

A man with a long, dark beard and hair is the central figure. He is shirtless, showing a large, colorful tattoo on his right shoulder and upper arm. The tattoo depicts a bearded man's face with wings. He is wearing a dark, possibly leather, vest and a chain belt. His hands are clasped in front of him, and he is wearing several rings. The background is dark and textured.

LUCKY'S TROUBLE

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
MISTY WALKER



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*This book is dedicated to Mabel so she'll stop complaining
how everyone has received a dedication but her.*

PLAYLIST

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“NFWMB” by Hozier

“Closer” by Nine Inch Nails

“Thief” by Ansel Elgort

“Church” by Chase Atlantic

“I Wanna Be Yours” by Arctic Monkeys

“Afraid” by The Neighborhood

“Faint” by Linkin Park

“Loving You” by Cannons

“Dial Drunk” by Noah Kahan, Post Malone

“Body” by Briston Maroney

“Say Yes To Heaven” by Lana Del Rey

“bad idea right?” by Olivia Rodrigo

“The Narcissist” by Blur

“SPIT IN MY FACE” by ThxSoMch

“Snooze” by SZA

A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

Lucky's Trouble is a dark MC romance that explores sensitive themes. I've listed all content warnings on my [website](#) if you're concerned about possible triggers.

Mental health matters!

XOXO,

Misty Walker
ROMANCE AUTHOR

PROLOGUE

TINLEIGH



T *hree years ago...*

“I’d like to bury my testimony. I know the church is true.” The little girl at the podium pulls her lower lip down with a finger and twists it from side to side as she recites the same damn thing as every other five-year-old who steps onto the stage on Fast Sunday.

Myla glances over at me, and we snicker under our breaths. All kids around that age mix up the word “bury” with “bear,” and it never gets less funny. Sacrament meetings are boring, and we have to get our entertainment somewhere.

The women of the congregation coo adoringly at the little girl as she says, “Amen,” and steps off the stage. It’s silent in the room as we wait to see if anyone else’s spirit is urging them to step up and give a sanctimonious speech. My eyes dart over the pews, praying there are no takers, but then David Bee stands and walks to the stage.

I roll my eyes, knowing whatever he spews will be utter nonsense. Last night, this motherfucker took me on an R-rated date. He said we were going to the middle of the Utah desert to look at the stars, when all he really wanted to do was clumsily finger me while attempting to suck my lips off my face.

Now he’s dressed in his Sunday best, weeks away from leaving on a mission to Spain, expressing how strong his testimony is to the entire congregation. I’ll give it to him, though—he has them all fooled. In their eyes, he’s everything

a young man should be: a priesthood holder, chaste, Christ-like, and arguably the most important, practices blind obedience.

“Doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.”

Barf.

“Didn’t he do a keg stand last weekend at Hannah’s party?” Myla whispers.

“I let him touch my boobs last night,” I whisper back, causing my twin to gasp way too loudly.

“Girls,” Mom admonishes, holding a finger to her lips.

When David is done, I watch as parent after parent pats the knee of their soon-to-be missionary, encouraging them to also bear their testimony. Typical. It’s all about appearances, and heaven forbid your son doesn’t go up after someone else’s did. What would everyone think?

Two tedious hours later, the closing prayer is said, and we’re free to leave. I dig my keys out of my Lulu crossbody and grab my sister’s hand, ready to drag her out of here. While no one would stop to talk to me, since everyone here thinks I’m a lost cause, Myla is seen as the good twin. It’s not true. She breaks all the same commandments I do; she’s just better at hiding it.

“I want you both home this afternoon. We’re hosting the missionaries for dinner,” Mom says, stopping us before we can clear the pew.

“Seriously?” I whine.

Myla nudges my shoulder with hers. “It won’t be so bad.”

“Says the girl no one looks at like she has devil horns sprouting from her head,” I mutter.

“I’ll be your buffer.”

“Fine.” I roll my eyes and turn to Mom with a fake-ass smile. “What time is dinner?”

“Three. Don’t be late.”

“We won’t.” Myla waves to our parents as I pull her to the exit.

Fast Sundays are bullshit. We’re required to skip two meals and then donate the money we would’ve spent on food to the church. Later today, a little boy will knock on our door to collect our fast offering that’s supposed to go to the needy. However, for a church worth billions of dollars, it’s odd there are still members who don’t have money to feed their kids.

“Where are we going?” Myla asks as she climbs into the passenger seat of our shared Toyota Tacoma.

“Pioneer Park.”

“Why?”

I grin. “I have an idea.”

Blasting our favorite Spotify mix, we sing along and vibe as we ride up the mountain. Our small town in southern Utah has grown a lot since we were little girls, but our favorite spot to hang out hasn’t changed. Since it’s Sunday and most of the population is the same religion that believes today is a day of rest, we’re mostly alone when we park.

I reach for the vape in a secret pocket under my seat that I hand-sewed into the fabric and hop out of the truck. Letting down the tailgate, I grab the duffel bag I packed before church and dig out two pairs of Converse and changes of clothes, handing one set of items to Myla.

“You were prepared,” she says as I tug off my modest cotton dress, leaving me in only a sports bra and undies.

Once we’re more comfortable, I lock the truck, and we walk to the lookout point. It’s hot out, but we’re both summer girls, so it doesn’t bother us to climb onto one of the red rocks and sit where there’s no shade.

Rolling up my sleeves, I stretch my legs out and tip my head up. “I love the sun.”

“Same.” Myla grabs the vape resting on my leg and takes a puff. “You gonna tell me why we’re out here?”

“We’re leaving.”

She huffs. “To where?”

“Reno.”

“What?”

I lean back onto my elbows. “I got a job. And I can get you one too, if you want.”

“Doing what?”

“Dancing.”

Myla and I have been competitive dancers since we could walk. Everything from ballet to ballroom, we’ve done it all. We were even accepted to a couple universities on dance scholarships. But we had to turn them down after Mom and Dad informed us that they prayed about it and didn’t think it was our path in life.

There are levels of devoutness in the church, and my parents are at the top of the scale. To them, our only purpose is to marry a return missionary as soon as possible and start multiplying and replenishing the earth. An education would be a waste since stay-at-home moms only need to know how to cook, clean, and raise a righteous family.

“What kind of dancing?” She raises a skeptical brow.

I grin. “The kind you do in your underwear.”

“Tinleigh!” She smacks my shoulder. “We can’t be strippers.”

“Why not? The owner said we could make bank, and it would get us out of here.”

“How did you even find this place? And why Reno?”

I shrug. “Why not?”

“Seriously, how?”

“This guy has been messaging me on Insta for a while. He’s a talent scout for some big club in Vegas,” I say carefully, knowing how it sounds.

“So why Reno?”

“He says we have to start at the Reno location, and if we do good, they’ll move us up.”

Her nose, identical to mine, wrinkles. “I don’t know about this. I mean, stripping? Really?”

“We’ve taken pole dancing classes. The only difference is that we’re in pasties and a thong.” I snag the vape and take a puff.

“That was just to work on our arm and core strength, not to prepare us to be strippers.”

“What’s going to happen to us if we stay here, Myla?”

She stares into the distance, thinking. “I don’t know.”

“Yes, you do. We’ll continue to work bullshit jobs until Mom convinces us to marry horny return missionaries who’ll knock us up on our wedding night. Then we’ll end up just like her: stuck in a loveless marriage, filling our time with church callings and raising babies.” I give her a pointed look.

“As opposed to moving somewhere we’ve never been, dancing in front of horny men for dollars until we’re too old? And then what?”

“It’s not a forever thing. Once we prove ourselves, we’ll go to Vegas and try out for the hundreds of different shows there. We’re damn good dancers; there’s no way we won’t get jobs right away.”

“Why don’t we skip the stripping and just apply for those jobs now?”

“We need to make quick money and establish ourselves first.”

“I don’t know, Tinny. It seems kind of cliché for girls who’ve been through what we have to fall into sex work.”

Her words push to the surface what we’ve both been trying so hard to keep down. The things we’re only allowed to speak about with each other since our parents barely acknowledged what happened, let alone allow us to talk about it or, God forbid, send us to therapy.

“It has nothing to do with that,” I say.

“Doesn’t it?”

I shake my head. “We wanted a way out of here, and I found that way. That’s it.”

Myla takes my hand. “I’ll follow you anywhere. You know that.”

“So, we can go?” I beam.

“How will we get enough money to move?”

“Neal said if we sign six-month contracts, we’ll each get a five-thousand-dollar bonus.”

Her head tips to the side, and her face screws up. “Neal?”

“He’s not a bad guy.”

Her gaze returns to the skyline for a long moment. “Fine.”

“Really?”

“Six months. If I hate it, we walk.”

I tackle her to the ground in a hug, not caring that I’m scratching my arms up on the rough rock. “Six months. I promise.”

“And you won’t try and talk me out of leaving if that’s what I want?”

I pretend to zip my lips. “Not a word.”

She glances at her watch. “It’s almost time for dinner. We better go.”

“Wouldn’t want to keep the missionaries waiting,” I say, peeling myself off her and standing, finally feeling like I can get a full breath of air in my lungs.



“Amen,” Elder Young ends his prayer.

We all return the sentiment before passing bowls around the table, scooping pot roast, mashed potatoes, and salad onto our plates. Dad holds the conversation, asking the missionaries all the customary questions about where they came from and how many baptisms they've performed.

