone in their house. “Sure.”

She smiled. “Have a good day.”

He grabbed onto her arm and twirled her around. “You forgot something.”

She looked dazed. “What?”

“My kiss.”

Her eyes widened. “Really?”

“Yes.”

He cupped the back of her head in his hand, bent, and kissed her. It wasn’t hot because she had to leave, and he didn’t want them to get aroused and be unable to do anything about it. It lasted longer than he had thought, but he hadn’t used his tongue or pressed her against his body.

When he raised his head, he smiled down at her. Her eyes were still closed, and her head tilted back as if she was waiting.

He turned her around again and gently pushed her. “Go to work. I’ll see you later.”

He had to fight to keep from laughing at the disgruntled look she gave him over her shoulder before she walked out the door.

He and Chains finished eating and cleaned up before locking the door and heading home.

Gunner was happy no one asked him questions when he walked into the living area. He headed to his room to crash for a few hours, and then he would call the hospital and check on Jana. He wouldn’t interrupt or try to talk to her. He just wanted to see that she was doing okay.

When he woke up, his prez, Striker, had a job for him that would take

him out of town for a few days. He wasn't happy about it, but he couldn't say no. As he and several of his brothers drove out of town, he had to remind himself that she'd been alone for a long time before he came along.

He tried to put the fact her cat had been murdered in the back of his brain, or he wouldn't be able to keep his head on the job. It was the best he could do.

The next day, Gunner had Chains check on Jana, and he came back with the information that she was done with her long shift and was home for the next few days.

He was relieved but felt like he missed her. He had never felt that way before. Although holding her all night, even without sex, had been so calming, he could see himself getting used to it quickly.

The idea of him becoming weak because of her flew out of his mind when he watched the brothers, who had their own women, interact with them and the work they still got done. If anything, they were stronger and worked harder because they were happy.

Although he had secretly been envious of the brothers with women, he hadn't thought it would happen to him. A few weeks ago, he'd been perfectly happy fucking the sluts at the house, but now it nauseated him when one of them tried to touch him.

The fact that the attraction happened so fast unnerved him. He needed to take a step back, take some time, and think about the situation. Maybe he'd even ask one of the brothers about women.

Chapter Nine

Jana pulled into her driveway and parked. She sat in a daze for a few minutes and gathered enough strength to open her car door and get out. She dragged herself into her house, trying to ignore the fact that the last time she'd done it, her cat had been in a box.

Although she was exhausted, her mind wouldn't settle. The cops had told her it had not been a random act and was definitely personal. She thought about every person she'd come in contact with over the last year. She couldn't think of anyone out in public she'd pissed off, so it had to be someone at the hospital. There had been instances where patients had been angry and taken it out on her, but they never threatened her.

She shut and locked the door behind her. Jana looked into the kitchen and thought about food, but she couldn't get herself to eat because her stomach had been in a knot all day.

She only told her friend, Mick, at the hospital about what happened. She'd held her when she cried, and it felt a little better because it released some of the tension in her body.

Mick had asked her to go home with her because she mentioned the fact that she was anxious to walk into the house, but Jana had declined. Jana said it would be harder the next time if she didn't take this step. Now, she thought she'd made a mistake because the house was lifeless and dull without Snookie.

Jana pulled off her clothing and walked into the shower. She washed her hair and body and then stood under the hot spray, letting it loosen some of the tight muscles in her shoulders.

She turned off the water when it started to cool and wrapped a towel around her midsection and hair. After brushing her teeth and blow-drying her hair, she pulled on a nightgown and slipped into bed.

She was afraid of the dark for the first time, so she kept the hallway light on and the door mostly open.

As exhausted as she was, she couldn't get her mind to shut down. When she pushed the images of the box from her mind, pictures of Gunner popped in. She couldn't believe she trusted him enough already to let him undress her and get her in the shower. And then later sleep beside her.

She knew her feelings for him were deeper than she felt for any man before, but he was a biker. He probably broke the law a bit and was the

opposite type of man she usually dated. She didn't even think any of the men she dated had a single tattoo, and certainly none were as big as Gunner. Hell, she had no idea why she was even thinking about him. She would probably never see him again, so she needed to get over it.

She finally was able to relax enough to sleep, but her dreams were either of Snookie or Gunner, so she was restless most of the night and didn't feel rested in the morning. Fortunately, she had the next two days off to sleep all she wanted.

Later that day, she decided to drive somewhere and stay a few nights. She needed to get away from all the memories for a while. There were a few towns over with shops she always wanted to check out, and now was her chance. She packed a bag and headed out.

Forty-eight hours later, she pulled into her driveway feeling better than before she left. She also had gotten a lot of sleep. She'd also found a few pictures and a vase she loved in a few of the shops.

She answered her phone as she set everything down on the sofa.

"Hello."

"Hey, girl, it's me, Mick. Are you planning to come back tomorrow?"

"Yes. It will help keep my mind off things."

"I get that. I'm working the first shift, so we'll barely see each other, but I want to get together when we both have a day off. We haven't gone to a movie or out to eat in ages."

Jana nodded. "That sounds wonderful. Let's meet at the ER desk before you head home, and we can go over our schedules."

"Sounds like a plan. How are you holding up?" Mick asked.

"I think I'm doing as good as expected. I have bouts of crying, but I can usually put everything out of my mind if I'm busy."

"I understand that. My offer to stay at my place still stands."

Jana had thought about it a few times. "Thank you. I'm doing fine right now, but I might take you up on the offer later."

"Anytime."

The next day, the women got a date that worked for both. Jana was thrilled. It had been a long time since she and her besty girl spent time out of the ER together.

After a nice dinner, they went to a movie they had both wanted to see. Fortunately, it was a comedy and had no violence in it. The sex scenes were hot but not over the top. She couldn't help but chuckle at some of the parts in

the movie. Tom Hanks always made her laugh, which was exactly what she needed.

Jana pulled outside of her girlfriend's apartment. "I had fun."

Mick laughed. "We have to do this more. It's great therapy."

Jana chuckled. She did feel better, so I agreed. They made tentative plans for the next time they had a day off.

She hugged and then waved as she watched Mick go into the building.

Chapter Ten

Looking around as she pulled into her driveway, Jana made a list of things she needed to do out in the yard the next day. It definitely needed mowing, and the flower beds weeded. It would be the only day she would have the time for a few weeks.

The attack came out of nowhere. She'd been putting her key in the lock when she was shoved into the wood. She felt her nose connect with the hard surface and instantly started to gush blood. When she realized what was happening, she started to scream and fight.

"You fucking cunt. You'll pay for what you did to me," the man's voice said behind her and close to her ear.

He tried to keep his hand over her mouth, but she would twist to the side and yell as loud as she could. It enraged him, so his blows became even more painful. She still fought as hard as she could because she had no idea if he would kill her. She felt him lashing out at her face, back, and arms. She kept kicking and trying to scream when he took his hand off her mouth.

"Hey!" a voice shouted off to the side.

"Fuck," the guy said. "I'll be seeing you again soon." He punched her one more time in the side before running away.

Jana slid to the ground. She tried her best to stay conscious because the boy was already freaking out.

"Oh, Jesus, Jana!" Cody yelled as he slid down beside her.

Jana saw him start to panic and guessed she must not look very good. "Cody," she said. Although her lip was split and bleeding, she needed to get him moving because she didn't know if the guy would return, and she didn't want Cody to be hurt.

"Go get your mom, honey."

"I'll be right back."

Jana nodded and tried to rest on her side, but her body hurt everywhere. She must have dozed because she heard a commotion and saw Cody and his mom kneeling beside her. Penny was on the phone giving someone the address.

Within five minutes, she heard sirens. She dozed off and on as the paramedics got her on the stretcher and into the ambulance.

"Fuck, is that you, Jana?" one of the paramedics, Devon, asked after

they got her settled in the back of the ambulance. He was one she'd seen several times when he brought injured people to the ER.

"Yeah." Hell, if he couldn't recognize her, she must be a mess.

She heard knocking, and then Devon yelled up to Joseph, the driver, to hurry and told him who she was. If she hadn't been strapped down and Devon holding her steady, she would have rolled off the gurney when Joseph took turns.

She would have told them to slow down, but she didn't have the energy and wanted the pain meds she knew they'd give her as they checked her over in the ER.

Jana was pretty sure there were no internal injuries. It was mostly superficial, but her attacker managed to hit any available surface on her body. She knew she'd have bruises everywhere and maybe a slight concussion from when the bastard had punched her in the head several times.

The next time she opened her eyes, a doctor she worked with was standing over her, trying to ask her questions, while a few nurses she knew well took her vitals and cut off her clothing.

"Jana," Dr. Collins said. "One of the paramedics said you've been beaten?"

"Yes." It hurt to talk, so she whispered as much as she could.

"Do you know who it was?" Carolina, one of the nurses, asked.

"No. I didn't recognize the voice, and he had my front pressed against the door so that I couldn't get a good look at him."

"Bastard," Carolina murmured.

Jana agreed.

They covered her with a warm blanket when she started to shake from shock and put in an IV and some pain meds. Not a lot because they ordered a CAT scan for her, but it helped take the edge off the pain.

A few exhausting hours later, she was put into a private room and given a sedative. She only had a slight concussion, so they could give her a larger dose but still check on her frequently and hook her up to any machine they could.

Jana slept between visits with the medical staff and the police officers who showed up to ask questions about the attack. She answered as many as she could before she couldn't hold her eyes open another moment and went to sleep.

When she awoke, it was quiet in the room, giving her much-needed

silence to think about what happened next. The first thought that came into her head was she would never be able to live in her house again, and that saddened her but also made her extremely angry. She hated that anyone else pushed her to do something she didn't want. She'd been independent since she was seventeen. Both her parents were alive, but she'd lost touch with them in the second year of college. She knew alcohol had a lot to do with it, but it still hurt that they would choose booze over her.

Jana also had a sister, but they lost touch several years before. It had always been in Jana's mind to try to track her down. It wasn't that they didn't love each other or were mad at each other. It was their difficult childhood that pulled them apart. The fact that Erica was five years younger didn't help. When Jana left home, she was ashamed to acknowledge that she hadn't taken any time to connect with Erica, and she thought her sister resented her leaving and never looking back. Jana had to admit she could have done better.

She flinched when she tried to move, and a shaft of pain raced through her. Her whole body hurt.

The sun was just starting to rise over the horizon when she closed her eyes again and slept.

Chapter Eleven

Gunner and the brothers he'd ridden with on this last assignment finally pulled into the compound. He sighed because he couldn't remember being this tired before.

He had to admit that the time away helped clear his head. He found that his thoughts often turned to Jana, and the picture of her standing naked in front of him would stay with him forever. His mouth would water, and his palms itch, needing to get his hands on her.

He untied his bag from the back of his bike and followed the others into the house. The feeling of being home always settled something in him.

His brothers always saw him as a hard-ass with no feelings, but he was just good at hiding them. It wasn't his fault that so many people pissed him off. He always did his best to hold off on beating them, but sometimes the person was so annoying he couldn't help it.

"Hey, man, Prez wants to see you in his office," Taz called out to Gunner.

Gunner sighed. He'd almost made it to the stairs, dammit. He dropped his bag on the floor and walked into the office. Both Striker and Feral were going over something, so he waited.

Striker sat back and narrowed his eyes at him. Hell, what the hell did he do now?

"Your nephew called here. He's been trying to get in touch with you."

"You know we all leave our phones here except the person in charge of the job," Gunner said.

Striker tilted his head forward.

"So, what's up?" He could already tell he wasn't going to like it. "Are my sister and nephew okay?"

"Yes. But Cody wanted you to know that his next-door neighbor was attacked and is in the hospital," Striker said.

It took a moment to understand. The fact that he was exhausted and the picture of her being attacked was so obscene it was hard to grasp.

"How bad?"

"Slight concussion, but most of her body is covered in contusions and cuts."

Gunner ran a hand down his face.

"Who is she to you?" Feral asked.

“Jana is Penny’s next-door neighbor. I met her when she tried to scare a meth head away from my nephew with a hand shovel.”

The other two men laughed.

Gunner smiled at the memory. “The guy saw me standing behind the two, put his hands up, and left.” He chuckled. “It was so cute when Jana turned around and looked so proud of herself until she saw me. She thought she’d been the one to scare the guy off.”

The three burst out laughing.

“The woman is maybe three inches over five feet and one hundred twenty pounds wet. The druggie was not only bigger than her, but he was also meaner and high on something.”

“I would say get some sleep. You look like shit, but you’re not going to listen to me,” Striker grumbled. “Take a few brothers with you. You’re so tired you’re barely on your feet.”

“I’ve been more tired before.”

The other two nodded.

“Call if you need anything,” Feral said. He tossed him the phone he’d left with them before the trip.

He called out to a few guys who looked rested and not drunk to follow him.

Once on their bikes, Gunner started making plans that he’d need to talk over with the prez and vice prez. He wouldn’t be able to leave her alone after this. He’d been concerned after what happened to her cat because someone that could do that to an innocent animal was a sick fuck.

They pulled into the hospital parking lot. Once they entered the door, people instantly moved aside, and a mother lifted her child and walked away. Fuck. For the most part, he was used to it and barely even registered when it happened, but hell, did they think they would go on some killing spree?

He walked up to the counter and was pleased when the older woman just looked at him.

“Can I help you?” she asked.

“Yes. What room is Jana Hudson in?”

Her eyebrows rose, but she looked at her computer and typed in a few things. “She’s in room 342. Take the elevator up to the third floor, and they’ll direct you to the right room.”

“Thank you,” Gunner said. He walked up to the elevators, aware of the three men he brought standing just behind him.

Every once in a while, he realized what awesome people he had in his family, and this was one of them.