I tune them out, my thoughts drifting back to my conversation with Myla. Excitement fills me as I spoon potatoes into my mouth, not tasting it. Maybe I'm naive, but this feels right. Even more than that, it feels like our only option. I'd rather die here and now than spend my life devoted to a religion I don't believe in, one that has done nothing but cause me pain.

Hearing my name snaps me out of my thoughts, and I look up to see everyone at the table staring at me expectantly. "Sorry. What?"

Myla reaches under the table and takes my hand.

Fuck. What did I miss?

Dad sighs in annoyance. "There's been a heaviness on you and your sister's spirits. After speaking with the bishop, we asked these young men to come here tonight to share their testimonies and bestow a blessing on you."

Elder Young clears his throat. "Trials are designed to test your faith, and distancing yourself from the Son of God during a difficult time is like taking away the safety of your seatbelt during a car crash. Instead of pulling away from the church, you should turn to prayer and scriptures."

His patronizing tone grates on my every nerve, and his condescension fuels the anger burning in my gut. I'm so sick of feeling like there's something wrong with me, like the reason I don't believe in their fairy tales is because I'm weak and don't try hard enough.

I've read their books, sat through endless hours of Sunday school, and attended more young women's functions than I can count, and still, I feel nothing. There's no warmth or understanding when I pray. There's no still calm voice in my head telling me what's right or wrong.

What happened to Myla and me wasn't the spark; it was the fuel.

"With all due respect," I start, earning another sigh from Dad. "You don't know me or my sister. You have no clue what we've done to get through our *fiery trials*."

"Tinleigh," Mom admonishes.

I stand. "No. This is bullshit."

Myla takes my side, not brave enough to speak for herself. She never has been. Hell, she quit talking for an entire year when we were three, trusting me to communicate for her.

"Sit down," Dad orders.

"No. I'm sick of us being treated like we're beneath you somehow because we don't believe in the things you do. It's time to end this charade of a perfect family and admit you failed. We're never going to be the daughters you want us to be, and it has nothing to do with us failing trials." I push my chair in, because not being faithful doesn't mean I don't have manners, and storm to my room.

Seconds later, Myla appears, closing the door after her. "That went well."

"Should've known they'd pull that shit." I pull my suitcase out from under my bed.

"What are you doing?"

"We're leaving now."

"Now?" Her eyes go wide. "We can't leave now."

"Yes, we can. Once we get on the road, I'll call Neal, and we can get the contracts signed. We have enough saved for gas and a hotel for a couple nights."

She plops down on my bed. "Are you sure about this?"

"Positive." I sit next to her. "Do you trust me?"

"Always."

CHAPTER ONE

LUCKY



I lean against the wall, folding my arms and crossing my ankles. “You’re a twisted son of a bitch, you know that?”

Riot, the club’s Road Captain and resident sadist, grunts as he throws another fist into the poor bastard’s face that he’s turning into ground beef. The guy passed out a long time ago. Hell, he probably died after Riot slammed his head onto the concrete floor until his skull cracked before stomping on each of his limbs with his heavy boots until they laid at awkward angles.

I know our instructions were to make him pay before killing him, but if he’s not conscious for the beat down, does it even count?

Riot’s fist rears back before delivering another blow. I realize he’s not the only weird one because here I am, watching the whole thing while chewing on a rope of licorice, not feeling a damn thing. I haven’t looked away, and my stomach isn’t sour; I see nothing wrong with what he’s doing.

“You finished?” I ask as Riot sits back on his haunches, sweat glistening on his brow and his once-strained features relaxing.

He stands, rolling his head on his thick neck. “He’s dead.”

“No shit, Sherlock.” I push off the wall and pull my cell out before snapping a few photos. Then, I give the prospects a nod. They’ve also watched the whole thing, but unlike me, they’re looking a little green. Called into action, they each grab a bucket and move in for clean up while I get to walk

away. One perk of being a patched-in member of the Sons of Erebus is that you get to have all the fun with none of the dirty work.

“Text us if you run into any issues,” I say as I follow Riot up the stairs, through the hidden door, and into the pantry at the Honey Pot, the brothel our club recently opened. On the other side of the pantry, another door opens to the kitchen, where I make eye contact with the head chef. “Ten minutes, and then everyone goes on break, Hugo.”

“You got it, boss,” he says with a salute.

All the Honey Pot Ranch employees know the drill and what’ll happen to them if they don’t keep their mouths shut about what goes on around here. They value their lives and their fat paychecks too much to test us.

The Sons of Erebus might’ve lost some credibility a few years ago when we had a scuffle with a rival club that nearly bankrupted us and a betrayal from our own president, but that’s all behind us now. We’re stronger than ever, and thanks to this brothel, we’re more liquid than ever.

Hugo hands Riot a bag of ice for his knuckles as he walks out the back door. Always the loner, he doesn’t feel the need to hang around or make small talk—the exact opposite of me. So, instead of leaving, I meander through the property, heading straight for Myla’s room. Shift change was about an hour ago, so she’s probably freshly showered and winding down.

Rapping my knuckles on her door, I wait for her to tell me to enter before pushing my way in. Myla’s sprawled out on her bed, nearly naked, making my cock stir. Even in a simple, white cotton bralette and panties that cover her whole ass, she’s sexy.

“Sup, hot stuff?” I smirk and flop down next to her, shoving aside a stuffed animal and a pink, frilly pillow.

“I’m sleepy.” She curls around a pillow, facing me.

“Busy day?”

She yawns. “The busiest. There’s a car show in Reno this weekend, so my dance card was full of gearheads.”

“That’s right. I forgot that was this weekend.” I stare up at her white ceiling. “We should go check it out tomorrow night.”

“I don’t know. I’m on tour, and you know how weird Mary gets about us leaving the property. I’d have to take a chaperone, and it’s a whole huge deal.”

The courtesans we employ work either a two- or four-week tour, where they’re required to remain on the property unless they’re going on a date with a client or escorted by staff. Most choose to stay and utilize staff to run their errands. I can’t tell you how often I’ve purchased tampons.

“Maybe she’d be okay with me being the chaperone.”

“We already push the boundaries on what’s acceptable. I mean, if Rigger walked in here right now, he’d blow a gasket.”

She’s right. Since the Sons own the brothel, we’re not allowed to fraternize with the ladies. Not that that’s what she and I are doing. Myla, who goes by Fiona when she’s working, is a friend. That’s it. I’d be lying if I said I wouldn’t fuck her in a heartbeat, but my loyalty to the club would never allow me to cross that line.

Myla’s cool as shit, though. We clicked right away and have become close, but that’s where it ends, because she can’t afford to lose this job, and I can’t afford to betray my club.

“I’ll talk to Rigger. He knows we’re friends.”

“Okay.” She yawns again, her jaw clicking with the intensity.

“Unless you don’t want—”

“No, I do. It’d be fun to get out and do something that doesn’t involve my vagina.” Her words are joking, but her tone is stale, which is unlike her. She’s always wiped after a shift, but this is something different.

“You just tired, or is there something else going on?”

Reaching under my cut, she snags a piece of licorice. “Nothing new. I just haven’t heard from Tingleigh in a few days.”

“You worried about her?”

“A little.” She places a hand on my chest and rests her chin on it. “I have this feeling she’s hiding something from me.”

“Can’t twins read each other’s minds or some shit?”

“Three months ago, I would’ve said yes and that I knew everything about her. But she’s been so secretive ever since I quit the Thirst Trap.”

“Maybe I should finally meet this infamous twin. See if I can get a read on her.”

“Maybe. Though if she’s not answering my calls, I don’t know how to arrange that.”

I quirk a brow. “Want me to go to the Thirst Trap?”

“No.” She pauses for a long moment. “Not yet, anyway. I don’t want her to think I don’t trust her.”

I climb off her bed. “Whatever you need, darlin’, you let me know.”

“Thanks, Lucky.”

“You got it.” I go to leave, but she stops me before I can make it out the door.

“I’ve never met anyone like you, you know?”

“Oh, yeah? What am I like?” I ask, amused to hear how she perceives me.

“I haven’t even fucked you, and you’re always here, checking in on me, doing things for me.”

“We’re friends.” I shrug.

“In my experience, men aren’t just friends with women,” she says, then corrects herself. “Men aren’t anything to women unless there’s some kind of transaction. I just can’t figure out what you get from me to make you want to stick around.”

My stomach turns to stone, and my jaw ticks in irritation. “You’ve been hanging around the wrong kind of men then.”

She huffs. “You got that right.”

I close the door with a quiet *snick* before heading to the security room where I know Rigger's working, replaying my conversation with Myla. I don't know her story since we haven't been friends for all that long, but I wonder what she's been through to get her to this place. Not that I think there's anything wrong with working at the brothel, but I've read the statistics. Nearly half of all prostitutes have experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime, and not a day goes by that I don't wonder if Myla's one of them.

If she is, I'd gladly slice the dick off the asshole who did it to her.

"Hey, brother," I greet, taking a seat next to Rigger.

"What's going on? You and Riot take care of that issue for the Costas?" The questions are for me, yet his eyes are glued to the security feeds.

I look up at the wall of monitors that cycle through the many camera angles on the property and smirk when I see where Rigger's attention is. His bitch, Navy, is chatting with Mary on the pool deck.

Navy is Rigger's stepsister, but that didn't stop him from claiming her, the twisted bastard. Not that I can blame him—Navy's hot, and even more than that, she's cool as shit, like Myla.