Gunner looked around as they stepped out of the elevator. He headed toward a counter down the hallway. The two women abruptly stopped talking to stare at them.

“Can you tell me which room Jana Hudson is in?”

“She knows you?” one of them asked.

Gunner almost rolled his eyes. “Yes. We’re good friends.”

The other nurse pointed down a hallway. “Go three doors down. We just gave her a sedative, so she’ll be asleep for a few hours.”

“All right. Thanks.”

The four men walked down the hall and into Jana’s room.

Gunner stopped at the bottom of her bed and cataloged all the damage he could see. It took him a good while to get his emotions under control before he grabbed one of the chairs and set it beside the bed and close to her head. He lifted her hand and ran his thumb over her scraped knuckles.

“How long do you want to stay?” Sharp asked.

“I’m not leaving until she does,” Gunner said.

“Gunner, that chair reclines. Why don’t you sleep while she does? I’ll go home and get you a set of clothing, and you can shower here,” Iron said.

Gunner nodded. “That would work.”

“I’ll stay here with him,” Sharp said.

“All right. We’ll be right back,” Snake said.

Gunner didn’t answer or look away from Jana’s face, so swollen it was barely recognizable. Her lips were cut and puffy, and he could see multiple bruises on her body.

“Hey, man, here’s a blanket,” Sharp said and tossed him the blanket. “I’ll be over here on my phone.”

“Thanks, man.”

Gunner leaned the chair back but could still see her face and hold her hand. He needed any connection he could have with her. It wasn’t much, but it was enough for the moment.

Chapter Twelve

Jana blinked, opened her eyes, and let them focus before looking around the room. She knew she was in the hospital, and her aches and pains had intensified. She expected that. It always happened where the pain was the worst, the second and third day after an injury like hers.

When she tried to move one of her hands, she felt a warm hand holding it. She carefully turned her head, and her eyes widened. Gunner was in one of the chairs that were uncomfortable for a regular-sized person, much less one as large as him. He had a blanket on him and was out cold. She could tell by the darkness under his eyes that he hadn't gotten much sleep.

His grip tightened when she tried to pull it out from under his. Her gaze went to his face to see his eyes cracked open.

"Hi," she said.

Gunner stretched, and Jana couldn't help how her eyes swept over him. Even beaten, her body still craved his.

"Hi, yourself. I'm gone for three days, and you end up here," he said and smiled. He sat forward and pushed the hair from her face. "I can't leave you alone."

She tried to smile but then winced when her bruised and cut lips pulled.

He sat his hand on top of her head. "Hey, don't move. I hate seeing you in pain," he whispered.

That was surprising. Although they'd been together a few times, it was always under bizarre circumstances—how he talked made it feel like they'd known each other for a while.

"What are you doing here?" she finally asked.

"Cody called the club and told my prez what happened. When we go out of town, we usually only have one person carry a phone. If Striker, my prez, thought it was critical enough, he would have contacted us."

"I think Cody is the one that yelled. It made the guy run, and then Cody and your sister were making sure I was comfortable until the ambulance arrived."

Gunner sighed dramatically. "That means I have to be nice to the little shit, doesn't it?"

Jana pressed her lips together to keep from laughing. "I think so."

Someone coughed across the room. That was when Jana saw the other

guy.

Gunner followed her gaze. “That’s Sharp. He’s one of my brothers. Our prez doesn’t like us to leave the compound unless there are at least two of us.”

“Why?” she asked.

“We’ve had some problems lately, and he wants to keep us safe.”

“He sounds like a good leader.”

Gunner grinned. “We think so. How are you feeling?”

“I ache, but it could be worse. I don’t have any broken bones.”

“Did you recognize the guy?”

She swallowed. She hated talking about the attack, but she knew it was inevitable. “He was behind me the whole time, and I didn’t recognize his voice.”

“I think it’s right to assume the attack and the cat incident were the same guy. It’s too coincidental, and they happened a week apart,” Gunner said.

“I thought so, too.” Her eyes scanned his face, and his fatigue was evident. “Why don’t you go home? We can talk later.”

Gunner shook his head. “No. I’m here until you leave.”

“That could be another few days. That’s ridiculous. I’m perfectly fine.”

He snorted. “I don’t think *fine* is the word I’d use, but it doesn’t matter. We don’t know who’s stalking you, so I’ll be here to watch over you.”

Her heartbeat rose. She couldn’t believe he cared enough to want to do this, but she admitted to herself that she was glad. She hadn’t really relaxed since the attack. “Okay. Thank you.”

He lifted her hand and kissed her knuckles. “You’re welcome. Now, get some sleep. It’s probably close to dinnertime here.”

She grimaced. There was no way she’d be able to eat most of it. The Jell-O would be fine if it weren’t lime.

He must have caught the look because he chuckled. “What flavor milkshake do you like?”

“Strawberry. I hope you’re not thinking of feeding me?”

He grinned. “Yeah.”

“But...”

He shook his head. “Shut it. You’ll get better quicker if you have

some nutrients, and I can guess you won't eat the meal they bring."

"Well. No..."

He squeezed her hand. "Relax." He stood and took a few steps away from her. "Hey, Sharp, what do you want from Amara's Diner?"

Sharp pulled his phone from his pocket. "I'll call one of the guys. What do you want for her?"

"Strawberry shake and some kind of soup. She can't open her mouth very far. I'll take two doubles and three fries. Also, get me a chocolate shake."

Jana wasn't surprised the man could eat. He was huge and had big muscles. There wasn't a place she saw that wasn't muscular. His body would have to take in a lot of calories to keep moving.

Sharp nodded as he texted someone. "I'm on it."

Gunner walked back to her and had just taken her hand when the door opened, and two cops came in. He and Sharp immediately grew tense.

She squeezed his hand. "It's all right. They're just here to ask questions. I was groggy the last time they came."

Gunner nodded but didn't move away from the side of the bed.

"How long have you been associated with the biker gang?" one of the cops asked.

Jana ignored the tone of his question. "I think we've known each other forever." She looked up at Gunner. "Isn't that right, Babe?"

She saw his lips twitch.

"Yeah. It's been a long time," Gunner said, smiling gently down at her.

The cop cleared his throat. "Okay. We have a few questions for you, Miss Hudson."

"Please call me Jana."

The officers smiled.

They left shortly after, telling her they'd get back to her if they had any more questions. Not two minutes later, three more large bikers walked in with bags of delicious-smelling food.

She tried to ignore the four other men, but when they walked into a room, it was inevitable that they would take over. The area was one of the hospital's larger rooms, but with them in it, there was barely enough space to walk.

"How about we sit you up a bit more?"

The bed rose until she was up enough to eat comfortably. She about groaned when he handed her a large shake, and she took her first sip. It was exactly what she needed.

She was glad Gunner was there for her.

Chapter Thirteen

Gunner watched her interact with his brothers as they all ate and kidded with each other. He didn't see an ounce of fear in her face where most women would have hurried from the room.

Sharp cleaned up the garbage, and the other guys left, leaving the three there.

The doctor came in right after they left. Gunner saw the look of apprehension on the man's face, but he hid it well.

"Well, my dear." The doctor looked down at the clipboard. "I think if you get some rest tonight, you'll be able to leave in the morning."

Jana smiled, but Gunner saw the shade of fear pass over her eyes before she blanked it and then smiled. She listened to everything the doctor said.

"That sounds wonderful. Thank you, Dr. Prime."

"You're welcome, dear. You'll be off work for at least three weeks."

Jana's eyes widened. "Three weeks. Why so long?"

"Because it will take that long for the bruises to heal. We can't have you helping patients when you look like one yourself."

Gunner knew she didn't like it, but she nodded and waved at the doctor. Little did she know if he had his way, he'd have her in the compound where the family could look after her. He first had to talk to Striker and Feral, but Gunner didn't see a problem. He knew Jana would get along with the old ladies.

The guys had brought him a change of clothing when they delivered the food.

"I'm going to shower," he said.

Jana nodded. "They won't mind."

He stripped off his shirt on the way to the small bathroom in the corner. He heard her gasp and grinned without turning. That was definitely a sign of attraction, and he was pleased.

Gunner washed and then pulled on everything except his boots. He shoved his dirty clothing in the bag, brushed his teeth with the toothbrush the hospital provided, and walked out.

He saw Jana on her side facing away from him and Sharp talking softly to her. He walked around to stand in front of her and cupped her hip.

"Why don't you get more sleep, Babe?"

She smiled sleepily. "I'll have to because the nurse gave me more pain meds."

"Good. I don't like the thought of you in pain."

"I'm doing better every hour," she said.

He started fixing up the chair he'd used before.

"Guys, I can have them bring in two cots. They're not the most comfortable, but they're something."

They both shook their heads.

"I'm good on the sofa. I've slept in much worse," Sharp said. "The pillow and blanket the nurse brought in for us will help."

She looked at him before he sat. "Can you lay up here with me?"

He smiled when a blush covered her face. "I'd love it, but I don't want to hurt you."

"You won't."

He studied her for a moment. "We'll try it, but I'll move to the chair if I feel it's too uncomfortable for you."

"Okay."

"All right. Move over on that side of the bed because I want to face the door."

She turned to her side and moved closer to the edge. He lay beside her, careful not to jar her, spread the blanket, and relaxed against the pillow. He wrapped an arm around her waist to bring her back against him. The bed was small, but they both fit if they lay on their sides.

"Are you comfortable, Babe?" he asked.

She hummed, snuggled tighter against him, and sighed.

He grinned, closed his eyes, and was out a moment later.

When he woke, he saw the sunrise through the part in the curtains. He couldn't remember feeling this rested before. He had thought with the cramped mattress that he'd be uncomfortable. But it was the opposite. He felt something close to contentment.

Sharp started to move and then stretch. "Fuck, my back is going to ache for a week."

Gunner grinned. They weren't as limber as they used to be.

Sharp stood and stretched. "I'm going to get us some coffee and maybe some donuts if they have any."

Gunner slid off the bed and rubbed Jana's shoulder as she began to wake up.

She rolled to face him. “How did you guys sleep?”

Sharp snorted. “Better than some other nights.”

Jana smiled.

“He’s going to get coffee and donuts for us,” Gunner said.

“They have good coffee down the hall, and the sweet rolls in the cafeteria are great,” Jana said. She started to move toward the side of the bed.

Sharp walked out. “I’ll be right back.”

“What are you doing?” Gunner asked.

“I have to use the restroom.”

Gunner grinned and helped her to stand. He waited to release her when he was sure she had her balance. “I need to make a call. I’ll do it in the hallway.”

Jana nodded over her shoulder.

“By the way, you realize that gown has no back, right?” he asked.

Jana gasped, grabbed the fabric’s back, and closed the gap. She scowled. “You know, you don’t have to sound so cheerful.”

Gunner laughed. “I’ll be right outside.”

She nodded and closed the bathroom door.

Gunner dialed Striker.

“What’s up?” Striker answered.

“I want to bring Jana back to the compound. She can’t go home, and it will take her a while to recover from what the bastard did to her.”

“I’ll come there and meet her before I say yes,” Striker said.

“That’s fine. We’ll be here for another few hours.”

“See you soon.”

Gunner shoved his phone into his pocket and opened the door to the room. He stopped when he heard her talking on the phone.

“Mick, I swear I’m fine. I just need a place to crash until I can find an apartment.”

“Who the fuck is Mick?” Gunner growled.

Jana turned toward him. “What?”

“Who is Mick?” he asked tersely.

Jana sighed. “I’ll call you back. Okay, thanks. It won’t be for long.” She hung up and frowned. “What’s the problem?”

Gunner crossed his arms over his chest. “I...” He stopped when the door to the room opened, and a nurse and doctor strolled in.

Chapter Fourteen

“How is everything this morning, Jana?” the doctor asked.

“I’m sore, but that’s to be expected. I’m able to move without a problem.”

“How about a shower?” the nurse asked.

She almost groaned. “That sounds great.” She hadn’t been clean since the attack. The staff did the best they could, but it wasn’t the same.

“I’ll go get you some scrubs.”

“Thank you.”

The doctor put the clipboard down. “I’m going to send home a few pain pills. It will get you through the next few days. You know you’re going to feel very sore.”

Jana nodded. She wasn’t looking forward to the week ahead of her. “I’d appreciate it. I might not use them, but I’ll have them just in case.”

“I understand. Take it easy for a couple of weeks. You know to come back if anything changes.”

“Yes. Thank you, Dr. Ross.”

“You’re welcome, young lady. I hope they find the person responsible.”

“I do, too.”

The nurse walked in with an armload of things. “Here you go. Are you going to need help?”

“I — ” Jana was interrupted.

“If she does, I’ll be right here,” Gunner said.

The nurse glanced at her, and Jana nodded. “Thank you for your help.”

“Press the button if you need anything. I’ll start on the discharge papers. It might take an hour or so because I have other patients.”

“That’s fine.”

Jana waited until the door closed to open her mouth. It snapped shut when the door opened, and Sharp walked in.

“I’m going to shower.”

She knew Gunner scowled at her, but tough. She’d deal with him after the shower.

She took her time and made sure she was as clean as possible. The nurse had brought in some lotion and more toothbrushes. Jana tried not to

study her face too much, but what she saw looked awful.

She still had some swelling around one eye and her lip. Her face was discolored, making it look like a colorful dyed fabric. She combed through her hair, being careful of the knot on top where the guy had hit her.

“This was as good as it got,” she said, opening the bathroom door.

Both men were standing and drinking coffee. Gunner glanced her way, and then his eyes narrowed.

“Now, let’s talk about Mick.”

Jana sighed. She was already getting tired and had no idea why he was so pissed. “Why?”

“What is he to you?” Gunner asked.