Deciding to not rib him for his obvious obsession with his woman, I reply, "Yeah. Wasn't hard. The asshole knew it was coming and didn't put up much of a fight."

The Sons might be on our way up, but we still have a few outstanding debts. One of those debts is to the Costa family. After finding out that Rigger's dad, Ray, had been raping Navy since she was fourteen, he obviously wanted to kill the motherfucker. Unfortunately, he was protected by the Costas, the same family we borrowed money from to open the brothel. That made Ray untouchable, at least until we repaid them and agreed to take over Ray's position in the Costa organization, meaning we now had to take care of their *problems*.

The guy currently being loaded into the back of a van by the prospects was one of those problems.

“Riot seem okay?”

I chuckle. “As okay as Riot can be.”

Riot has always enjoyed the darker side of club life. If someone needs killing, he’s the guy who jumps at the chance. He’s got more demons rooting around in his head than brain cells, but he’s loyal as fuck and a good man to have on your side.

“Good. I’ll let Prez know.” He pulls his phone out of his pocket and shoots off a text to Cy.

“Got a question for you.”

“What’s up?” His gaze returns to Navy, flipping to a different view when she and Mary walk back into the building.

“Think I could take Myla to the car show Saturday?”

“Myla?” he asks.

“Fiona.”

He glances over at me suspiciously. “You two on a real name basis now?”

“We’re just friends.”

He snorts. “Since when do you have friends with a pussy?”

“Since Myla.”

“You know the rules, brother. The courtesans are off-limits.”

“It’s not like that with us. She’s different.”

He shakes his head. “Not a good idea. I already know Mary and Navy will say no.”

The Sons might own the brothel, but Mary is the madam. After Rigger reconnected with Navy, he hired her to be Mary’s second. Those two women run a tight ship and are sticklers for the rules. I get it; when you operate a legal brothel, the county is constantly up your ass, but I’m not asking to break any of the rules.

“Just talk to them for me.”

“Okay, but if I have to sit through a lecture from Mary over this, I’m kicking your ass.”

“Deal.” I stand.

“You know I’d go to the show with you,” Rigger says, almost sounding hurt. He’s been my best friend since I can remember. We grew up together, and when his dad kicked him out of the house at eighteen, my family took him in until we could afford our own place.

“I know. You’ve just been a little preoccupied lately.”

He grins, pointing at the screen showing his woman. “If you had that to go home to, you’d make yourself available too.”

“Not in the cards for me, brother. Variety is the spice of life.”

“I used to think that too.”

I roll my eyes. “Pussy-whipped motherfucker.”

“I could still take you.”

“I’d like to see you try.” I walk out the door before he follows through on his threat. Truth is, I don’t know who would win in that fight. I’m bigger and taller, but not by much, and Rigger’s scrappy as shit.

It’s been a long day, so as I climb onto my bike, I have two things on my mind: a cold beer and a wet pussy. It’s the only way to end a day like this, and the only place I can guarantee I’ll find both is the clubhouse.

Thirty minutes later, I arrive at my destination. Pulling through the iron gates, I park in the gravel lot next to a long line of other bikes. Besides my parents’ house and the shitty apartment Rigger and I shared for a short time, this is the only other home I’ve had.

The old warehouse doesn’t look like much from the outside, but inside, it’s fucking beautiful. As I walk through the front door, the deep bass of a rock ballad piping through

the speakers reverberates through my body, and the scent of cigarette smoke laced with the skunky aroma of weed stings my sinuses. Brothers, patch pussy, and hang-arounds loiter about, stopping their conversations long enough to give me a chin lift as I pass.

Being the Sergeant-at-Arms gives me a level of respect that fills me with pride. I may not be the doctor or lawyer my strait-laced parents wanted me to be, but I'm not nothing to these guys, and that's something.

"Tig, grab me a beer," I shout at the ginger prospect behind the bar.

"Sure thing, Lucky." Like the good grunt he is, he scrambles to fill an ice-cold mug and pass it over to me.

"Thanks." I take a big, satisfying swallow before turning around on my stool and taking in the talent. There ain't no one here I haven't seen a million times over, and suddenly, I don't want to be here anymore.

"What's up, brother?" Dutch, one of the club's two Enforcers, asks.

"Not much. You?"

"Nada." He rests his elbows on the bar. "Riot came back in a mood."

"Riot's always in a mood."

He chuckles. "True."

"Hey, you doing anything right now?" I ask, an idea forming.

"Nope. Just a chill night."

"You wanna hit up a strip club?"

"Why would I want to do that when we have a private show here?" He gestures to the corner where Larissa dances on the stage, twirling around the stripper pole. Her glittery midnight skin catches the spotlights and makes her look like a goddamn goddess. She's naked, save for a gold thong that

exposes her tight ass—the same ass I fucked last week and the week before that.

Not that my reason for wanting to go to the Thirst Trap is to get laid. I think I'm just bored. If I can ease Myla's worries about her sister while entertaining myself, it's a win-win.

“There's something I wanna check out.”

He shrugs. “I'm down.”

I chug the last of my beer and slam my glass down before wiping the foam from my overgrown mustache and beard. “Let's do it.”

CHAPTER TWO

TINLEIGH



“Hey, baby. You having a good night?” I ask, sidling up to a middle-aged man with a round face and a beer belly. He’s got money, judging by his gold watch and thick gold rings encrusted with diamonds and gems.

“Well, hi there, sweetheart. Aren’t you a pretty thing?” He shamelessly eyes me up and down.

I lean over, resting my arms on his table to give him a good view of my breasts, barely contained by my silver bra. “Thank you. Are you having fun?”

“I am now.” He pats the spot next to him. “Why don’t you keep me company for a while? My buddy stepped away to use the facilities.”

“I’d love to, but I’m about to go on stage. Would you like to come watch?”

“Sure. Which stage?”

“The main one, silly.” I giggle, running a finger along my collarbone, drawing his attention back to my cleavage.

“Should’ve known, a sexy little kitten like you.”

“There’s a seat up front with your name on it. One for your friend, too.”

Another man approaches, and I’m reassured that there’s money to be made here. His teeth are white and straight, his hair styled, and while his suit isn’t bespoke, it’s tailored to fit his frame.

“What are we doing?” he asks, his gaze going right to my tits.

“This young lady asked if we’d watch her dance on stage.”

“And if you like what you see, maybe we can take the party somewhere more private, where I can give you a better view of my assets?” I wink.

“Sounds like a plan,” man number two says.

“I’m going to get ready.” I point to the two chairs in front of the stage. “But head on over, and I’ll see you in a minute.”

As I walk away on my platform high heels, I’m sure to put an extra swing in my hips, trying to entice them even more.

It’s all an act, a skill I’ve honed over the last three years. I’m the highest earner at the Thirst Trap strip club for a reason. Not that it’s hard; my body was built to lure in men and render them stupid. From my hourglass shape to my full lips, I was made for this line of work.

At least, that’s what I tell myself. The truth is, I hate working here. It doesn’t feel good to know I’m wanted for one thing and one thing only. No one’s interested in *me*, only the idea of me.

My existence is nothing more than a fantasy, and that feels pretty shitty.

I make my way to the dressing room, unhooking my bra and stepping out of my thong along the way. Nudity means nothing anymore—quite the leap from how I grew up. Back then, I wasn’t allowed to wear tank tops, and my shorts had to reach my knees because heaven forbid I tempt a man with my slutty shoulders and thighs.

Opening my locker, I decide on my neon green fishnet crop top with the matching double-strap thong that sits high on my hips but dips dangerously low in front. The rhinestones scattered across both pieces sparkle under the lights, looking like diamonds. It’s a fan favorite.

After slipping it on, I stop in front of my vanity mirror to make sure my makeup is holding up. As I apply another layer

of nude pink lip gloss, a familiar chill runs up my spine. I don't *see* him yet, but I know he's lurking in the shadows, watching me.

"Are you having a good night?" He steps fully into the room.

Standing at six feet, he's average height, and most would say Neal's attractive. Muscled in all the right places with a dimpled smile and bronzed skin, he possesses physical attributes most women look for. To me, though, he's the ugliest person I've ever met.

"I am." I rub my lips together to even out the gloss, keeping my eyes on my reflection.

"Good." He rests his hands on my shoulders. "You have some making up to do after last week."

"I can't control how many people walk through the door. That's your job." I shouldn't bait the shark, but I'm in a mood, and when I'm in a mood, I have no sense of self-preservation.

His grip tightens painfully. "Watch your tone. Any girl worth her position at my club will pull her weight. And if not, there are other places she might fit better."

It's a threat he makes often—not just with me, but all the girls. We all know we're one mistake away from being forced to sell more than the illusion of sex. When Neal told me he owned places in Vegas, I assumed he meant other clubs, and he never corrected me. It wasn't until our six-month contract was up that I found out the "places" he owns are escort companies that only exist as a front for his prostitution ring. Anyone who doesn't kiss Neal's ass at the club is moved down the ladder, and suddenly you're spreading your legs for cash.

"I'm your top earner," I bite out.

"You used to be. But ever since Myla left, your attitude has sucked, and the customers have taken notice." His thumbs dig in harder, sending shooting pain through my shoulders and no doubt leaving a mark. Just another bruise I'll have to cover. I've gotten good at it over the years since Neal uses brute force rather than words to make a point.

I could care less about the physical pain, though. It's the mention of my sister that has me faltering, and he knows it. He gets off on reminding me why she's free of this place and why I'm not. Neal doesn't let girls go, not if they have value, and Myla is extremely valuable.

But I was the one who got her into this mess, so I made damn sure to be the one who got her out. Even if she had no idea what was going on.

"Let go," I demand, shaking out of his grip. "It's time for me to go on stage."

"Better make it a good one." His words are a warning I don't take lightly. "I could replace you with Myla, and no one would ever know."

I shake his words off as I walk through the back hallway and toward the main stage, trying to get into the character I've developed over the years. When I straighten my spine and push my breasts out, I'm no longer Tinleigh, the sheltered, naive girl who moved to Reno only to get fucked over by yet another man. No, I'm Stormy, the sex goddess you pretend to fuck when you go home to your boring wife at the end of the night.

I'm your goddamn fantasy.

Hearing my song, I step onto the stage, starting slow and taking my time as I strut down the catwalk, running my hands up and down my body. It's not long before the music takes over, and I arch my back, sway my hips, and touch myself sensually. I don't have to look into the crowd to know all eyes are on me, their hungry gazes fueling my every movement.

I give my performance my all, letting go of my problems and absorbing the sexual energy coming from the crowd. As my song plays, I perform jaw-dropping acrobatics on the pole and use every inch of available floor space, crawling on my knees, rolling onto my back, and spreading my legs wide.

Bills get tucked into my thong and thrown on stage: fives, tens, twenties, and even a couple hundreds from the men I lured in earlier. This isn't how I make the majority of my

money, though; this is just an appetizer. Once the song ends, my night will be full of private dances until it's my turn on stage again in an hour, and so on and so on.

This is my life six nights a week.

I'm nearing the end of the song when my eyes snag on two men I've never seen before. That's not unusual, but the leather vests they both have on are. In the world of Reno's strip clubs, the Thirst Trap has only one rival—Royal Treatment. The latter is owned by a local motorcycle club, the Royal Bastards, so it would make sense that's where all the bikers go.

So why are these guys here?

Both men are attractive, though the one on the right is more my type. I like my men broad and bulky. I might be short, but I have thick thighs and I'm top-heavy, so the idea of having a man who's big enough to make me look small is appealing.

Not that I can ever have a man. I came to Reno a virgin, and once Neal got his claws in me, I became untouchable to everyone but him. He's not my boyfriend, not even close, but he's my something. Employer? Dictator? Owner?

I meet the first biker's gaze as I drop to my knees, preparing for my next dance move, but hesitate for a split-second when he reaches under his vest, thinking he's pulling a gun. It wouldn't be the first time, though I've never been on stage when it's happened before, and there's nowhere to run and hide if shit goes down.

I'm relieved and confused when all he produces is licorice.

He places the candy in his mouth, letting the majority of the rope hang. His jaw works as he watches me intently and rests his meaty forearms on the stage.

I have an idea.

Crawling over to him, I lean forward and sink my teeth into the free end of the candy. When I give it a tug, he bites down on his end, releasing it. His dark eyes sparkle with humor as he chews. Lifting onto my knees, I grip the licorice

between two fingers and make a show of twirling it around my tongue and sucking a good portion into my mouth.

The biker leans back, and though his mustache and beard are unruly and hide his lips, I know he's grinning by the small wrinkles in the corners of his eyes. Now that I'm closer, I take in the way his black T-shirt clings to his arms and chest, showing off his muscular frame.

Fuck me, this man is hot.

My core clenches, and my nipples, which have been soft throughout my dance, tighten to points and tingle with desire. I've never had a reaction like this to a man at the club before, no matter how attractive they are. To me, they're not people; they're money, a means to an end.

I take a bite of the sweet treat and then offer the remaining bit back to the biker. He reaches out to accept it, our fingers touching. His long thumb strokes mine, sending prickles of need through my body. It only lasts for a second, but it's long enough to make me want this man with every fiber of my being. With our gazes locked, he pops the leftover inch of candy into his mouth, as though sharing food with a stripper is commonplace.

The lights go down, and the song ends with me basically gaping at the stranger, not in the splits with my ass bouncing like it normally does. If Neal's watching, I'll no doubt hear about my lackluster performance because how dare I break character? And what was I thinking giving that much attention to one person? Who would want to buy a dance from me when I all but ignored the other eager men?

Still stunned by my reaction, I stand up to walk off stage. Before I step into the darkened hallway, I look back and find the biker's attention still on me. His pointer finger hooks in my direction, requesting my company, and without questioning it, I nod. At least tonight's not a total bust. I'll just have to milk this private dance for all he's worth.

With quick steps, I sneak through the dressing room, relieved when Neal isn't waiting for me, and hurry into the main area of the club. Spotting the bikers right where I left

them, I stand tall and swallow down any Tingleigh that made its way to the surface. She's not welcome here.

Shaking out my hair, I avoid making eye contact with the sexy biker and focus my attention on his friend. He's safer.

"Did you like my performance?"

He looks almost confused as to why I'm asking him when something clearly happened between me and his buddy while I was on stage. With his brows bunched together, he mutters, "Yeah. Was good."

"That didn't sound convincing. Maybe you should take me somewhere more private, and I could try again?" I run a finger down his shoulder but jerk it away when the sexy stranger I'm ignoring stands and growls like a feral animal.

Holy shit, he's bigger than I thought—at least a foot taller than me and double my width.

"You okay, sweetheart?" I ask nervously, my eyes traveling up and up until I meet his.

"He's not interested." His voice matches his appearance, deep and thick. And fucking sexy.

"But you are?"

"Lead the way." He motions for me to proceed.

"I charge fifty dollars a song."

"Deal."

I take his hand, weaving my soft and delicate fingers through his thick and rough ones, leading him to the back of the club where the private booths are. The bouncers eye him speculatively, probably wondering if they could take him down if need be. I'm not worried. I don't feel unsafe, and after three years of this, I can tell when there are going to be problems. This guy doesn't give off that vibe.

There is something, though. Why else would he growl when I touched his friend?

A bouncer named Tim holds the curtains back on a free booth, and we step inside. I gesture to the vinyl-covered

bench, and Mr. Biker takes a seat, spreading his legs and his arms out wide as if he owns the place. His confidence outmatches my own, making me uneasy.

“Can I get you a drink?” I ask, sashaying over to the small bar stocked with the basics.

“No, thanks.”

I turn. “Just a dance, then?”

“Sure.” His tone is so nonchalant, like this whole thing is my idea and he’s just along for the ride.

But I’m here to do a job, so I close my eyes for a second, listening to the music and allowing it to flow through me. My hips sway of their own accord, and I begin to dance. This is the only part I like about being a stripper. I’m a dancer. It’s in my blood, my marrow, my DNA. It’s all I’ve ever wanted to do, all I’ve ever been good at.

When my eyes open, my poise has returned. I move closer to him, filling the space between his legs. Running my hands down his thighs, I squat down, my hips rocking side to side. There’s nothing but solid muscle under my palms that flexes with my touch. As I come back up, I bend forward and stick my ass out, my breasts running over his crotch, up his torso, and further until they’re right in front of his face.

At this point, my customers are usually asking if they can touch, but Mr. Biker keeps his hands fisted on the back of the bench. I twirl around, once again squatting, only to slowly lift my ass in the air, bending in half. I twerk, making my cheeks bounce and move in a way that makes most men think of what it would look like if they were pounding into me from behind.

Still, he gives me no reaction. What’s this guy’s deal?

CHAPTER THREE

LUCKY



I t's taking everything in me not to grab handfuls of her ass and bury my face in her crack. My mind and body are battling, and I can't say for sure who'll win. If my mind does, I'll stop this dance right now and tell Tinleigh why I'm here, but if my dick has anything to say about it, I'll wait until after the dance is over.

Tinleigh straddles my hips and unties the bow at her neck, letting the fishnet fabric covering her tits fall down, and my mind takes the backseat. Since her shirt was all but see-through, I already knew her tits were big, but seeing them bare with only small, bedazzled tassels covering her nipples was a whole new experience. The way they hang and move with her body is mesmerizing.

"You can touch me," she says, gliding her own hands over her perfect mounds.

Shit. Don't do it, man. Myla would cut off your balls if she found out.

Tinleigh makes the decision for me when she grabs my hand and brings it to her breast. Fuck me, she's more than a handful for even my big paws, and her skin is soft and supple. My cock thickens, and I see the moment she feels it between her legs when her pouty lips part and her eyelids go half-mast.

I shrug. What did she expect?

Since I'm already palming one breast, I decide I might as well go all in and reach for the other. She arches back, resting her hands on my knees as she grinds against me. I squeeze her

tits, wondering what it would take to get these pasties off and if she really likes this or if it's all an act.

Lifting onto her knees, she moves my hands to her ass before looping her arms around my neck and thrusting her breasts in my face. Goddamn, this is pure fucking heaven. My cock strains against my zipper, and right now, I'd do anything to release it and slip inside her cunt.

“Am I allowed to taste them?” I ask.

She glances into the corner where the cameras are. “Sure, baby.”

Baby?

My hands fall away from her as the fake term of endearment is so casually thrown out. It's like a bucket of ice water being dumped on my head, reminding me why I'm here. She's not grinding on me because she's into me. This is her damn job, and as far as she's concerned, I'm nothing more than a customer.

“We need to talk, Tinleigh,” I say, removing my face from her tits.

She freezes, loosening her hold from around my neck. “How do you know my name?”