She opened her mouth to set him straight when the door opened again, and three bikers entered. These were men she hadn’t met before. The one in the middle was the scariest.

“Jana, I want you to meet my Prez, Striker. The others are Stone and Taz.”

“It’s nice to meet you.” She climbed back onto the mattress because her legs were starting to shake, and the last thing she wanted was to collapse in front of these guys.

She imagined that showing any weakness was not cool.

Striker asked her a few questions, but they were pretty basic ones, so she didn’t mind.

“What do you think?” Gunner asked.

Jana looked between the men. “What’s going on?”

Striker ignored her.

“Find out how much she wants to keep. The guys will pack everything and take the things she doesn’t need to the warehouse,” Striker said.

“Wait...” What the hell was going on?

“That shouldn’t take long,” Gunner said.

“Take her back to the compound, and we’ll take care of the rest.”

“Can I ask...”

Striker talked over her. “The girls already know about her and are waiting to do whatever you guys need.”

Gunner nodded. “Good. That will help her adjust. When we get back to the compound, I plan to take her directly to my room so we can both rest, unless you need me to do anything.”

“Not right now. Does she know anything?” Striker asked and smiled. The man looked handsome when he smiled. She just didn’t think he did it very often.

“No. I’ll do that after you leave.”

Striker chuckled and nodded. “Good. We’ll see you back home.”

Jana watched the three men leave, then looked at Gunner and crossed her arms. “What the hell is going on?”

“Who’s Mick?”

Jana’s teeth snapped together. “None of your business.”

Sharp snorted and walked to the room’s other side, sitting and watching.

Gunner walked to her, bent until his nose was touching hers. “You wanna bet?”

“First, tell me what your prez was talking about?”

She could tell she was pissing him off but too bad. She wanted to know if he was making decisions with her life.

“We’re moving you to the compound where you’ll be safe.”

Jana’s mouth opened and closed a few times. “Excuse me?”

Gunner crossed his arms over his chest. “You heard me.”

“Where in the world did you get that idea, and don’t you think you should have asked me?”

He shook his head. “No. If I gave you a choice, you’d choose wrong.”

Jana sputtered. “Who the hell do you — ”

“Who’s Mick?” Gunner asked suddenly.

It took her a moment to change her mindset. Her chin went up.

“It’s none of...” She stopped abruptly when Gunner came to stand in front of her.

“Do you want to continue saying that?”

Jana shivered at the dark, dominant tone of his voice.

“I just don’t see why...”

“Who’s Mick?”

Jana rolled her eyes when she heard Sharp chuckle.

Gunner cupped her chin. “Don’t push me on this. It’s the best place for you right now. That bastard won’t get within a mile of you.”

She hadn’t thought about that. She would be safest with the club. But she’d never seen herself as a biker chick. Maybe it could just be until the man was caught. When she brought that up to Gunner, his face darkened and his

jaw throbbed.

“Let’s play it by ear. Listen, there are several normal women that live with us.”

“Normal? What does that mean?” Jana asked.

“They’re women like you and not the sluts that live with us.”

She had heard biker clubs liked to keep loose women around for sex, and the thought of Gunner screwing them left a bad taste in her mouth.

“You want me to stay in a place with naked women running around and guys having sex out in the open?”

“Yes, I do,” Gunner said. “The other women got used to it, and they’ll help you adapt.”

That made her relax a bit. “Where would I sleep?”

“With me.”

She knew, but she needed to hear him say it. “And if I want my own room?”

She started to fidget as he stared at her intently for a long moment.

“Is that what you really want?” Gunner asked.

Jana heard the dark steel in his tone that told her she was pushing him. The air got stuck in her throat when he leaned toward her and placed his hands on the mattress on either side of her hips.

Jana felt her blood heat in her veins, and her heart started galloping in her chest. They both kept their eyes open as he placed his lips on hers. He gently kissed her for a minute before deepening the kiss using his tongue.

The air around them crackled, and they both started breathing heavily. Gunner pulled her up on her knees and wrapped his arms around her. One was around her waist, and the other cupped her head.

The clearing of a throat caught their attention and made them put inches between them, but his hands still gently gripped her. She noticed that he was always gentle with her, and looking at him, you’d never think he was a sweet man. It made her feelings for him deepen.

She was already getting in over her head, so she was afraid she’d give all of herself to him, and then when he got sick of her, she’d be broken.

Chapter Fifteen

Gunner watched as she thought about the move. It was a no-brainer, and her things were probably already moved in. Striker tended to act fast.

He didn't like the shadow of sadness on her face and couldn't imagine what she was thinking.

"Jana?"

She looked up at him and nodded.

The air rushed from his lungs in relief. He knew she would be living at the club no matter what, but it would be easier for him if she came peacefully.

"You won't fight me about staying in my room?" he asked.

"No."

"Good girl. We have time to talk about everything later. I can see you're unsure about some things."

"Yes."

"I can't wait to ask this. We've been interrupted every time I've tried to ask. I need to know now who the fuck Mick is and what he is to you?"

Jana smiled. "Mick is my friend. She's another nurse in the ER."

"She?" Gunner asked.

"Yeah. Her real name is McKinley, but she likes to be called Mick."

Another level of tension left his body.

"Let's get you home and into bed."

"It's not even noon."

"Yeah, but you've been hurt, and I'm sleep-deprived. Don't you want me holding you while you sleep?" He smiled at the blush that covered her face.

"Yes."

"Let's get you out of here."

Sharp stood up. "I'll check with the nurse."

"Thanks, man." When Gunner turned back to her, he caught the blush on her face darkened and grinned. "What?"

"He was sitting there when we ... you know ... were making out."

Gunner laughed. "Yeah. For one thing, we were just kissing. My hand would have been down your pants if we were making out. I'll demonstrate it to you later. Besides, we're not a modest bunch, but you'll get used to it."

Sharp walked back in, and the nurse followed with a wheelchair.

“Here you go, Jana. You know the drill, so I won’t go over everything. You’ll still have to be taken to the entrance in a wheelchair.”

“Yes. I remember.” Jana smiled. “Thank you, Jessie.”

“No problem. Call if you need anything, and I hope I’ll see you again.”

Jana smiled. “Yes, you will.”

“Striker sent the car for us and had some of the guys take our bikes back to the compound,” Sharp said as they rode the elevator down.

Gunner pushed the wheelchair out of the elevator and nodded. He figured Striker would have it all taken care of.

“I’ll pull the car up,” Sharp said and walked out of the hospital.

Gunner waited with Jana. He still had a grip on the chair’s handles, but he bent forward. “How are you doing?”

Jana looked over her shoulder. “I’m doing okay. How about you?”

“I’m fine. But I’ll be glad to get you back home. I want you where I know you’ll be safe.”

Sharp pulled up next to them. Gunner opened the back door and helped her slide in.

Gunner waved when an orderly took the wheelchair and moved next to Jana in the back seat. He wrapped an arm around her shoulders.

“It won’t take us long. It’s not too far out of town,” Gunner told her.

She rested against him and nodded.

He could tell she was slightly dozing off when they drove through the huge gates and up by the house.

“Come on, Babe. Let’s get you up to bed. We won’t stop to talk to anyone.”

He maneuvered her out of the car and into the house. He held up a hand when a few people started asking him questions.

“Later, guys, I’ll take Jana up to our room. We’ll be down later.”

No one said anything else.

He opened his door. “This is our room. It’s not huge, but we have our own bathroom.”

“That’s good. I’d hate to share one with a bunch of guys.”

He grinned. “Are you hungry?”

She shook her head.

“Do you have to use the bathroom?”

“No.”

“Okay, then come here.”

She walked over to him. “Let’s get these off of you.”

Jana grabbed onto the bottom of her shirt. “Wait. Why do I have to undress?”

“Because I know you’ll be more comfortable out of them. I can give you a t-shirt if that will make you feel more at ease?”

“I’d like that.”

He walked into his closet and came out with a clean shirt. “I’ll allow it today. But don’t expect to wear one after you get comfortable.

Gunner helped her out of her clothing. He’d seen her body before, but not with so many bruises and contusions. The discolored injuries looked obscene against her white skin. Fuck, he wanted his hands on the bastard that hurt her. He’d show the guy what pain really was.

He pulled the shirt over her head and smiled when it reached her knees. Damn, she was a tiny thing.

“Get in,” he said as he pulled the blanket back for her to slide in.

After she was comfortable, he closed the curtains. The room was dark, but enough light came through the break in the curtains for him to see.

He stripped off everything but his boxers and slid in next to her. He loved the way her eyes heated when she looked at him. He couldn’t remember any woman looking at him like he was a super stud.

“Let’s get you in place.” They moved until her back was against his chest. “How is this?”

“It’s good.”

“No pain?” Gunner asked.

She shook her head.

He kissed the back of her head and settled down. “We’ll get up for dinner unless you get hungry before then. I can always bring you something.”

“No. I can wait.”

“Okay.”

He listened to her breathing even out and deepen. He was exhausted but didn’t want to lose this feeling of contentment from holding her. It was like she belonged there all along. His main concerns were getting the bastard who hurt her and finding a way to get her to stay with him because he couldn’t see his life without her in it.

He’d ask the guys with old ladies for advice. Fuck, he was sounding like a pussy. He never thought he’d be in the same predicament as the other

men in his club, but he wouldn't lose her, so he'd suck it up.
His eyes closed, and within a minute, he was out.

Chapter Sixteen

Jana opened her eyes to see several large men standing around. Fortunately, Gunner had an arm around her the whole time because she might have fallen to her knees they were shaking so much. Hell, that would be beyond embarrassing.

She got another shock when they walked into the large building. The place was huge and held several more men who all turned to stare at her. When she caught sight of two half-naked women sitting on a few men's laps, she looked away. It was all too much to take in.

Gunner took her up the wide stairs and into a nice-sized bedroom. She was relieved to know she wouldn't have to share a bathroom with a bunch of men.

"Hey." She balked when he tried to undress her. She knew he'd seen her naked before, but this time seemed different. Her anxiety bled away when she saw how he reacted to seeing her injured. It was like he really cared. Cared more than she thought a violent biker would.

A shout from outside jerked her awake.

"Easy, Babe. It's just one of the guys," Gunner said.

She exhaled and relaxed.

"It's close to dinnertime. How about we get dressed and head down? After the meal, if you feel up to it, we can be outside with the men and old ladies."

"That sounds fine." Even though something close to dread started to rise, she pretended to be calm about the situation. What if she wouldn't ever be able to get comfortable? Even though she considered the situation temporary, just until they caught the guy, she didn't want to spend her time here in the room.

Gunner rolled out of bed and stood. He was beautiful. All those muscles and tattoos made him look larger than life. Even tired and aching, looking at him made her tongue stick to the roof of her mouth, and cum started to wet her panties.

Gunner came out of the closet dressed. "Are you getting up? Or do you need help?"

"No. I'm feeling better. Is there time for us to go to my house so I can pack a bag? I don't want to wear the scrubs around."

Gunner grinned. "Come here."

Jana stood and walked to him. He pulled her into the closet and stood there silently. She didn't understand until she saw her clothing hanging by his and her shoes on the floor.

Seeing her things made her stomach drop and tension fill her. "What ... how ... what's going on?"

"The prez had all your things boxed up. There's a warehouse where your furniture and kitchen things are, but your clothing and personal stuff he had brought here."

Jana wanted to be angry or at least irritated, but she only felt amazement.

"How did it happen so quickly?"

"We've got close to forty men here."

"Forty?" Hell. That would overwhelm her if she had to be in a room with so many bikers.

"Yes. When you have that many men, packing a house up takes minutes instead of hours."

The fact that she never had to return to that house was a relief. She dreaded being so close to where she lost her cat and was hurt worse than at any other time in her life.

Gunner pulled down a long dress. "Wear this. It's loose enough so it'll be comfortable for you."

"Okay. I have to use the bathroom."

"Babe, you can do whatever you want if it's okay with me, of course." He grinned.

She almost rolled her eyes but instead turned and walked into the bathroom. Everything looked so clean and big enough for it to be comfortable for a man Gunner's size. Everything she'd ever thought about bikers was booze, drugs, and dirty. These guys weren't that way, and it confused her, but it also made her curious.

Seeing her things on the counter jolted her out of the fog. She removed the shirt and draped it over the towel rack before pulling on the dress. After brushing her teeth and hair, she looked at herself critically. The swelling was gone, but the bruises had darkened a bit, making her look odd.

"Babe, I want you to meet the old ladies."

"I'm coming."

He stood by the door.

"I need to get panties..."

Gunner shook his head. “No. I don’t like them.”

Her mouth dropped open. “You don’t like panties? Why?”

“Because I like knowing you’re bare, and I can get to you easier.”

“What does that mean?” He confused her.

“Let’s talk later.” He held out his hand.

She dropped the subject and took it, letting him lead her down the stairs and into the kitchen. There were men standing around either getting food or talking, so it was hard to see the women.

“Ladies, I want you to meet Jana,” Gunner said. “I know you’ll help her adapt to us.”

Gunner led her around the group to see several women hustling in the kitchen, but they looked incredibly happy.

“Hi, my name is Kristina. I’m Striker’s woman.”

Gunner chuckled. “You still don’t like to be called *old lady*?”

Jana grinned when the sweet-looking woman narrowed her eyes.

“Because I’m not old,” Kristina practically yelled.

Several of the men laughed.

Jana’s mouth snapped shut when the scary guy from before walked behind Kristina and wrapped his arms around her waist. He nuzzled his mouth against the side of her head and whispered, making the woman blush.

Jana couldn’t believe how gentle he was, and he looked different. More human with the woman. She wanted to ask how they met and how she could deal with such a brutal man.

There were many interesting guys, but she’d never have the courage to ask them questions.