“I'm Sons.”

“Sons?”

“Sons of Erebus. We own the Honey Pot.” She tries to remove herself, but I know these rooms are monitored, and if anything looks off, there'll be a bouncer here in seconds. We need to make everything look like business as usual, so I reclaim her ass and hold her in place. Besides, I might as well get my money's worth. “Don't give those men out there any reason to come inside this room.”

She stares down at me for a long moment, looking so much like her sister. I obviously know they're twins, but I'm still shocked at how similar they really are, from their cute button noses to their big blue eyes. The only difference I can

see is that Tinleigh's blonde hair has hot pink streaks while Myla's has purple streaks.

"Did Myla tell you to come here?" Realization washes over her as she glances at the camera in the corner before resuming her dancing. She's not trying as hard as she was moments ago.

"No, but she's my friend, and she's worried about you."

Tinleigh lifts off me, but she does it in time with the music, so I know she's not going anywhere. She turns around and sits in my lap, reaching up and over her head to run her hands through my hair that's long and loose tonight. "Your friend, huh?"

"She is, and I don't have girls who are friends." I settle my hands on her hips, wishing we were alone so I could do all the things to her that're running through my mind since I saw her on stage.

Even more than that, this woman intrigues me in a way not many do. Yeah, I want to fuck the shit out of her, but afterward, I wouldn't want her to leave. I'd want her to stick around so I could find out more about her.

She tips her head up so her lips are close to my ear, her words tickling against my neck. "Tell my sister I'm fine."

"I'm afraid that ain't gonna be good enough for her, darlin'. She'll want to hear that from you." The song ends, and Tinleigh tries to move again, but I keep her ass against my still-hard dick. "I want another song."

"Sorry, baby, I have other guests waiting," she says in a saccharine tone.

"Tinleigh," I growl. "We're not done here."

She sighs. "Fine. One more. But you're paying for it."

"Don't I know it." If she thinks I'm talking about the money, she's wrong. I'll be walking away from this exchange with the biggest case of blue balls I've ever had. "Why haven't you returned her calls?"

“It’s complicated.” She stands and pops her ass in my face, making her butt cheeks clap.

Scrubbing a hand down my beard, I groan. “Simplify it for me.”

Turning to face me, she dances in the space between my legs. “Why should I tell you anything? I don’t even know you.”

“What are you doing tomorrow morning?” I ask, trying my damndest to keep my eyes off her bouncing tits. Fuck, it’s hard. If I could conjure up my perfect woman, it’d be the one standing in front of me right now.

Focus, asshole.

This argument we’re having allows me to finally see the biggest difference between my friend and her siren of a sister. It’s the attitude. Myla is sweet and almost shy; she makes me want to tuck her in my pocket and protect her. Tinleigh’s nothing like that. She’s fire and confidence, a woman who would fight alongside you.

“Why?” She stands on the bench, putting her barely-covered pussy right in front of my face as she continues to dance.

“Why don’t you come to the Honey Pot and see her? She’s working nights, so if you come in the morning, she won’t be asleep yet.” I don’t even try to keep my eyes off the apex of her thighs. She’s bald down there, I just know it, and I can see the outline of her puffy lips. And is that a wet spot? Is she turned on by me, too?

Maybe this chemistry isn’t one-sided after all.

“I can’t. I’m busy.”

“Surely, you can spare an hour for your sister.” I can’t help but run my hands down the outside of her smooth, muscular thighs.

“I don’t have a car.”

“I’ll come get you.” I reach around to the swells of her ass, allowing myself one final squeeze to take home with me.

“That’s not a good idea.” Something flashes in her eyes. Fear, maybe?

“What are you worried about?” I ask.

“I’m not allowed to go places without protection.”

“A babysitter,” I deadpan.

I’ve heard rumors about the douchebag owner, Neal. He keeps a tight hold on his girls. I’ve even heard sinister whispers of him being involved in some darker things, though I’ve never seen substantial evidence. I’m sure Myla would’ve said something.

“Either way, I can’t go.”

From what Myla’s told me, all the Thirst Trap girls live in the same apartment complex. Neal makes it sound like a perk of the job, but really, it’s just another way he controls the girls who work for him.

“Sneak out and meet me near your place. You can go and be back before anyone notices.”

She grips the back of my head and brings it to her core, grinding against my face, probably to shut me up, but I don’t give a shit. This is the best day of my life. I swipe my tongue along the fabric covering her cunt and don’t miss her sharp intake of breath.

Eventually, she’ll either move away and give me an answer, or I’ll suffocate. Honestly, I’m good with either one.

She kneels down and then bends her torso all the way back until she’s lying on my outstretched thighs like a damn buffet. The long stretch of her body causes the fabric of her panties to lower even more, giving me a peak at the top of her slit. Goddamn. I’d give my left nut to know what she looks like underneath. Does her clit hide beneath a fleshy hood, or is it big and juicy, peeking out of her pussy lips?

To stop myself from ripping the tiny scrap of fabric off her body, I run a hand from between her tits down to below her cute belly button, stroking my thumb over the slightly stubbled skin from where she waxes.

“Answer me,” I say.

Using muscles I didn’t know existed, she sits up fully without the use of her arms. “I’ll meet you at the diner on First Street. Do you know it?”

I run through the map in my head of the area I know she lives in, picturing a run-down place I’ve never been to but have seen. “Yeah. What time?”

“Eight. I usually sleep until late afternoon, so no one will come looking for me before then.”

“It’s a deal.”

The song ends, and she climbs off me. I stand, almost chuckling at the drastic size difference between us. It’s easy to forget how short she is when she’s throwing her big attitude around. I pull out my wallet, connected to my belt by a heavy chain, and grab two, hundred-dollar bills.

I hold them out to her, but she doesn’t take it because her gaze is fixed on where my pants are tented.

“Like what you see?” I ask.

She blinks, followed by a scowl, as she snatches the bills from my hand. “Whatever.”

Her sass has me curious about how she turned out so differently from her twin. A lot of men love Myla’s innocent and demure personality—it’s evident by the number of clients she pulls. Me, though, I prefer this feisty version of my friend. All the same mouth-watering curves and beauty, but with an edge that keeps you on your toes.

“See you tomorrow morning.” Before I can slip through the curtains, Tingleigh stops me.

“You never told me your name.”

“Lucky.”

“And are you?” she asks with a coy grin.

“Am I what?”

“Lucky.”

I palm my aching junk. “Not tonight.”



Despite the godawful hour, I’m buzzing with energy as I pull into the diner. Ever since last night, I haven’t been able to get Tinleigh off my mind, even after I stroked my cock in the shower to the memory of that lap dance. And later, as I fell asleep, it was her image I drifted off to.

It’s kind of fucked, when you think about it, considering she’s my friend’s twin, but I’ve never denied wanting to bang Myla. What would it be like to be with both of them? Double the tits and sexy asses. My cock perks up at the idea, but I shake it away. I’m not *that* lucky.

I park out front but don’t get off my bike, admiring how badass it looks. My pride and joy is a custom matte black M8 FatBoy, with a few modifications to account for my size and style. If anything were to happen to my bike, I’d shed real tears, not caring if it made me look like a pussy.

Turning off the engine, I push down the kickstand, remove my helmet, and climb off, choosing to lean against the seat and scroll through unanswered texts as I wait. When I hear rocks crunching under the gravel, I look up and nearly lose my breath at how beautiful the woman standing in front of me is.

Last night, she was all done up with cat eyes, rosy cheeks, red lipstick, and covered in glitter that followed me home. Even after I showered, I found a few flecks of that shit in my beard. Today, she’s as natural as the day she was born. Her tanned skin glows in the morning sun, and her hair hangs over her shoulder in a long braid. Gone is the sexy lingerie, and in its place is a black, cropped baby tee and baggy, light wash jeans that hang low on her hips, showing a few inches of her stomach.

There’s not a woman in this world who can compete with her. She’s that stunning.

It's confusing to see a near-mirror image of my friend because while she looks like Myla, she also doesn't. There's a sharpness in Tinleigh's gaze and a confidence in her posture that her sister lacks. There's also a devil on her shoulder that I recognize because I have one of my own. It tells me she knows some shit she shouldn't, that she's been through more than most.

She glances over her shoulder, her steps hurried. "Let's go."

With all the blood in my body rushing down south, I just stare at her.

"Lucky! Snap out of it. Come on." She removes the second helmet from the cargo net secured to my tail, slips it on, and then climbs on the bike like a professional.

"Not your first time?"

"No. Now, let's go. This neighborhood is owned by Neal, and if anyone sees me, they'll report back to him."

It's odd that Neal would keep such a tight hold on his girls. Granted, we do the same at the Honey Pot, but a brothel is a whole different beast than a strip club. We don't keep tabs on our employees because we give a shit what they do. We do it because there are regulations and shit we have to follow to keep our license.

"Yeah, okay." I put on my dome and straddle my bike, my abs contracting when I feel her hands on them. It's not even a sexual touch, but tell that to my twitching cock.

I've had plenty of chicks on my bike before since nothing makes panties drop quicker than a ride, but never has my body reacted so quickly, so viscerally. There's something about her I can't explain.

All I know is I want her.

"Lucky!" she shouts, slapping my side.

"Fuck," I mutter before bringing my bike to life and peeling out of the parking lot, enjoying it a little too much

when her grip tightens, and I feel her breasts press against my back.