Looking around, Jana kept her anxiety hidden and hoped she’d get used to this someday as long as she stayed.

Chapter Seventeen

“Jana?” a female voice said, making her turn.

It took a moment to realize it was Alicia. They had been in a few classes together and had become fast friends. Jana had wanted to keep in touch, but Alicia had disappeared after her sister had been murdered.

“Alicia?” The two hugged and laughed.

“Oh my God! What are you doing here, and what happened to you?” Alicia asked.

“It’s kind of a long story, and I want to hear yours, too. Should we wait until later? The other women are running around.”

Alicia and Kristina looked and then nodded.

“Definitely later,” Alicia said and hugged her one more time. “I’m so glad you’re here.”

“What can I do to help?” Jana asked Kristina.

The other woman looked around. “We need more bread cut up.”

“I can do that.”

Another woman raised her hand. “Here’s the bread and knife.”

“Oh, thank God,” another woman said. “Willow holding a knife gives me nightmares.”

Everyone laughed except Willow, who hit the other one in the shoulder and called her a bitch. Jana was concerned until she saw that no one else paid attention to the two.

“I’m Willow. And that bitch is my BFF, Meg.”

The two started to bicker, making Jana laugh. She was busy cutting the bread when she felt her shoulder bumped. Jana smiled at Kristina.

“Don’t mind those two. They’re both a little crazy, but Willow scares everyone for the fun of it. Mostly the men.”

Kristina laughed, making Jana relax.

Jana couldn’t imagine someone like Willow scaring these tall, dark, violent men. She was tiny and maybe a hundred pounds and looked like an angel. She’d pay attention and watch because she wouldn’t believe it until she saw it.

Jana cut up the two loaves they gave her and then stood to the side to watch everyone and how they interacted. It amazed her how much fun the women were having and how the men were respectful toward them.

She looked around for Gunner. It was hard to see with so many

people walking around. Her breath caught in her throat when she found him leaning against the far wall, talking to another guy, but his eyes stayed on her. She liked how protective he was and that he didn't just leave her. She smiled when he winked and then went on to help the woman.

The group started to thin out.

"Let's get our plates, girls," Kristina said. "It's nice out. Do you want to eat at our table outside?"

The other nodded.

Alicia showed her how they did things, making her laugh several times when one of the other women would pop up with a suggestion, making Alicia roll her eyes.

Jana saw Gunner grab his own plate. "Go on with them. I'll be outside if you need me."

Jana smiled and followed the other women to a long picnic table.

"First, I'd like to know how you got all those bruises?" Alicia asked.

"Someone attacked me as I was going into my house. The next-door neighbor saw and yelled, chasing the man away."

"Do you know who it was?" Meg asked.

"No. A week before, someone broke into my house and caught my cat. They tortured it and then put it in a box on the back stoop."

Willow growled. "No fucking way. What kind of sick fuck does that to a helpless animal?"

"I don't know," Jana said.

Alicia squeezed her hand. "I'm sorry."

Jana's eyes misted. "I'm sorry for you, too."

The table was silent for a moment.

"My name is Charlie. How did you two meet?" Charlie asked.

"We took some classes together," Jana said.

"What about Gunner?" Charlie asked. "How did the two of you meet?"

Jana looked at her. "His sister lived next to me."

"I didn't even know he had a sister," Willow said.

"And a nephew," Jana replied.

"What do you do for work?" Kristina asked.

"I'm a PA in the ER at the hospital."

Meg looked confused.

"It's called a physician assistant. It's a glorified nurse." Jana

shrugged.

Alicia shook her head. “No, it’s not. You’re just one step down from a doctor. In fact, you could have been a doctor easily.”

“So could you.”

Everyone got quiet.

Alicia sighed. “I didn’t have the heart after my sister...”

Jana nodded. “You don’t have to say it. I understand.” Alicia’s sister had been tortured and killed by a rival motorcycle club. Jana would never forget that or how she tried to look for Alicia, but she’d disappeared.

“You’ll have to tell me where you went. I looked for you for months.”

“Later,” Alicia whispered.

Jana nodded. Her head jerked toward the back door when it slammed open, and a handsome but angry, slightly wild-looking man stepped out.

“Oh, fuck,” Willow said and quickly ducked under the table.

“What did you do now?” Kristina asked.

“Where is she?” the man bellowed.

Jana stiffened. Holy cow. She wouldn’t want to have this man angry at her. He terrified her. He looked like a vicious biker with a bit of crazy thrown in.

“That’s Willow’s man, Blood,” Kristina told her.

Willow hissed. “Shhh.”

Jana sat back and watched the drama unfold since no one seemed to be concerned about it. Her feeling of calmness crashed quickly when Blood stomped over to them, and the look on his face terrified her.

“You guys, should we...?” Jana asked.

Meg snorted and shook her head. “No. I’m not helping her. She does this on purpose.”

“You dyed my boxers pink, woman!” Blood yelled. Several men laughed, and the girls snickered.

“Hey, it’s his fault. He pissed me off,” Willow said. “Shit!” she said when he crouched down. He got ahold of Willow’s arm and dragged her out before tossing her over his shoulder like she weighed nothing.

“You owe me some boxers, woman,” Blood said as he walked toward the house.

Willow smacked his back. “That’s bullshit. You deserve it. Besides, I think you’ll look pretty in them.”

Blood stopped suddenly. “You did not just call me pretty, did you?”

“Fuck yeah!” Willow yelled.

Blood turned back and headed for the pool.

“Don’t even think about it, fucker. You dump me in the water, and I’ll cut your dick off.”

Jana pressed her hand to her mouth. Oh my God. She didn’t know if she wanted to laugh or gasp in horror when Blood threw Willow into the water. Willow screamed as she flew into the water, then silence for a moment, and then she erupted out of the water and shrieked at him.

“You fucking asshole.”

Blood bent over and laughed. “What did you expect? You disrespected your man.”

Willow laughed and then used her arm to splash Blood, drenching him.

“Motherfucker!” Blood shouted.

Jana couldn’t believe it when Willow laughed. Did the woman have a death wish?

Kristina tapped her shoulder. “He would never hurt a hair on her head. They both just like fighting and then making up. It’s crazy, but it works for them.”

Jana chuckled.

Willow got out of the pool to make a run for it but only got a few feet before he snatched her up and over his shoulder again. Jana could hear them fight and then nothing.

Jana exhaled.

“Let’s get the kitchen cleaned up,” Meg said.

The group walked back into the house. With so many helping, the work was done within thirty minutes, and Jana couldn’t remember having such a good time.

“We usually either go outside by the bonfire or watch a movie in our family room,” Kristina told her.

“You have your own room?” Jana asked.

“We have to. I don’t want to be in the same room as the sluts,” Alicia said.

“Because of the sex?”

Charlie laughed. “No. Because they’re all bitches.”

“They’re mean to you?” Jana asked.

“Hell, no,” Charlie chuckled. “They wouldn’t dare because we’re old

ladies, so they have to respect us. It's hilarious watching them try to be nice."

"None of them are pleasant?"

"We've had a few, but not at the moment," Kristina said.

Alicia squeezed her hand. "They'll try to push you since you're not an old lady yet."

"Just face them down and be as mean as you can. That always puts them in their place," Meg said.

"Let's go watch a movie," Jana said.

The back door opened, and Gunner walked in. "She can't tonight. We're going to bed early."

He raised a brow, waiting for her response.

"How about tomorrow?" she said to the women.

"That works. Good night," Charlie said and smiled.

Gunner held out his hand, which she took and let him lead her up to his bedroom.

Chapter Eighteen

Gunner closed and locked the door behind them before taking off his vest and hanging it on the chair's back. Then he reached over his shoulder to grab his shirt and pull it off. He caught the anxiety on Jana's face and thought about how to improve it.

"Can I take a shower?"

He stopped unzipping his jeans. "Babe, you can do whatever you want in here. I'll take one after you."

She nodded, walked into the closet, and came out with an armful of clothing.

"You're not going to need that," he said.

"Why?"

"Because if you wear a shirt in this room, it will be mine, and I don't like panties." He put his hands on his lean hips. "Are we going to have a problem?"

She hesitated for a moment and then shook her head.

"Good."

Jana returned to the closet and came out with one of his shirts. He didn't want her to wear even that, but he reminded himself that it was the first day, and she was still hurting from the beating.

He removed his boots and socks, lay back on the bed, picked up the remote, and started going through the channels. He glanced at the door in resentment. He didn't even like that barrier between them, and once she was healthy, he'd tell her some of the rules he had.

He heard the blow-dryer. It went on for a several minutes, but he figured it would take that long to dry with her thick hair.

He glanced over when the door opened, and she walked out. Fuck, the light in the bathroom shone through the shirt she wore, and he could see her figure. He already knew she was beautiful because he'd seen her naked, but it was getting to the point of pain because he couldn't touch her the way he wanted to.

He rolled to his feet. "I'll be out in a few minutes."

Jana nodded and crawled onto the bed.

He slammed his eyes shut when he caught a glimpse of her ass crack. Hell, what he would give to have his cock as deep in her ass as it could go. He just knew it was going to grip him and feel like nothing he'd ever felt

before.

Jesus. He started the shower and left it on cold. He needed something to calm his cock down. He knew he could hand-fuck himself, but that would take longer than he wanted to get back to her.

He hissed when the water hit his heated skin. "Fuck." He washed quickly before turning the water off and grabbing a towel. He looked down at his cock in disgust. That hadn't affected him at all. He'd have to suck it up if it got too uncomfortable. He'd come back into the bathroom and hand-fuck himself for relief. He didn't even consider going downstairs to one of the sluts. For one, he didn't like any of them. Two, he'd never do that to Jana. He pulled on a pair of boxers and brushed his teeth.

When he opened the door, he almost swallowed his tongue.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

She looked at him. "Putting lotion on."

"You put that on your whole body?"

"Yes. I don't like dry skin."

Hell. Seeing her soft, pale skin made his desire ramp up. He gritted his teeth. Before sliding into bed, he turned off the light so there was only the light from the TV.

She finished and handed him the bottle.

"What do you want me to do with it?"

She smiled. "I would never ask you to put vanilla peach-scented lotion on. Can you put it on the nightstand?"

He rolled to face her as she got comfortable. "How are you feeling?"

"Better. Tomorrow, I'll be close to healed."

He liked the sound of that because he wasn't going to fuck her until she was a hundred percent healed. "Good. Now, come here." He helped her come closer to his chest and then tucked her against his hot skin.

Her scent surrounded him, making him even more miserable. "Do you want to watch any more TV?"

She shook her head and yawned.

Gunner grabbed the remote, turned it off, and put it aside before wrapping an arm around her. He was going to ask for a kiss, but he knew it would get out of hand quickly, and he had only so much strength.

He pressed his lips to the back of her head. "Good night."

"Night," she murmured and then was out.

It took forever to fall asleep because he couldn't escape the torment of

her scent and body.

Finally, his exhaustion from his job for Striker caught up with him and dragged him down. He slept deeply for the first time in months.

The feeling of Jana trying to get out of his grip woke him the next morning. He glanced at the DVR and was shocked they'd slept until nine.

"Where are you going?"

"Bathroom," she said.

"Are you coming back to bed?"

"No. I want to help the girls."

He was very pleased that the group had taken to her right away. The fact that she knew one of them helped.

"Go ahead. I'll be down."

He lay back and waited for her to come out of the bathroom dressed. "I need a kiss first."

She grinned and walked to him, bent, and pressed her lips to his.

Before releasing her, he cupped the back of her head to deepen the kiss. "Are you healed?" he asked.

"Yes. I still have some discoloration, but I feel amazing."

"Good." He propped up his head with his hand.

"Good, what?" she asked at the door.

"Tonight, I'm going to be all over you." He smirked when a blush covered her face.

"Oh, so. Um..."

"Don't go getting all anxious. I'm going to make you feel so good."

"I'm sure you will," she said with sarcasm.

He chuckled when the door closed behind her. It was going to be fun messing with her today. He planned on getting her so horny she'd beg him to fuck her.

"Hot damn." He rolled out of bed and got dressed. Today was the day he would make her his.

Chapter Nineteen

The day seemed to drag for her. It didn't help when Gunner was around and put his hands all over her. God. Her panties had been wet since the morning, and her stomach felt tight with desire.

Willow bumped her shoulder and grinned. "It looks like you're getting laid tonight."

Jana sputtered and then laughed. "How the hell do you know that?"

"You can always tell when a guy is horny. They get a certain hungry look in their eyes."

"I didn't know that. You'll have to point it out to me," Jana said.

"You bet."

"Oh, fuck. Look, girls, we have another woman who thinks she can come in and take our men."

"Don't let them insult you, girl," Willow said, moving away.

Jana cleared her throat. "You must be the sluts I've been hearing about."

"You're damn right we are, and I'll tell you we can satisfy the men here ten times better than you."

"You might think that," Jana said. "But your cunts and assholes are so stretched out the guys don't get the feeling they need."

One of the sluts narrowed her eyes at her. "Listen, bitch, you're not an old lady yet, so I'd watch what you say."

Jana snorted. "I'm not afraid of you sluts. I know every vein in the body, I only have to cut one of them a little. It actually only takes a little nick, and you'll bleed out in minutes."

She was happy to see some of the sluts back up, and it helped to hear the cheers from her friends behind her.

The side door slammed shut, making everyone turn that way. When Jana caught the murderous anger in Gunner's eyes, she felt a shiver race up her spine. She was very thankful to know she wasn't the one who angered him. Gunner grabbed one of the girls that were talking by a chunk of her hair, making the woman cry out.

Meg grabbed her arm when she took a step. "Don't interfere. This is what it takes with these whores. Besides, I haven't seen them kill one of them since I've been here, but I've heard it has happened."