It's a twenty-minute ride to the brothel, and I use that time to reign in my control. Tinleigh is off-limits for so many reasons, most of which involve her sister.

Myla basically knows everything about me, including my track record with women. There's no chance in hell she'll be okay with me pursuing her sister. For someone who fucks for a living, she gets awfully judgmental when I talk about my weekends full of sex and booze. I used to think it was funny to watch her face screw up as she called me a "man-whore," but now that she'll be the cockblock between Tinleigh and me, I'm regretting sharing so much with her.

Suddenly, rushing back to the Honey Pot doesn't sound like such a good idea because once we get there, I'll have to walk away. I'm not ready for that yet. There's still so much I want to know about her that I won't get once Myla's around.

I spot a popular breakfast spot up ahead and decide a little detour is in order.

CHAPTER FOUR

TINLEIGH



My heart pounds in my chest, and with how fast my breaths are coming, I fear I'll hyperventilate. It's not the adrenaline from being on a motorcycle that has me all riled up, though Lucky's bike is dead sexy. No, it's because I'm certain someone is going to realize I'm gone.

I've only snuck out once before and vowed to never do it again, not after Neal found out and taught me a lesson I'll never forget. Still, I can't bring myself to regret it because it was the night I got Myla out of there.

Slowing my breaths, I tell myself it's too late now, and if I'm going to be punished for this little jaunt, I might as well enjoy my time away. After this, it might never happen again, so I'll put on a brave face and soak up all the sister time I can.

Except when Lucky parks, it's not at the Honey Pot. It's at a small restaurant called Squeeze In.

The engine has barely been cut before I'm off the bike and in Lucky's face. "What the fuck are we doing here?"

He pulls his helmet off and shakes his head, reviving his long, wavy hair that I know from experience is silky and smells like spice with a hint of motor oil—a scent that might only be appealing to me. That's not the only thing I notice. His eyes are gray-blue, like a stormy ocean. They're hypnotic.

No. Not hypnotic. Annoying. Because we're at a restaurant and not the brothel where my sister is.

"Calm down, hellcat," he says, noticing my sharp gaze. "I skipped breakfast since I had to wake up at the butt-crack of

dawn to pick your ass up, and I'm starving." He takes the helmet from me and rests it on his bike.

"Isn't there a restaurant at the Honey Pot?" I ask, knowing full well there is. Myla and I haven't spoken a lot since she left the Thirst Trap, but she did give me a run-down of the brothel when she got the job.

"I eat there all the time." He throws an arm around my shoulders and propels me forward. "I want something different."

I shove him off me. "I don't have time for this."

Instead of doing what I want, he continues into the restaurant without me, knowing he's my ride and I have no other options. I'd call an Uber, but I don't have a bank card. I'm literally stuck here.

"Lucky!" I yell, shielding my eyes from the sun.

Again, the bastard ignores me and walks into the restaurant.

Huffing, I follow after him. The second I'm inside, the delicious aroma of eggs, bacon, and sausage hits me, and my stomach growls. I haven't eaten since lunch yesterday since I try to not eat before a shift—dancing with a full belly is a bad idea for many reasons—and by the time I got home, I was so anxious about today that I couldn't bring myself to eat.

I spot Lucky at the hostess station, where a teenage girl is ogling him with puppy dog eyes as she gathers menus and leads him into the dining room. With my arms folded across my chest, I march after them.

"I'll have a coffee, and she'll have..." He motions to me as I take a seat in the booth across from him.

"Orange juice, please."

The girl's smile falls when she sees me. She was probably hoping Lucky was dining alone. Her disappointment makes me feel a bit better. This is only one of many unpleasant things that will happen in her innocent life, and I'm happy I was part of it.

Does that make me a bitch? Probably. But nobody has any business being happy in a world where evil things are going on right under their noses. Things that wouldn't happen if people weren't so caught up in their own bullshit.

I guess you could say I'm jaded.

"I'll grab your drinks, and your server will be right with you," she says, her attention only on the big scary biker, who apparently isn't scary to teenagers. But he is to the adults in the room. I didn't miss the conversations that quieted as he entered or the hushed whispers now that we're seated.

I should tell them I'm a stripper and really give them something to talk about.

"Glad you could join me." Lucky rests his folded arms on the table, his plain white tee pulling across his biceps. One of his arms is heavily tattooed with what I think is a colorful pirate motif, but the other is nearly a blank slate. I wonder why he got them and how much more of him is tattooed.

No, I don't.

This man is standing between me and my sister, limiting what precious time I have to spend with her. "Not like I had a choice."

His expression changes from amused to dead serious, his tone lowering. "You always have a choice. Might not like the consequences, but the choice is there."

I take in his words, wondering if he's right. Do I have choices? It doesn't feel like it, but if I force myself to simplify it into a yes or no answer, then I'd have to agree. Although, if both options are equally horrendous, does having a choice even matter?

"I guess," I say noncommittally.

The waitress drops off our drinks, and I watch in horror as Lucky grabs nearly every sugar packet on our table and dumps it into his coffee. It only gets worse when he opens six tiny cups of French vanilla creamer and pours them in, too. I can't tell if he's fucking with me or is for real. I get my answer

when he stirs it up and takes a long swallow, humming his delight.

“I see you like a splash of coffee in your sugar and cream?”

He laughs loud and deep, startling me. Glancing around, I catch every eye in the joint focused on him. What’s with this guy?

“Basically,” he says, leaning in and lowering his voice. “I have a bit of a sweet tooth.”

“That explains the licorice.”

“You got me. I always keep a bag of it in my cut.” He opens his leather vest, exposing his hidden candy.

“How old are you?” I ask because the burly beard makes it hard to judge. He could be hiding a baby face under there, for all I know. Even his slightly weathered skin could be due to too much sun exposure rather than age.

“I’m thirty-one, why?”

“I’ve just never seen a grown adult carry candy in their pocket.”

He sighs and reaches his arms out wide to rest on the back of the bench, unapologetically taking up so much space. I wonder what it would feel like to be that confident, to not care who sees you or takes an interest in you.

It could never be me.

“Yeah, well, I blame it on my folks. My whole life, they told me I was allergic to sugar, so I never had so much as a cookie until I was fifteen.”

“And you believed them?”

“They’re my folks,” he says as if that’s an explanation, but it’s not to me.

My parents told me a lot of shit, and I can’t ever remember a time I believed them. Even when I was just a child and they told me I couldn’t have the cute Strawberry Shortcake bikini I was eyeing because it was my obligation to keep the thoughts

of men pure, I had this gut feeling that it was all bullshit. I was six, for fuck's sake.

Thinking back on it now, it makes me think they were the fucked-up ones by sexualizing a child. If anyone has any thoughts other than "How stinkin' cute is that girl?" when they see a little girl in a bikini, then they're the ones who should be ashamed, not me.

"How did you find out they were lying?"

"My buddy, Rigger, was staying the night and smuggled in some Skittles. I figured one tiny piece of candy wouldn't kill me, so I ate one. When nothing happened, I ate a couple more. I finished off that whole bag, and the only thing that happened was I got a little hyper." He laughs again, and this time, I don't bother looking around because I'm too transfixed on this insane man. "I barged into my parents' room at midnight, holding up the empty bag and telling them I must've grown out of my allergy. Scared the shit out of them, but after they woke up a little, I saw the lie on their faces."

"Sucks when you find out your parents are liars."

"Nah, it wasn't that deep. My mom told me she made it up after giving me some ice cream when I was two years old. I got all hyped up, climbing the furniture and shit. She was just protecting her peace."

Our server interrupts our conversation, ready to take our orders. Knowing a little about Lucky, I'm not surprised when he orders the strawberry French toast with whip cream. I opt for the egg white and asparagus omelet with a side of turkey bacon, since I know it won't cause me to bloat.

"Asparagus omelet? That sounds gross," Lucky says after the server takes our menus, leaving us alone once again.

"Maybe to a man-child like you, but to us grown-ups, it's a healthy choice."

"I'm not a man-child." He pouts before realizing how immature he sounds. "I'm older than you."

"How do you know how old I am?"

“Your sister and I are really good friends.”

What does “really good friends” mean? Have they fucked? No, there’s no way. Lucky isn’t my sister’s type. She’s more into the intellectual types. Then again, she’s a prostitute now, so maybe he’s a client. My face screws up when I think about how much I enjoyed grinding on his big dick when he’d been with my sister.

“What’s that look for?” He takes a sip of his sugary coffee.

“Just thinking about how gross it is that I was giving a lap dance to someone my sister fucked.”

He chokes, and coffee dribbles down his beard. I hand him a napkin as he reaches for his water.

“You good?” I ask after his sputters slow.

“Goddamn, hellcat. You can’t say shit like that when I’m drinking.” He pats his beard, soaking up the coffee. “I haven’t fucked your sister.”

I tip my head to the side and raise my brows. “You expect me to believe that?”

“Hell yeah, I do. I’m not a liar. Besides, it’s against regulations for any of the Sons to sleep with our employees. We could get shut down, and I’m not going to be the reason our cash cow dries up.”

“Are you calling my sister a cow?”

He growls. “Jesus fuck. No, I’m calling the Honey Pot a cow.” Realizing that doesn’t sound any better, he shakes his head and blows out a breath. “Anyone ever tell you you’re exhausting?”

“A few people, actually.”

“Yeah, well, they weren’t lying. You’re wound tighter than a two-dollar watch.”

“What?”