That didn't help much, but she did hang back and let Gunner deal

with it.

“If I ever hear you talk to these women like that, I’ll take you out back and bury you. Alive. Don’t fuck with them or me. Do you hear me?” he barked.

“Yes, Gunner. We hear you,” the woman he had ahold of cried.

He pushed her away from him. “Now, get the fuck out.”

The girls scampered out of the room. The women turned back to clean up after dinner. Jana was drying a plate when she felt an arm wrap around her middle.

“It’s time for bed, Babe,” he murmured in her ear.

When he used that silky, velvety tone of voice, she would have agreed to anything.

Charlie took the towel from her and grinned. “We got this. Go have fun.”

Gunner took her hand and led her out of the kitchen and up to his room. He locked the door behind them, and the sound seemed to echo in the room.

“Go shower.”

She nodded and rushed to the bathroom but stopped when he called out.

“And don’t bother with clothing. You’ll never wear them again in this room.”

Jana nodded and closed the door.

“That’s something else we have to talk about,” he yelled. “I don’t like things between us.”

Oh, dear God. Would she be able to handle an affair with that man? She already determined he was possessive, protective, and attentive, but he might go overboard on the controlling part, which she would struggle with the most.

His body was amazing. She caught the outline of his penis a few times through his boxers and the heavy bulge between his legs when he wore jeans, and that made her nervous. She’d only been with three men, and they were all smaller than Gunner.

“Don’t hide in there,” he called out.

Jana pinned her hair up and stepped into the shower. She washed quickly, anxious to get to him but also terrified she wouldn’t be able to take him. She knew about the human body and how a woman’s pussy stretched,

but sometimes it was nearly impossible. She just didn't want to disappoint Gunner.

She reached for a towel, dried herself, and wrapped it around her midsection. She wasn't ready to walk around in front of him naked. After brushing her teeth, she grabbed her hairbrush and took a calming breath before opening the door.

The almost feral look in his eyes as they swept over her, left her body tingling. He stood suddenly and stalked toward her. She couldn't help the urge to back up and did until she hit the wall.

He boxed her in with a hand on each side of her shoulders. "Jesus, woman. I've never had this gut-wrenching feeling. Like if I don't get in you in the next few minutes, I'll lose it. I'm not entirely sure I'm happy about what you do to me."

One of her hands pressed against his chest. "I don't mean to."

"Yeah, I know, but that makes it even more bizarre. But you'll be putting me out of my misery in a few minutes. Won't you?"

She nodded and licked her lips.

"Good girl. I'm going to shower."

She nodded again.

Jana exhaled when the bathroom door closed. "Jesus, that man is potent." She was a little afraid she wouldn't be able to keep up with him. She'd never really been into sex. It felt good, but nothing to write home about.

She knew he made her feel hotter than any other man ever did, but she didn't know if the sex would really be different.

Chapter Twenty

Gunner walked out of the bathroom and froze. He would remember that moment forever. She sat in the middle of the bed, slowly brushing her hair. It was a feminine thing he'd only seen his sister do a few times when they were growing up, and it never made him feel like that.

He'd wrapped a towel around his hips to appease her until he got her flat on her back and tucked under him. Her eyes skated to him as he turned off the overhead light but turned on the lamp on the nightstand.

Her eyes went back and forth. "Do we really have to have that on?"

He grinned and nodded. "Hell, yes. I want to see every part of you I'm touching. And your expressions as I fuck you."

Gunner lay down on his side toward her and rested his head on his palm. He waited, watched her for another minute, and guessed she was trying to delay them. "Are you about done?"

He held out a hand. He grinned when she sighed and handed it over. He set it on the nightstand and then pulled her against him. Before she had a chance to take a breath, his lips covered hers and devoured her. Her taste went to his head, and her scent made his cock harder than ever before.

The kiss seemed to last forever, but he wanted to taste more of her. He slid down until he got to her neck. A smile crossed his face when she shivered, and her nails started to dig into his shoulders.

From her neck, he went to her breasts and spent a long time attending to them, and he didn't stop until her nipples were hard and red. She gasped when his tongue probed her belly button. Fuck, even that was beautiful. There was nothing about her that didn't appeal to him.

Gunner pried her legs apart, ignoring her when she tried to push him away. He grinned, like that could happen. He was finally in his little heaven. It would take a bomb to get him away from her right now.

He used one hand to separate her cunt lips and then blew on her swollen clit. She screamed, just about jackknifed off the bed, and then collapsed against the mattress. Jesus. She was incredibly sensitive, and he would have fun making her come repeatedly. He wouldn't hurt or even make her sore but would be in her body somewhere whenever he could.

"Let's see how my finger does."

His one finger glided into her cunt, making them both groan. "Jesus, Babe, you're so fucking tight."

One of her hands gripped the blanket under them, and her eyes were closed tightly. "Look at me."

He waited for a moment. "Okay, let's see how two fingers feel."

She tried to protest, but he was already working his fingers into her.

"Ahhh," she cried out.

"Does this hurt?" he asked.

She nodded and then shook her head, making him grin.

He spent a long time stretching her and pushing her to a level of desire that would help him get into her. When he could work three fingers into her, he pulled out and reached for the condom under the pillow.

He rolled the rubber on and was in between her legs within a minute. He cupped her face in one hand, and the other went to her hip to keep her steady.

"Just relax."

"Gunner..."

He didn't like the anxiety he heard in her tone. "Are you in pain?"

She shook her head. "It's just ... so much."

"You can take me. We'll take it slow this first time." He slowly worked his cock into her. When he got it all in, sweat rolled down his back and forehead. He couldn't describe the feeling at that moment. The closest he could describe it was their souls were being affected. He was content at the same time, hornier than ever before.

Gunner had no idea how he could hold still when every cell in his body screamed to fuck her. The slow glide in and out didn't last long before both were moaning, and she was begging for more.

"Please, Gunner..."

"Shhh, Babe. Everything's okay."

He bent down and kissed her lips as his hips worked to push her over. He felt the tingling start in his spine, and his balls swell.

"Come for me," he demanded.

He could see her struggle against the pleasure. That wasn't going to happen. He reached under her and used one of his thick fingers to spear into her tight ass. She screamed and immediately tightened on his cock. He could feel her lose control and started pounding into her.

"That's it. Another one."

She shook her head, and her breath was billowing out of her throat. "I can't."

“The fuck you can’t. Let’s try this.”

Before she had time to tighten, he pushed two fingers into her ass, sending her right over. He pounded into her a few more times and finally let himself go.

He couldn’t seem to get close enough. His strength left his body, and his forehead dropped to her shoulder.

His cock was still in her cunt and his fingers in her ass, but it was next to impossible for him to get the strength to move. He did have the presence of mind to keep his weight off her.

He hummed when he felt her hands stroking his back. It was exactly what he needed to settle.

“I’ll be right back,” he said. He pressed a quick kiss to her lips and pulled his fingers and cock out of her. He rolled to his feet and walked into the bathroom. He pulled the condom off and wrapped it in a tissue before washing his hands.

When he returned to the bedroom, she was on her side, facing away from him. He didn’t know what the hell that was about, but he’d find out. He got comfortable and then pulled her around and against his chest. He tilted her head when she tried tucking it against his body.

“What’s up?”

She murmured something he didn’t hear.

“Tell me. Did I hurt you?”

She shook her head. “No. It’s just that you did things to me I’ve never done before, and I…”

He nudged her when she stopped. “And you what?”

“Liked it.”

He smiled. “You’re supposed to like it. I made you feel good.” It wasn’t really a question because he already knew he did.

“Yes.”

“That’s all that matters, Babe. What we do in this room is between us. If we’re not hurting each other or anyone else, we can do whatever we want.”

She looked up and studied him before she nodded.

“Good,” he said. He pressed his lips against hers. “Because I’m going to be in you one way or another as much as I can.”

He chuckled when she blushed. The only people he’d seen blush were the old ladies, and he always found it charming.

“Get some sleep.”

She nodded and laid her arm over his chest before closing her eyes. He heard her breathing deepen and slow, telling him she was asleep.

He was tired, too, but he wanted to go over how fucking her made him feel. He wasn't happy about it, but he didn't know how to stop himself from his emotions. Maybe he'd get the courage to ask the other guys. He had to do something because he couldn't see the emotions going away, and he certainly wasn't going to stop fucking her.

He never expected this, and it didn't sit right with him. He was too tired to speculate. There was always time the next day.

Chapter Twenty-One

The next morning, Jana awoke pressed against his hot body. She listened for a moment and heard his deep breathing before she started to maneuver herself out from under his arm and bed.

Jana tiptoed into the closet, grabbed some clothing, and entered the bathroom. She took a quick shower before dressing. She peeked out to see Gunner had rolled onto his side, facing the other way. She didn't take a full breath until she'd slowly closed the bedroom door behind her.

Jana walked into the kitchen to find some women already there. "What can I help with?"

The women stared at her and grinned.

"What?" she asked.

Meg snorted. "You must not have seen the hickeys Gunner put on your neck."

Jana's hand rose to her neck. She hadn't looked at herself in the mirror before coming down, so she hadn't seen anything.

"That rat," she hissed, walked into the bathroom, and lifted her face to inspect her neck. Sure enough, several hickeys on her neck stood out starkly against her pale skin.

Alicia came in, stood behind her, and smiled. "The girls and I have speculated that they do mark us, especially in the beginning, to show the other guys you're taken and to keep their hands off."

"It's like a biker ritual?" Jana asked sarcastically.

Alicia laughed. "Something like that. I have some makeup you can use."

"Yes, I want to hide as much as possible." She studied them in the mirror. "Damn him, I've never in my life had a hickey."

Alicia grinned. "I'll be right back."

Jana was looking for the marks on her neck when the bathroom door closed, and she heard the lock. She spun around to see Gunner. "Hey."

He tilted his head forward and crossed his arms over his chest.

"Are you going to say anything?" she asked nervously when he stayed silent.

"You left our bedroom."

She looked confused. "Yes. I wanted to help in the kitchen, and I wanted you to get some more rest."

“I don’t like that.”

“Like what?”

“You leaving and me not knowing.”

“Okay,” she said sarcastically.

His eyes narrowed, and he took a few steps forward, and his hands went to her shoulders.

“Cut the attitude, Babe. I don’t want you to leave the room without me knowing. You got it?”

She pressed her lips together. She didn’t know how to deal with this situation, so she didn’t want to say anything. They were still a new couple, and she didn’t know how far she could press this biker.

His grip tightened, and he opened his mouth when there was a knock at the door.

“What?” he barked.

“I’ve got the makeup Jana wants.”

“For what?”

Jana’s mouth turned down. “For all the hickeys you put on my neck.”

He scowled down at her. “You’re not covering them up.”

She stomped her foot, making him smile. “Yes, I am. It’s indecent.”

He snorted. “Let me put it this way. If I see makeup on your neck, I’ll just take it off.”

She growled. “You’re being a jerk.”

She smiled when Alicia laughed and called through the door. “So, I guess you don’t need the makeup?”

“Yes!” Jana said.

At the same time, Gunner yelled, “No!”

“Keep it up, Babe. And you’ll end up tied to our bed.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” Jana said.

“Wanna bet?”

She grunted and said something under her breath.

“What was that?” Gunner asked.

“Nothing.”

“You can push me all you want, but be prepared for the ramifications.”

“Fine.” She crossed her arms over her chest.

He studied her suspiciously. “And you’re not changing your shirt to something that hides the hickeys.”

That's exactly what she was going to do, but she'd never admit it. "I wouldn't think of it."

He wrapped his arms around her. "Now, you may give me my morning kiss."

Jana wanted to kick him in the shin but decided it would be a bad move. She went up to her tiptoes and pressed her lips to his. It didn't take a second before he took over. He cupped the back of her head to keep it where he wanted it, and the other went to her ass.

He lifted his head and stared down at her. "Jesus, woman. You are driving me crazy."

"Is that bad or good?" she asked breathlessly.

"I would say good, but it makes it difficult for me to concentrate."

She smiled. She liked the sound of that.

He bent and started to nuzzle her neck. "Are you sore?"

She nodded.

He smiled at the red tint of embarrassment that covered her face. "I'm sorry, Babe. Once you get used to me, you won't have that problem."

She hoped not. It made just walking uncomfortable. "I should get out there and help."

He kissed her again. "Go. I'll find you later."

Jana nodded and walked through the door he opened. She looked over her shoulder to see him staring at her ass. She wanted to say something, but there were too many people around. Maybe she'd say something later. Or not.

The rest of the day sped by. Jana stayed with the women all day, but Gunner would find her and kiss her before moving on. He took every opportunity to touch her, and although she loved it, it also scrambled her brain for a minute, making the other women laugh.

Jana couldn't help laughing with them. She'd never had girlfriends like this and would miss them when she left. Maybe she and Gunner could still see each other if he wanted, and he could bring her here to see the girls.

It was something she'd bring up later. For now, she'd wait it out.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Jana was walking through the main room when one of the sluts stopped her.

“Hey, bitch, Gunner needs you out front.”

Jana narrowed her eyes at Cherry. The woman was rotten through and through, and Jana didn't trust her. Jana saw the bag at her feet. “Are you going somewhere?”

Cherry smirked. “I'm moving on. I'm bored with the men here.”

Jana smiled. “It's probably best. They've been sick of you for a while.”

Cherry's face darkened, and pure hate filled her eyes as she stepped forward. “You fucking cunt. Someday, you'll regret coming here. I just wish I could see it.”

Jana rolled her eyes. “Where's Gunner?”

“He was talking to someone by the fence.”

Jana's instincts told her to be careful.

“Hey, where are you going?” Willow asked when she saw Jana head for the door.

“Cherry said Gunner wanted to see me.”

Willow's eyes narrowed. “Oh, really.” She glanced at the slut, and something hard crossed her face.

“Jesus, what is with you cunts? You're scared of your fucking shadows. He just wants to talk.”

“I'll go with you,” Willow said.

“No!” Cherry burst out and then calmed. “I mean, he only asked for her.”

“We'll take care of it,” Willow said. “I see you're on your way out, so get going, and please don't come back.”

Cherry cursed and picked up her bag. “All you bitches will pay.”

Willow snorted. “I'll be waiting. Now go.”

Cherry headed for the door. Jana didn't understand the fear the woman tried to hide.

Willow tossed her head. “Let's see what Cherry has planned.”

“Should we get a guy?” Jana asked.

Willow grunted. “Those pussies. No, we'll take care of it.”

Jana took the knife Willow handed her. “Just in case.”

“You carry a knife with you?” Jana asked.

Willow grinned. “A few of them. I also have a gun in my boot.”

Jana laughed. “You’re amazing. I want to be like you when I grow up.”

Willow chuckled and wrapped her arm around Jana’s. “Let’s go before someone stops us.”

“You’re really enjoying this, aren’t you?” Jana smirked.

“Yup.”

They stood just outside the front door. They looked at each other when they heard a car peel out on the other side of the gate.

Willow whispered in her ear as they walked toward the tall metal gate. “I’m going to act helpless, so don’t let it throw you off.”

Jana smiled and prepared herself. They both turned after passing through the opening. Jana felt Willow tense when they saw a guy hiding behind a tree. He came toward them rapidly, not giving her time to brace herself.

“You fucking cunt,” the man growled as he reached for her.

She saw the gun in his hands and felt fear stiffen her. She regretted letting Willow come. Now, she was in danger.

It took a moment for Jana to recognize the man. It was the one that threatened Cody.

“What do you want?” Jana asked and then grimaced when he grabbed her arm tightly.

“I want both of you to come with me. This cunt and I have things to talk about, and that little slut next to you can entertain me after. I’ve been waiting for this.”

Jana dug her heels in when he tried to pull her. “Wait, are you the one that attacked me?”

The man looked pissed and started to look nervous. “Fuck. Yeah.”

A realization came to Jana suddenly, making her fight to tear away from the man. “You tortured and killed my cat.”

The man laughed. “Yeah. It was entertaining.”

Jana saw a red haze of hate fill her eyes. She remembered the knife Willow had given her and stuck it in his leg. The man cried out and dropped to the ground.

“That little cut won’t make you bleed out, but the things I’m going to do to you...” Jana said.

Willow whooped as she picked up the guy's gun. "What's your plan?"

She looked at Willow. "I want some time with him alone."

Willow snorted. "I think you've got a minute before the guys will surround us."

Hell. Jana kicked the man in the side when he tried to crawl away. "You're going to feel the same pain you put that innocent animal through. People like you shouldn't be on this earth."

Jana got on the man's back and used her fists to pound on the guy.

"Your time's up," Willow said and laughed.

Jana heard several men yelling but ignored them.

"What the fuck..."

Someone yanked her off the man. She fought to get back to him.

"Let me go. I'm not done!" she yelled.

The person squeezed her around the middle. "Enough, Babe. You're done."

Jana collapsed against him. "Just one more minute. He's the one that hurt and killed my cat and beat me up."

"He'll be taken care of," Striker said as some of the guys lifted the hurt man and started to carry him off.

"Wait!" Jana yelled. "I promised I'd make him feel the pain Snookie my cat felt."

"And he will. I'll make sure of it," Gunner said.

"Why can't I?"

Willow snorted. "Because they never let us have any fun."

Gunner turned to Jana to face him and kept his hands on her shoulders to keep her there. "Have you ever hurt a person?"

"Well, no. But that..."

"Have you ever watched one be tortured and killed?" Gunner asked.

Jana's shoulders drooped. "No."

"Let me take care of this. You'll regret it if you do it. You're angry now, but you'll feel terrible about it later."

"But isn't that my d..."

He shook his head. "No. Babe, your career is to take care of hurt people. This will affect you harder than most."

"In my office," Striker said behind them. "You too, Willow. I want to know what you had to do with this."

Jana was glad when Willow pressed her lips together and followed them into the house.

“What happened?” Kristina said.

“I’ll tell you later, Babe,” Striker said and kissed her hard on the lips before walking away. “Someone get Blood and tell him to come to the office.”

Gunner pulled her along, and her stomach got tighter with every step closer to the office.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Jana stiffened when the office door closed behind them, leaving Striker, Feral, Gunner, Willow, and her. The room was pretty big, but the abundance of hostile testosterone made it feel like there was no air or room to move around. It didn't help that Gunner hadn't taken his hand off of her.

Striker took a seat behind the massive desk while Feral sat on a corner of it.

"Talk," Striker barked.

Jana looked around and saw that everyone was looking at her. She cleared her throat. "Cherry stopped me in the main room. She said Gunner needed me out by the gate. I was suspicious, of course."

"But you didn't think to call for one of the guys?" Striker asked.

"I was still dealing with the slut," Jana said. She turned and smiled at Willow. "And then Willow walked up."

"You heard what the slut said?" Feral asked Willow.

Willow shrugged. "I think most of it."

"What then?" Striker asked Jana.

"I knew something was up by the way she acted."

"Again, why did you not call one of the guys?" Striker said. "We've got close to forty of them, for fuck's sake."

"Because I had Willow," Jana said.

All three men cursed, and Willow grinned.

Striker looked at Gunner. "You deal with that later."

Gunner nodded.

"So, Cherry left, and we followed a minute later. We heard a car peel out, and then nothing. Willow and I walked around the fence, and a guy was hiding behind a tree just a few feet away. Before we could react, he gripped me and tried dragging me away. I had him talking, and that's when he told me he was the one who tortured and killed my cat and beat me. I kind of lost it. I stuck him with the knife I got from Willow."

The men turned to Willow and glared. Willow wasn't affected by it at all. Jana really wished she had Willow's courage.

"Go on," Striker said.

Jana cleared her throat again. "So, I stuck him in the leg. Nothing serious because I didn't want him to die yet. He fell to the ground yelling, Willow picked up the gun, and I started whaling on him."

Jana glared at Gunner over her shoulder. “I would have kept going if someone hadn’t torn me away from my playtime.”

Willow hooted, and the men growled.

“Jesus Christ. These women are getting into more trouble than our guys ever did,” Striker said.

“Or maybe we’re not causing problems, but fixing them before you dickhead guys can,” Willow said snidely, crossing her arms over her chest.

“Jesus. Feral, get Blood in here.”

Feral went to the door and called out. The door was jerked open before he sat back down, and Blood came through.

“What’s up, Bos — oh shit,” he said when he saw his woman. “What did she do now?”

Jana watched Willow’s eyes narrow. “Do you want to put that another way?”

Blood faced off against her. “No.”

The look on the man’s face scared the shit out of her, but it seemed just to turn Willow on. They were both crazy.

“Oh, hell,” Striker said.

Jana felt sorry for the prez because he had so many people to watch over, and some acted like toddlers.

“Get her out of here,” Feral said. “You can deal with her.”

“Oh, I’ll definitely do that,” Blood said and lunged for Willow. She couldn’t get away, and the man was fast. He threw her over his shoulder as she screamed at him and walked out. Her voice faded, and then the room went silent.

“What are you going to do with her?” Striker asked, pointing at her.

Her mouth dropped open. “What do you mean? I’m perfectly fine. I’d be better if you let me at him for a few minutes.”

“Not going to happen. We already discussed this, Babe,” Gunner said.

Jana’s chin rose, and she crossed her arms over her chest. “Well, it sucks, and it’s not fair.”

She looked at the other men to see them fight not to laugh.

“You do what you think is best,” Feral said. “Have you gone over the rules for the women?”

Gunner shook his head. “No. I didn’t expect my woman to attack and stab a man.”

“Well, that would be good to go over,” Striker said. “Now that you

know she's as crazy as the rest of them."

Jana gasped in outrage. "Crazy!"

Gunner put a hand over her mouth, which she tried to pry off.

"I'll take her up. I'd like to ... talk with the guy."

Striker nodded. "That's to be expected. We need to send a few guys out to find Cherry."

"Why?" Jana asked.

"She's partly responsible for what happened. I'd like to talk to her," Striker said.

For some reason, Jana didn't believe him. She'd ask the other women later.

Gunner started moving her out the door. "I'll be back down."

He dragged her up the stairs and into their room. He released her and locked the door.

She turned to face him, ready to argue.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Gunner studied Jana. He could tell she was nervous but ready to tear into him. "Get naked."

Her mouth dropped open. "What?"

"Get naked and on the bed."

"We're going to have sex. Right now?"

"No. I'm going to start your punishment before I go deal with the guy," Gunner said. "The longer you wait, the harder it will be."

She reluctantly stripped off her clothes and lay back on the mattress.

He didn't remove his clothes but spread her legs wide and made a place for himself.

"Wait. What are you doing?" she asked.

He used his thumbs to separate her pussy lips. "I can't do a regular punishment because it's my fault you don't know the rules. After tonight, you will. But I can make you uncomfortable until I get back."

"I don't think..."

"I don't want you to think." He bent forward and blew on her clit, making her scream. He set out to make her as needy as possible, and then he'd leave for a while.

He used his fingers and tongue to drive her crazy. He wanted her to beg him.

"Gunner."

"A little bit more."

Her eyes were glazed, and her hips couldn't stay still. He stood at the end of the bed.

"I'll be back in a while."

He almost smiled at her gasp of outrage.

"You're going to leave me like this?" she asked.

"Yes. It's uncomfortable, but it won't hurt you. If I find you made yourself come, I'll have you like this all night. I won't let you come until morning."

"You jerk."

"Hey, I could have stuffed a butt plug up your ass and left you like that." He knew part of her irritation was because she needed to come, and her body ached.

Gunner bent over her and pressed his lips against her. He knew the

moment she tasted herself because her first instinct was to flinch away, and when he didn't let her, he felt her melt and reach for him.

He stood and stepped back. "No touching. I want to see you exactly like this when I get back. If not, just know I'll get you this hot and needy and then not do anything about it for hours. I'll do this all night long."

"You bastard," she hissed.

He bit his lip to prevent himself from smiling. "I'll be back."

Gunner walked out of the room and then chuckled softly when she started cursing him.

His happy mood changed when he was let into the place where they kept the people they wanted to "question." It was deep into the woods around their home and had a camouflaged steel door, making it nearly invisible. A person would have to know it's in the area if they had a chance of finding it.

Striker, Chains, and Stone were in the room. The man had his hands tied and hung on a hook in the ceiling. He was bloody but still able to curse and yell profanities at them.

"What's the plan?" he asked Striker.

Striker leaned against the wall with his arms crossed over his chest, looking like he had all the time in the world. "Go at him. It was your woman he messed with."

Gunner grinned and cracked his knuckles.

An hour later, the man was barely alive and now just begging to die. He said they got the information about Cherry helping him, and then she was going to travel out of the area.

Gunner wiped the blood off his hands and removed the bib overalls that protected his clothing from splattered blood.

"Are you going to finish him?" Striker asked.

"No. I want him to suffer and die slowly. It won't take long. He's losing a lot of blood."

The others nodded and followed him outside. They walked silently up to the house. When they got to the back door, he grinned.

"If you hear screaming, ignore it," Gunner said.

The others laughed and wished him luck.

Gunner's first look at Jana made his cock harden instantly. Her body had a thin layer of sweat and a rosy flush of desire. Her look was part fury when she saw him, and the other was pleading for him.

"Hey," he said as he pulled off his clothing. "I'm going to take a

quick shower, and then I'll make you feel better."

"Hurry, dammit."

He waited until the bathroom door was closed before grinning.

Within a few minutes, he walked out of the bathroom with a towel wrapped around his waist. He turned off all the lights except the one on the nightstand before lying beside her.

She immediately rolled toward him and started to run her hands over him.

"Are you going to make me feel better now?"

She tried to sound sweet, but she talked through her teeth, ruining the effect.

His hand cupped her face. "Yes. I hope you won't put yourself in danger again. The next time will be harsh."

She rolled him to his back, making him chuckle. He liked her aggression but only gave her a few minutes to play before taking over.

"Oh, fuck," he said when her hands and face moved down his body. His body tensed when she held his cock in her small hands. When her mouth took him in, he had to grit his teeth and grab the blanket under him to hold back from coming.

No matter how good it felt. He wanted to come inside of her cunt.

He reached down and pulled her up to his chest.

"Hey," she yelled.

"Another time. I'm too fucking close." He gripped the hair on the back of her head and started kissing her with all the pent-up desire.

His hand started to stroke over her body. He knew she didn't need a lot of foreplay because she was already past the need and was at the "fuck me now" stage.

He rolled until he was between her legs. He lined his cock up to her pussy and slammed into her. She instantly orgasmed, and he knew her scream could be heard. He continued to ram into her, forcing her need to rise and making her fly. The fourth time he worked her, she was tired and begging for him to stop.

"One more time," he said.

"Oh, God. I can't."

He pulled out, flipped her to her stomach, and raised her hips. It was a different feeling for her when he thrust into her this time. She was so close already, but he could tell she was fighting it.

“Come, Babe.”

She shook her head. “It’s too much.”

“The hell it is,” he growled. He pulled out and started to push his cock into her ass. He had played but had yet to fuck it, but he knew she needed the extra pinch to throw her over.

It didn’t take a minute after he worked his way into her that she was screaming again. His fingers dug into her hips to hold her steady as he pushed through. When she dropped her head, and her ass let up on his cock a bit, he rode her with every bit of savage need he had.

A deep groan tore from his mouth as he started to come. It seemed like it would never end until finally his balls were empty.