“It doesn’t matter. All you need to know is that I haven’t slept with your sister. We’re just friends, and since I know how old she is and you’re her twin, I know how old you are.”

I wonder what else she's told him, and I'm about to ask when our food is delivered. By the time the server leaves, I forget to ask, because I'm too busy watching Lucky eat. He's a big man, so the obvious assumption is that he can eat, but when he jabs a fork into a slice of the French toast and shoves the entire thing in his mouth, I'm speechless. He barely chews before another slice of bread goes in.

"What?" he asks around a mouthful.

"When you said you were hungry, you weren't kidding."

"I'm a growing boy." He pats his flat stomach.

I shake my head and pick up my utensils, making a show of cutting my omelet into bite-sized pieces just in case no one ever showed him how. Who knows how this Neanderthal was raised? If I were to guess, it was in a barn next to the hogs.

"You and Myla are really friends?" I ask between bites.

"Yeah. She's awesome. You don't know me that well, but I'm a pretty chill guy—"

"You don't say."

He smirks. "Anyway, Myla's cool like that too. I hang out with her whenever she's not working, and we talk. She's even come by the clubhouse a few times when she's not on tour."

"Clubhouse?" I ask, picturing a bunch of bikers hanging out in a wooden treehouse.

"It's like a home base for the Sons, somewhere we can have a beer and party, that sort of thing. I live in a cabin on the property, so if I'm not at the Honey Pot, The Garage, or Dope, I'm there."

"Dope?"

There's so much I don't know about Myla's new life and her new friends. It's only been three months since I got her away from the Thirst Trap, but we've barely spoken in that time. Not because I don't want to; it just hurts too much. I got her away so she could do something with her life, not get deeper into the sex business by becoming a prostitute.

“The weed shop the club owns. You smoke?”

“No.”

“That’s too bad. Coulda hooked you up.”

“Not my thing,” I say, but what I mean is that I don’t have the luxury of letting my guard down. Not ever. One slip and my life could be over.

Long minutes of eating in silence pass until Lucky pushes away his empty plate and says, “Tell me about you.”

“What about me?”

“Anything. I know what Myla has told me, but that wasn’t much.”

“There’s nothing to tell.”

“Seriously doubt that.” His penetrating gaze bores into me, making me uncomfortable. The only time anyone asks about me is when I’m at the club and giving a lap dance. Most people feel the urge to make small talk as I work them over. It’s dumb, really. They don’t care, and besides, none of my answers are real.

I give him my practiced smile, letting Stormy take over. “Just a girl who loves to dance and found a way to make money doing it.”

His lip curls. “Don’t do that.”

“What?”

“Give me that fake shit. I’m here with Tinleigh, not Stormy.”

“I don’t know what you mean.” I’m still smiling, but I feel the crack in my armor.

“Yeah, you do. You forget I work at a brothel. I see the change in the girls when they go to work, and I know why they do it. Don’t blame them a bit. But I’m the realest motherfucker you’ll ever meet, and I expect the same from you.” Gone is the light-hearted man-child, and in his place is the biker. I’m not the only one who switches personas, it seems.

“Maybe I don’t like talking about myself,” I say.

“Why?”

Growing frustrated, I push my plate away and set my elbows on the table. “Because there’s nothing to say. I left Utah at eighteen, moved to Reno, and have been working for Neal ever since. That’s it. The end.”

“That’s not it.” He reaches over the table and grabs my hand, pulling it up to his mouth. His mustache and beard tickle my sensitive skin, and I can’t do anything but watch with rapt attention as he drops a chaste kiss there. “But I can wait until you’re ready to tell me more.”

CHAPTER FIVE

LUCKY



It feels good to have her back on my bike, her arms around me. Some might think our first meal together didn't go well, but I disagree. My hellcat might flash her claws, but I know that's just to protect herself. I have a unique perspective after spending almost every day with sex workers, and I've learned a lot from it.

My hellcat. I huff because I don't even know what I'm thinking. She's not mine. She can't be. But both times I've been in her company, I seem to forget that fact.

Pulling up to the Honey Pot, I park in the back near the residential suites. The brothel is an old motel that's been renovated into what it is now. The east end of the property is where the girls stay during their tour, while the west end has all kinds of themed rooms our guests can choose from. In between the two are a parlor, kitchen, restaurant, spa, workout room, and clinic.

Nevada is the only state with legalized prostitution, but a lot of the other brothels are run-down and make you feel slimy the second you step inside. Not the Honey Pot. Everything is luxurious and modern. If anything is dirtying up the place, it's the bikers who protect it.

"This is it, huh?" Tingleigh pulls off the helmet and secures it back in place.

"Come on, Myla's room is this way." I place a hand on her lower back, noticing it spans the entire width. Her personality is so big, I tend to forget she's pint-sized.

Once inside, we walk slowly so she can take everything in. The artwork on the walls is a trip. The images are smutty as hell, depicting couples of all kinds fucking. Men and men, women and women, men and women, groups, it's all represented in each painting. But they're abstract, so they're not quite pornographic.

"It's beautiful in here," she says absentmindedly as we stop in front of Myla's room where I knock three times, so she knows it's me before entering.

"Gimme just a second," Myla calls out.

"I brought you a surprise," I say.

That piques her interest, and seconds later, the door swings open. "Please say it's donuts."

Dressed in a silk robe with a towel around her hair, Myla freezes when she spots Tinleigh. The two sisters stare at each other for a long minute, almost as if they can't believe the other is there. It's a trip seeing them together, like double vision or some shit. The trance breaks, and in perfect unison, they move quickly to embrace.

Not gonna lie, any teenage fantasy I had about twins comes bubbling to the surface, and I'd give anything for them to turn to me and drop their clothes. I'll keep that thought inside my head, though; I value my balls too much to let it out.

"I missed you." Tinleigh snuffles, making me feel like an even bigger asshole because here they are having a moment, and I'm thinking about how awesome it would be to have double the tits.

"Me too. I can't believe you're here. Wait—" She suddenly sobers, pulling away from her sister, a worried look on her face. "How are you here?"

"This asshole showed up at the club last night and told me you've been worried, so I thought I'd pop in and reassure you I'm okay."

Myla's gaze shoots to mine. "You did this?"

“Stress causes wrinkles, and you’re too pretty to age prematurely,” I kid.

“God, you’re a dick. But I love you.” She moves from Tingleigh’s arms to mine. “Thank you.”

“No problem, short stuff.” I release her and give Tingleigh a chin tip. “I’ll let you guys talk. Just come find me when you’re ready to go home.”

Leaving the room, I feel good. Not only did I get a chance to hang out with Tingleigh, but now Myla won’t be stressed. Two birds, one biker.

I head to the security room, where I find Golden, the club’s treasurer, and Tobi, a prospect. All of us Sons take turns working shifts here, researching clients and protecting our employees. Most of the time, just having us walk around keeps everyone in line, but occasionally, someone thinks they’re above acting gentlemanly, and we have to step in.

“How’s it going?” I ask, taking a seat in one of the swivel chairs.

“Quiet this morning,” Golden says, his leg bouncing. “What’s up with you? You aren’t working today.”

“Nah, just came to deliver Fiona a present.” I use her working name so as not to confuse him. “I have to be at the Garage later, but I’ll hang out until then.”

Along with security shifts here, I’ve been working at the Garage since I was sixteen. Both Rigger and I started out cleaning up the shop at the end of each day, slowly learning the ins and outs of car repair until we knew our shit enough to work on cars and bikes.

The only club business venture I don’t have a hand in is Dope since Bones, the club doctor, doesn’t like people fucking with his weed. He brings a prospect in to work the front counter, but other than that, he runs it alone.

“What kind of present?” Golden asks, an edge to his tone.

I clamp a hand on his shoulder, grinning. “Always thinking the worst of me.”

“Have you given me a reason not to?”

“Fair point.” Of all my brothers, I’m the one who pushes the boundaries the most. Though after all the shit Rigger went through with Navy, he might’ve taken that honor. I turn to Tobi. “Hey, kid. Why don’t you do a perimeter check?”

“Yeah, sure.” He jumps to his feet and dashes out of the room like a good little prospect should.

“Think he’ll make the cut?” I ask when he’s out of earshot.

“Yeah, he’s a good kid. Young, though. I wonder if we’re doing right by him.”

“That’s the dad in you coming out.”

“Probably,” he sighs.

Out of all the ranking members, Golden is the only one with a kid. The mom isn’t in the picture, never has been, leaving Golden to raise the kid all on his own. It’s why he’s so high-strung. Kids’ll do that, I guess.

“You want to see Tyson patched in someday?”

“Honestly, I don’t think I’ll be able to stop him. You see how he is with you guys; he thinks y’all hung the moon.” His leg bounces faster. “But if I had a say in it, this wouldn’t be the life I want for him.”

“I get that, but you know if he chooses this, we got his back. Same way we got yours, brother.”

He huffs. “Good thing I have twelve more years to come to terms with it. Now tell me what you did for Fiona, and does it have anything to do with the outing you went on with Dutch last night?”

“You heard about that?” I gather my hair up into a low bun.

“Yeah. Dutch said you were walking a little funny after your private dance.” In a rare show of humor, his lip tips up in the corner.

“I was not.” I laugh, twisting side to side in my chair. “Okay, maybe I was a little.”

“So what does that have to do with Fiona?”