He took a few minutes to settle and gain some of his strength back. He pulled out and gently laid her on her side. “I’ll be right back.” He showered and then wet a washcloth. When he returned to the bedroom, she was out and didn’t move as he cleaned her.

After turning off the light, he lay down and lifted her against his body. He tucked her tightly against his chest, exhaled, and fell asleep.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Jana stood around the corner at the top of the stairs and watched not one but two sluts hang all over Gunner. What hurt was that he didn't do anything about it. He just kept talking to another guy.

The other guy asked about Jana, and Gunner said something that made the other guy laugh. She wished she had heard it, but on the other hand, maybe not. She was already hurting enough. She had hoped Gunner was gone so she didn't have to see him. But now she had to walk past him. She didn't want to wait because she wanted to be with her friend before it got dark.

She took a deep breath and descended the stairs. She kept her eyes down at a paper she was carrying. She saw the one guy nudge Gunner and point, and she felt Gunner's eyes follow her, but she ignored him, and he didn't call out.

She found some of the girls out at the picnic table. The questions started the moment she sat down.

"What the hell is going on?" Meg asked.

"I need your help. I have to leave."

"Why?" Kristina asked.

"Because Gunner is sick of me, and I can't stay around and watch him with the sluts."

"What makes you think he wants them?" Alicia asked.

"Because he has two of them on his lap right now and ignored the fact that I was in the room."

"Motherfucker," Willow said.

Kristina gripped her hand. "They've been on their own for so long it's hard for some of them to let go of what they're used to."

"I get it. I'm not mad. I just wish he'd said something. I already knew it was over since he didn't come to bed the last few nights, and I hadn't talked to him in a few days. He usually tries to find me. I knew it was temporary, but now I feel like an idiot."

"Don't you dare," Meg said. "You have nothing to be ashamed about."

"I should have left a week ago. I have to get back to work anyway. My boss said to come in when I'm ready."

"He hasn't said anything about you staying?" Kristina asked.

Jana shook her head. "Nothing. Look, I'm going to be okay. I've got

my career, you guys, and my friend, another nurse, said I can crash with her until I find a place.”

“They’re all assholes,” Willow said.

Jana blinked to keep the tears away. “I’m going to miss you guys.”

The women huddled together.

“Maybe Striker will let us visit?” Kristina said.

Meg snorted. “You have to be surrounded by men just to go to the grocery store.”

Kristina sighed and nodded.

Alicia gripped her hand. “What do you need from us?”

“My furniture and things are at some warehouse. How do I get those when I need them? I will also have to leave some of my things here, but I’ll call and see the best way to get them. I’ll have them stacked by the door in Gunner’s room. I hope he won’t throw them away. I don’t have the strength to take everything right now.”

“Call here, and I’ll have you talk to Striker. He knows where they’re at and will know what to do.”

“I’ll go pack. It won’t take me long. I’ll call an Uber...”

“One of the guys can drive you,” Alicia said.

“No. I don’t want them to know where I’m going.”

They all hugged again.

Jana was amazed at the tears in Willow’s eyes.

“At least call us so we can talk over the phone.”

“I will. I love you guys.”

Jana stood and walked inside. It took all her energy to keep from crying and look normal as she passed a bunch of people. A few scowled when they saw her face. She didn’t even try to look for Gunner. She didn’t want a face-to-face goodbye and planned on writing a quick note.

She hurried up to Gunner’s room, closed, and locked the door. The first thing she did was call Uber. She didn’t hesitate but grabbed her big bag and stuffed the things she’d need for a few days. She’d have to have the girls send her the rest, and either she could pick them up or they could send them.

She looked for paper and a pen for the note.

I wanted to thank you for letting me stay this long. It’s time to go back to work and get out of your hair. Take care of yourself. Jana

She set it on his nightstand and looked around one more time before leaving the room. She walked down the stairs and hurried to the door because

she saw a few guys who looked confused, and she didn't have the strength to answer them. She ignored the few voices that called out to her.

She got outside the gate and started walking. She told the Uber person to look for her. Within ten minutes, the car pulled up.

"Are you Jana?" the guy asked.

"Yes."

"I'm Carl, your Uber driver. Do you need help with the bag?"

She shook her head. "No. I'm good. Thank you."

"I'm glad I came quickly. You're within a mile of a big bike club. From what I hear, they're vicious."

"I'm sure they are." She gave him the address to Mick's place and sat back. She tried to blank out her head because she didn't want to deal with any memories until she was safely tucked away and alone, but it was getting harder as the minutes passed.

They pulled up to an apartment building. Jana handed the man the fare and a tip. "Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Jana carried the heavy bag up a set of stairs and to Mick's place. Fortunately, she had a key from when she took care of her mail and plants while she was away on a trip the year before.

Jana took the second bedroom and tossed the bag on the bed. Her friend wouldn't get off work for several hours, so she had time to herself. She curled up into a ball and cried. She needed to release some of the tension and pressure inside her. She had no idea how long she lay there, but she finally stopped crying and rested.

A knock on the apartment door woke her from her nap. It was dark outside, so it had been a few hours since she had gotten to Mick's. The lights were off in the apartment, so it looked like no one was home.

The person pounded on the door a few times, and it started to scare her. She rummaged through her bag for her phone and had it ready to dial 911.

After another minute, the person finally gave up.

The sound of a motorcycle starting had her rush to the window. She saw five bikers but couldn't tell who they were.

The sound faded, but it left a hollow feeling inside of her. She needed to regain her life and knew she'd be okay.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Gunner knocked again. "Goddammit. Where the fuck are you, Jana?"

He finally gave up and left. The four guys that came with him sat quietly and waited. They knew his emotions were volatile and didn't want to lose some teeth if they pissed him off or looked at him the wrong way.

He looked at the second-story window before starting his bike and returning to the club.

He wasn't going to give up. He knew he was a fucker for hurting her. He'd been trying to get her to say how she felt about him. She acted like they were roomies until he had his hands on her. He knew it was childish, but he wanted to make her jealous, and then maybe she'd open up.

He also knew he should share his feelings with her, but he'd never done that before, and it frankly scared him because he knew he'd fuck it up. He never thought he'd fall in love with her. It was supposed to be temporary.

Well, because of the stunt with the sluts, he'd lost her. He wasn't giving up, but knowing she wouldn't even try to keep him still hurt. Not even talk to him. She took the cowardly way and wrote a note which he had in the pocket of his vest. He wouldn't get rid of it until he had her back in his arms.

A week passed, and he got a little more anxious every day. He was biting people's heads off if they tried to talk to him.

Gunner sat in a chair around the bonfire and stared at the flames.

"Hey, man," Stone said when he sat beside him. "I have an idea, but you have to be desperate."

He'd take anything right then. "What is it?"

"You need to hurt yourself bad enough to go to the ER for stitches. You suspect she's hiding when you go to see her. She won't be able to stay away if you're a patient."

It was a great idea. "Thank you. I'll go now." He knew she was there because he got her schedule.

"Wait. What are you going to do to yourself?"

Gunner hadn't thought that far ahead. "I don't know, cut my arm maybe."

"Or your injury could be farther down, so you'd have to remove your jeans."

"Fuck, that's going to hurt,"

"Stop being a pussy. I'll do it if you want."

Gunner grunted. “Hell, no. You’re not getting close to my cock or balls with a sharp object.”

Stone snorted. “Then your outer thigh.”

“I can do that.”

“Wait until you get close so you don’t lose too much blood. I’ll ride with you.”

Gunner pulled his knife out to see how sharp it was. “Get a few more guys, and I’ll meet you out by the bikes.”

Stone nodded. “You got it.”

Gunner walked to the open office door and knocked.

“Come in,” Striker said. “What’s up?”

“My little lady is being sneaky. She hides when I’m close, but Stone had the idea of cutting myself bad enough to get stitches in the ER. Then she can’t ignore me.”

Feral laughed. “Drastic measures...”

“Jesus. There’s no other way?” Striker asked.

“I’ve tried waiting at the apartment she’s staying at, but she gets by me. When I go to the hospital, she’s nowhere to be seen even though I know she’s working.”

Striker nodded. “Go do what you have to do. Just don’t fuck yourself up enough that you can’t work.”

“I won’t.”

Feral called out at him when he walked out. “Good luck.”

Fuck. Yeah, he was going to need it.

Some guys were waiting for him on their bikes. He nodded at them and then got on his own. When they got a few blocks from the hospital, he slid his knife out, and not stopping to think, he cut a three-inch long gash that was definitely deep enough for stitches because blood was saturating his jeans. Fuck, that stung.

They pulled and parked. Stone and Iron would go in with him. The last few would stay out in the parking lot. “Dammit.”

Stone glanced at him. “What?”

“These were my favorite jeans.”

Stone laughed until they got to her entrance. “Now act pitiful.”

“Fuck, this better be worth it,” Gunner said.

Stone smacked his shoulder. “It’s worth it.”

Gunner took a breath and limped into the ER. A nurse ran to him.

“Let’s get you into a room.”

The woman “helped” him walk to a cubicle.

“Can you get up on the table by yourself?” she asked.

Gunner scowled at his friends when they laughed and tried to hide it.

“Yeah, I got this.”

“I’ll get your information, but could I look at the injury to see if it needs immediate attention?”

Hell, he hadn’t thought of anyone seeing him except Jana. “Yeah.”

“I’ll cut the jean leg off.”

He nodded.

She quickly sliced off the leg, and threw the piece of fabric in a corner. He was left looking like an idiot.

“Can you lay down, sir?”

He started to scowl.

Stone piped in, hiding a grin. “I think it’s best if you lay down. You’re looking a little pale.”

Right away, the nurse was pushing him down.

The damn thing was so uncomfortable. He was too big for the bed, and it felt like he’d fall off the side if he moved.

“This is deep. I’ll get the PA. You’re losing a lot of blood.”

The nurse scurried out and closed the curtain for privacy. She was back a moment later with a bag of liquid.

“What the fuck is that?” Gunner asked, pulling his arm away when she tried to lay it flat.

“Glucose. You’ve lost a lot of blood, so our PA wants an IV put in.”

Gunner glared over her shoulder at Stone, who had a hand over his mouth, but his eyes were tearing, trying to hold back his laughter.

“Lady, this isn’t that serious,” Gunner said.

“Sir, if you move, I won’t be able to find a vein.”

When he opened his mouth to bark at her, Jana walked in.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Jana froze when she saw Gunner on the bed. Jesus. She had not expected to see him there.

Her eyes went over him. When she saw his injury, her medical training reared.

“Hey, guys,” Jana said to the other two standing.

“Hey, Jana.”

The nurse looked at her with wide eyes. “You know them?”

“Yes.”

“Some more than others,” Stone said.

The nurse looked confused.

Jana lifted the gauze the nurse had put over it, looked at the cut, and probed it around the edges. “What happened?”

“He cut himself,” Stone said.

Jana snorted and waved the nurse away when she tried to help. “I figured that, but how?”

“With his knife,” Iron said.

Jana rolled her eyes. They wouldn’t give her any information, so she stopped asking.

She looked at the mess the nurse had made because of him. There were several pads with blood on them and several holes in his arm from where she missed getting a vein.

“He won’t stay still,” the nurse said. “I couldn’t get an IV in.”

“I’ll do it, Cami. Will you go get me a suture kit, please?”

The nurse walked out.

Gunner watched Jana throw the bloody things in the garbage before pressing down on his arm. He was shocked to see the needle already in and her taping it to his arm.

“I don’t need this, Babe,” Gunner said.

“You’ll get an IV because you’ve lost blood. And don’t call me Babe.”

If her tone of voice got any colder, he’d have icicles on his nose. From the look on his handsome face, he knew she was pissed. She was pretending mostly. She wasn’t really mad at him anymore since Kristina called her. She told her about Gunner trying to make her jealous so she’d show him she cared. Now, he knows he fucked up, but she did, too. She

admits she held her emotions back to protect herself, but he hadn't shown anything either.

She knew he'd been trying to track her down for over a week, but she enjoyed making it hard for him. She planned on stopping by there during the weekend. She guessed he'd pull her aside for some alone time, and then they could figure it out.

The nurse came back with a large tray. A cloth was over the top to hide the instruments she'd use. That made him nervous, which made her smile. Jana pulled on gloves. The snapping sound at the end seemed to make him tense.

Jana was adjusting the IV.

"What are you doing?" Gunner asked, curious.

She glanced at him. "If you'd like another medical personnel, I can find one. I have plenty of other patients."

"Fuck. No. I want you."

"I don't care how mad I am at a person. I took an oath to heal, not maim."

"Except the one time," Stone pointed out.

Jana glared at Stone. "Stick it, Stone."

Stone laughed, Gunner grinned, and the nurse looked horrified.

"Jana," the nurse whispered close to Jana's ear. "Should you be talking to them like that?"

Jana rolled her eyes. "It's fine. They see all the fun things I get to play with." Her hand waved over the tray, which looked like torture devices and all of them sharp. "I doubt they'd try to hurt me."

Jana lifted a syringe and stuck the needle into the tube going into the IV bag.

"What's that?"

She wanted to roll her eyes again. "It's a sedative."

He opened his mouth, but it snapped shut when he saw the look in her eyes. This was one way she could get back at him. She wouldn't hurt him, but she could make him uncomfortable.

"Can I sit up?" he asked.

Jana shook her head. "No."

"Have you had a tetanus shot in the last ten years?" Jana asked.

Gunner narrowed his eyes. "What the hell is that?"

"It helps prevent serious infections."

He relaxed, or at least tried to, against the pillow. She held up another syringe.

“What’s that?”

She pressed her lips together to keep from smiling. “This is an antibiotic shot.”

“I don’t need...”

She grinned and poked it into his arm.

“Jesus Christ. Be gentle, woman,” Gunner barked.

“I’ll try to do better with the next one.”

“I have to have another shot?”

“Yeah. The tetanus one.”

He cursed, making her happy.

“You’re going to feel a sting here.” Jana shot Novocain around the injury to numb it.

“What’s that?” Gunner asked.

“It will make it so you don’t feel the sutures,” Jana said. When she finished, she pulled off the gloves.

“Now what?”

Jana smiled. “You’re worse than my child patients. I’m giving it time to work so we can proceed.”

She took her clipboard from the nurse and wrote something down.

“I’ll be back. I’m going to check on a patient.”

After she closed the curtain, she pressed her hand to her mouth to keep from laughing out loud. He asked the nurse when she’d be back and why she couldn’t stay with him.

Jana did go check on a patient who was being discharged. She filed while she waited. She was giving it an extra minute or two just to freak him out.

She checked the time and walked back into the cubicle. “How’s that leg feeling?” she asked as she pulled on a pair of gloves.

“It’s fine,” he said.

“Good. Let’s get started.”

She had to bite her lip when he raised his head and shoulders, braced himself on his elbows, and watched every move she made.

When she finished, she smoothed some gel over it and then put on a thick bandage. She glanced at the IV bag and saw it was empty.

“The nurse will take that out.”

He grabbed onto her hand before she could leave. “Don’t go.”

“I won’t. I have to discharge you first.” She looked at the other two. “Hey, guys, with the sedative I gave him, he’s not going to be able to ride his bike back.”

Stone nodded. “I figured. I called the prez, and he’s sending some guys with a car, and one will ride back on Gunner’s bike.”

She nodded. She was waiting for him to make the next move. It would be interesting.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

He hated the way that shit she gave him made him feel. He was all woozy, and he kept forgetting what he would say. He'd taken some hard-core drugs in his life, but none affected him like this. All he knew was he wasn't leaving the hospital without her.

He watched the nurse clean up the area.

"She'll be right back. Call out if you need anything."

He waited until she was gone before he looked at the guys. "When Jana comes back, I want you both to close the curtain, stand outside, and prevent anyone from coming in while I talk to her."

"Should we catch her and bring her back if she tries to make a run for it?" Iron asked.

Gunner scowled. "Fuck off."

The other two laughed. Their discussion was cut short when Jana came back in. Gunner smiled when she hadn't noticed the other guys moving out of the cubicle. That was good. The more he surprised her, the more off-balance she'd become.

She stood beside the bed where he sat upright.

"Here are your papers." She grunted when he pulled her against him, wrapped his arms around her, and rolled them to the side, laying down.

"What the hell are you doing?" she asked, and she tried to push him away.

He knew it wouldn't get anywhere, so he waited until she settled.

When she did, he grabbed a chunk of her hair to hold her. "Listen to me, Babe. I fucked up, and I know it. Please come back to the club with me."

"Oh, I don't know..."

"I'll have someone take you home if you want to leave, but I'm hoping you'll stay at the club with me as my old lady after you hear what I have to say."

She looked surprised before a smile grew across her face. "Yes. I'll give you some time. But I will leave if you piss me off."

"I got it. Now give me a fucking kiss before I go nuts."

He pulled her to him and sealed his lips over hers. It felt like a second went by when he heard Stone clear his throat.

He lifted her away from him. "Go get your things and meet me out front."

“You’re lucky I’m getting off work right now. I’ll be right back.”

Gunner slid off the gurney and grabbed onto it when the room spun. Hell, that sedative was killer. He walked out. “Let’s go. She’ll meet us out in front.”

Stone pounded on his back. “Didn’t I tell you it was a good idea?”

Gunner rolled his eyes. He was going to hear about this for a while.

The car had pulled up, and Taz was waiting for them. The rest of the guys would ride the bikes back.

“How’s your owie?” Taz asked.

“Fuck off,” Gunner said.

Taz laughed.

Gunner watched Jana walk toward him. He helped her into the back seat before sliding in after her. He wrapped an arm around her and tucked her tightly against his body.

“So, how did you accidentally cut yourself?” she asked.

Taz started laughing hysterically.

“What’s going on?” Jana asked.

Gunner cleared his throat. “It wasn’t exactly an accident.”

Her brows puckered in confusion. “Then how?”

“I cut myself.”

“Yes, I know that part. What were you doing at the time?”

“Riding to the ER.”

“So, your knife poked you?”

He sighed and gave Taz a mean look when he started laughing again.

“I did it on purpose.”

She looked even more confused. “I don’t understand.”

“I took my knife out and intentionally cut my leg.”

“For God’s sake, why would you do that?”

“To get close to you.”

She stared at him for a long time, and his fear rose as the seconds ticked.

A smile grew over her face. “That’s the most romantic thing anyone has ever done for me.”

Taz started choking, and Gunner chuckled before he tilted back her head to kiss her.

“Leave it up to you to do a stupid stunt, and it really worked,” Taz said grumpily.

Gunner laughed but didn't talk again. When they pulled into the compound, he exhaled in relief that he finally got her back where she belonged. Now, he just had to keep her there.

One Week Later

Jana pulled Gunner into the kitchen. "Alicia, can you take his sutures out?"

"Why? You know how to do it," she said.

Jana rolled her eyes. "He pissed me off earlier and is afraid I'd hurt him."

Alicia sputtered out a laugh. "Okay. Where?"

"He can sit on the table if that would be easier for you to reach."

"I'm not scared, for fuck's sake, but her with a knife that close to my cock makes me a little jumpy."

"Now, why in the world would I cut off my favorite toy in the world?"

Everyone around laughed.

"This big bad biker is afraid of a little needle."

"You'll pay for that," he growled but was secretly ecstatic. He didn't care what she said. She was home where she belonged.

The End

Other Books by Lila Fox:

www.evernightpublishing.com/lila-fox

If you enjoyed this book, you may also like:

[Shadow Obsession by Beth D. Carter](#)

[Splintered Vows by Jade Marshall and Sofia Aves](#)

[Huck's Legacy by Lee Ann Sontheimer Murphy](#)

BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER

HER MAFIA DESTINY

Maclean Mafia Men, 1

Lila Fox

Copyright © 2022



Sample Chapter

“Yo, brother, I think you need to go back home and mellow out.”

Alastair turned abruptly to face his brother, Calum, getting in his face and gritting his teeth. “Would you like to say that to me one more time?”

“Jesus Christ.” Calum raised his hands and took a hasty step back. “Man, it’s just that you’re really pissed off....”

“Aren’t you usually like this after talking to your mother?” Alastair asked.

“She’s your stepmother. That counts, nut fuck. But yes, I do. The woman’s a viper. It’s just when you’re pissed like this, someone usually ends up dead.”

Alastair rolled his eyes, turned, and walked down the long hallway. The woman, Calum’s mother, was his fourth stepmother. Alastair’s mother died a few days after giving birth to him, which ruined his father. From what his family had told him over the years, they had been passionately in love, surprising because of their lifestyle.

Being a part of the mafia was not easy. You had to be cold and vicious to survive. It was especially hard for the women. The wives and

mistresses had to deal with a lot.

His father had married four more times, trying to find the love he'd had with Isabella, Alastair's mother, and it had never happened. This last one, Una, Calum's mother, was the worst.

The first three stepmothers had died of surprisingly natural causes and not murder like one would expect living with the mafia—one in a car accident, one in an accidental drug overdose, and an accidental fall down the steps.

Alastair had liked that one the most. Nessa had been Logan, Ewen, and Rory's mother and had been sweet as can be. It had hit his father hard when she passed away. Not as hard as Alastair's mother, Isabella, but it took a while for him to want to have another woman in the house and in his life.

This last wife was a viper, and Alastair hated her, but he had to get along with her because his father was alive. After the stroke, his father had been unable to lead the Maclean clan, so Alastair had taken over the whole operation then, which was fine because he ran most of it anyway.

He shivered inside. Two minutes with his stepmother was torture. The woman was as mean as they came, and he couldn't understand what his father saw in her. She might have been attractive if not for the permanent sneer she had on her face.

His brother was probably right, but he couldn't stand the thought of going home to the same house his stepmother lived in, knowing she'd probably try to hunt him down to talk some more because he'd walked out on her tirade. The temptation to just kill her was too strong, and he didn't know if his father would ever forgive him.

"What exactly are we looking at?" Calum asked.

"Our strip joint in Newport needs new women, and I sent out some of our guys to find ones who were attractive and loved being a stripper. Most of the ones we have now are getting old and tired, so we'll get them other jobs in the business."

"Cool. Maybe think about taking one of them home," Duncan, another brother, said. "It might help your disposition."

"Fuck off," Alastair said without turning around.

Alastair opened the door to what could pass as a conference room. It had a long table and chairs and a small bar off to the side. Some meetings went late, and the guys were more pleasant if they had some alcohol in them. But not too much, or they started killing each other.

The women were already there waiting. The ones that noticed him stood as seductively as they could, begging for his or his brothers' attention. Being one of their mistresses was sought after not only for their good looks but mainly for the money.

"Hey," Stuart, one of his best men who had been with him for years, said and walked over to shake his hand. "I think we did well."

"You checked for diseases and made sure they had no children?"

"Sure, boss. I know what you like."

Alastair nodded. "Where's Ross? He was supposed to be helping you."

"He's coming in with the last one or two."

Alastair turned to Calum. "Can you get me a bourbon on the rocks?" He wouldn't admit it to his brothers, but he did need to mellow out, and a nice drink helped every time.

"Sure."

The first drink went down smoothly and helped calm his anger a bit as he talked to Stuart and ignored the women trying to vie for his notice and interest. He shook his head and snorted when his brothers did give the women their attention and had girls all over them.

"Craig is going to take these women to the club if you're okay with them," Stuart said.

Alastair turned and whistled for Duncan. "I'm going to put you in charge of this. Take them to Speedy's, get the women who will live in our apartments next to the club moved in, and take the rest back to their place but tell them they have to be at work tomorrow. If they are late, they're fired. There are no second chances."

"I got it," Duncan said.

His brother and a couple of the men rounded up the women and took them out a back door to the vans waiting.

"Are you going to wait for the last of them?" Stuart asked.

Alastair looked at his watch and sat down. "I'll give them a few minutes."

He hadn't finished with his second drink when a side door opened and Ross, one of his guys, walked in, dragging a woman. She was crying and fighting to get away from him.

"Shut up, bitch," Ross said and shook her.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Stuart yelled.

Alastair held up a hand, set down his drink, and stood to face Ross. He walked to stand in front of the man and crossed his arms over his chest to keep from strangling the man, trying to ignore the woman's pleas and cries. "Tell me."

Ross stuttered. "Oh, well, her uncle owed us some money, and I was supposed to get it, but he didn't have it, and so I thought we could use her as collateral until he pays up."

Calum, Stuart, and the rest of his guys cursed, and the tension rose in the room.

Alastair just stared at the woman. She was tiny but had curved hips and larger breasts. She was dressed in a long white nightgown with lace. Her dark hair was tousled like she'd been pulled from bed.

"Who gave you permission to do that?" Alastair asked when he turned back at Ross.

"Well, no one. I just thought..."

"Is it your job to think?" Alastair asked.

"Well, no."

"Jesus Christ, you dumbshit," Stuart said.

Alastair walked up, cupped the woman's chin, and raised her face. His breath stalled in his lungs because her eyes were the most beautiful he'd ever seen, even when they were red and swollen from crying. They were light blue in the middle and green on the other part, and they seemed to look right through him.

"Who is your family?" Alastair asked her.

She sniffed. "I don't have one besides an uncle I haven't seen in years."

"No husband?"

"No. Please, let me go home. I won't tell anyone. I don't even know you," she said.

For once in his life, he made a decision with his heart instead of his head. He pulled out a gun and shot Ross in the forehead in one smooth move.

Everyone in the room stood frozen and in shock until the woman screamed.

Alastair put his gun away and reached for her when it looked like she was going to faint, only to have her flinch in horror away from him. He knew why, but it still pissed him off, which was ridiculous. Of course, she would be terrified of him. He just murdered someone in front of her.

He didn't like the blood that had been sprayed over her from Ross's head, and he wanted her clean as soon as possible.

He kept a few feet away from the woman and waited for her to be calm enough to hear him. "My name is Alastair Maclean. We're the mafia in this part of the city."

Alastair heard his brother curse behind him and ignored him.

The woman was hunched against the wall. Tears mixed with blood and brain matter ran down her face. "Why are you telling me this? Are you going to kill me next?"

Alastair shook his head. "I'm making sure that you won't be able to go anywhere, ever."

"I don't understand. I've never done anything to you or anyone."

"I know. Sometimes your life takes a path you didn't expect." *No kidding.* He never predicted he'd kidnap a woman and plan to keep her forever. "My advice is to make the best of this. I'll treat you like a princess as long as you're loyal to me. Do you understand?"

"No, I don't. I don't understand any of this."

He sighed. "That's okay. We have plenty of time." He held out his hand and waited.

She shook her head.

"You can either take my hand and walk out of here with some dignity, or I can have a few of my men carry you out. Choose."

She studied him for a moment and before she reached for his hand. He could see how much she was trembling, but he would take care of her as soon as they got home. When her shaking, tiny cold hand slid into his hand, something inside of him settled, and a warmth filled him.

"That's good, baby." He pulled her along and looked at one of his men. "Take care of Ross."

"You got it, boss."

As he led her out to his car, he felt something shift in his universe, and he knew he'd forever be changed. He just didn't know if it would be for the good or bad. Only time would tell.

End of sample chapter

www.evernightpublishing.com/her-mafia-destiny-by-lila-fox



EVERNIGHT PUBLISHING ®

www.evernightpublishing.com