“I guess Dutch can keep his mouth shut about some things.” I pause, thinking of how to word this correctly since Golden is our golden boy who walks a straight line. Or as much as one can when you’re a Son. “Fiona has a twin who works at the Thirst Trap. She was missing her, so I decided to get her and bring her here for a visit.”

“And in order to do that, you needed a private dance?”

“Well, I needed to get her alone to talk to her, didn’t I?”

He smirks, shaking his head. “Did she know who you were when that dance began?”

“Not exactly.”

“You asshole. Was she pissed?”

“Sorta, but shit. Have you seen Fiona?” I wait for his nod, even though the answer is obvious. “Okay, now imagine her, only hotter because instead of being all shy and shit, she’s got an attitude problem.”

“Sounds like trouble,” he grumbles.

“And a hell of a good time,” I add.

“Your mama ever drop you on your head when you were young?”

“I don’t know. I’ll ask her next time I see her.”

He shakes his head in exasperation. “The Thirst Trap, huh? That’s owned by that dickwad Neal, right?”

“Yeah. You know anything about him?”

“Nothing good.”

“Like what?” Seeing the look of fear on Tinleigh’s face when he was brought up has me wanting to know more about this guy and his business. I have a feeling I won’t like what I find and that I should stay out of it, but curiosity has me in a chokehold.

“Just rumors that won’t get you anywhere. If you want to know the real deal, you should talk to one of the Royal

Bastards. With them owning Royal Treatment, I'll bet they have some good intel."

"That's actually a good idea."

"My ideas are always good," he says without humor.

"Truth." I stand. "Dads know best."

"Fuck." He turns his attention back to the wall of security feeds. "Now get out of here so I can focus."

With that, I leave. Glancing at my phone, I see it's been about an hour since I left the girls to catch up. Knowing Tinleigh can't stick around long, I head that way.

CHAPTER SIX

TINLEIGH



Bunching up the pillow under my head, I roll to face Myla. We've been lounging in her bed for nearly an hour now, catching up and reminiscing.

"You look content," I say, taking my twin's hand and giving it a squeeze.

"I am. I had a lot of doubts when I applied for this job, but I was desperate. Turns out, I'm really good at making people happy, and I actually enjoy it."

"You don't mind having sex with random people?"

"No. All anyone who walks through those doors wants is to feel accepted and seen. A lot of times, that doesn't happen in their everyday life, so they come here. If anyone understands that, it's me. My whole life, people assumed I'd do whatever they wanted because I didn't speak up for myself."

Her words hit me like a ton of bricks. "I did it too, didn't I?"

"It's not all your fault. I let you do it." Her smile is tight and sad.

"I'm sorry, My."

"It's okay. Really. But I have to admit, I'm enjoying figuring out who I am without anyone else's input. This job is exactly what I needed to do that."

"I'm happy for you." We stare at each other in silence for a long moment, not needing words to communicate. When I feel

my nose sting, it's time to lighten the mood. "What if the person smells bad? Or you aren't attracted to them? Or what if they're really bad at sex?"

She ticks her answers off on her fingers. "We make all our guests shower before we begin services, and yes, we monitor to make sure they're cleaning everything. I'm not always physically attracted to my clients, but there's something attractive about every person on this Earth. You just have to find that thing. And sometimes they *are* bad at sex, but that's what I'm here for. I've taught many a man how to please a woman."

"What a crazy life you have."

"What about you? Have you been seeing anyone?"

The last question sobers me. Even though we both worked for Neal, I made concessions to give Myla a semi-normal life. Myla has always been my weakness, and he exploited that as much as possible. As long as I did everything he asked of me, he mostly left her alone. She was free to come and go from our apartment, which meant she dated and had friends.

I took care of her behind the scenes, never letting her see the darkness just below the surface of the club. Everything was fine until Myla casually mentioned to Neal that she was applying to work at the Honey Pot. She met a woman who worked here who told her all about it, and the job appealed to her. If she would've talked to me about it first, I could've talked her out of it. But she didn't, and when Neal brought me into his office to explain what he'd do to her if she quit, I knew I had to figure out a way to get her free.

The thing about twins in the sex industry is that we're worth more together than apart. Every man has a fantasy about identical twins, and though it's gross, we played into it for the cash. At least once a shift, we were hired for a private dance together. Neal made a lot of money off us, and it wasn't easy to talk him into letting Myla go.

"No. Not seeing anyone."

She shoves me playfully. “You need to get out there. One day, your youthful good looks will be gone, and you’ll still be alone.”

That was fine by me. When I picture my future, all I see is my sister and me when we’re old and gray, sitting on matching rocking chairs and knitting sweaters. I’m starting to realize that I might be pulling Myla into a future she doesn’t want. That leaves me sitting in a rocking chair all alone, but I’m unbothered. As long as she’s happy, I’m happy.

“I don’t mind being alone.”

“At least you’ll always have me.”

“Always,” I say and then change the subject. “So, tell me about you and Lucky.”

She rolls her eyes. “He’s an idiot, but he makes me laugh, and we have a lot in common.”

“Do you like him?” I don’t know why I’m asking. It doesn’t matter.

“A lot. I know he looks kind of scary, but he’s a giant softy.”

“Do you think you guys will... hook up or whatever?”

She laughs. “No. He’s definitely not my type. I mean, I adore him, but not like that. He’s like the older brother we never had.”

I curse at the relief I feel, even knowing there can’t ever be anything between Lucky and me. When someone harbors as many secrets as I do, you can’t afford to get close to anyone.

“Oh.”

Her brows bunch. “Why are you asking?”

“Just curious. He said the same thing about you, but I’ve never seen a man and a woman be friends. Especially when they’re both hot.”

“You think he’s hot?” Her question is more accusatory than curious.

“Don’t you?”

Her nose scrunches. “He’s too hairy and veiny and muscly. I don’t want to worry my partner will crush me in bed.”

All of the things she hates are what I love. Our tastes couldn’t be more opposite.

“I guess.”

“Don’t go there, Tinny.” Her tone is cautionary.

“Go where?”

“He’s literally my boss, and he’s a man-whore. Not that there’s anything wrong with having an active sex life, but he has no intention of ever settling down.”

Neither do I.

“I’m not going to hook up with him. I was just asking.”

“I mean it. He’s off-limits. I really like it here, and I don’t want to have to get a job at any of the other brothels if you get together and then things go sou—”

“Myla! I’m not doing anything with Lucky. It was just a question.”

The look she gives me says she doesn’t believe me. “Can I even trust him to get you home without hitting on you?”

We both whip our heads around when there are three consecutive knocks at the door, and a grinning Lucky appears. Whatever look he sees on our faces causes his smile to fade, the licorice hanging out of his mouth drooping.

“What?” he asks.

“Nothing,” we say in unison.

“Are you ready to go? ’Cause I can come back.”

“No, I’m ready.” I lean over, smothering Myla in a hug that has to last me for a long time. “Love you, sis.”

“Love you too. Next time I’m off tour, we should get together.”

“I’ll see what I can do.”

She sighs. “That doesn’t sound promising.”

“I have some things going on, but I’ll try.” Climbing off the bed, I straighten myself and turn to the sexy, bearded biker in the doorway. “Let’s go.”

Once outside, dread fills me. Today was so fun and relaxing, two words I never use to describe my life, but now, it’s over and back to reality. Not knowing if I’ll get caught only adds to the sick feeling taking over me.

“You okay?” Lucky asks, handing me a helmet.

“Fine.” I plop it on my head and wait for him to climb on before straddling the bike.

“You in a rush to get back?” he calls out after bringing the engine to life.

“Yes.”

“You can’t take a small detour?”

“No, Lucky. Thank you for bringing me here, but I don’t have the luxury of gallivanting around all day.”

“What if I promised you’d enjoy it?”

I should say no. The longer I’m out, the greater the risk of getting caught. Still, something in me wants to cling to this freedom for as long as I can. Chances are I’ll be found out, and my evening will look much different than my day. Might as well make it worth it.

“Where do you want to go?”

“I have an errand to run.”

That’s disappointing. I thought Mr. Good Time Biker would take me on a ride or somewhere to cause some chaos. An errand sounds boring and definitely not worth the punishment headed my way.

“I don’t think so. I need to get home,” I say.

“Oh, come on.” His hand reaches for my knee, snaking inside the worn hole in my denim and stroking bare flesh. I jump, startled at the contact, but his touch remains, warming

my skin and spreading tingles throughout my body. I try to muster up some anger at his audacity, but I can't deny that I like the way he makes me feel.

I find myself murmuring an "okay" before I have time to overthink. I both hate that I'm attracted to him and love it in equal measure. I'm so used to feeling nothing that I could easily get addicted to this fluttering in my belly. This man is a threat to my self-preservation.

"Good girl." His hand moves away to grip the handlebar, and he peels out of the parking lot.

Even though he can't see me, I bite into my lower lip to hide my smile from his praise. It's fine. I'm fine. I'll just use the time it takes to get wherever he's taking me to reel my emotions back in. So, as much as it hurts, as the miles pass by with the wind in my hair and the feeling of freedom washing over me, I tamp it down and remember my dark reality.

A half-hour isn't nearly time enough to convince me there's no hope. I'm mostly there as Lucky parks in front of a two-story home in a planned community where the yards are maintained and neighbors wave as you pass. They even acknowledged us, though the roar of the engine was louder than the lawnmowers, and I'm certain our attire is an offense to their modest senses.

If I was cranky after spending my time on his bike convincing myself to go back to Neal, then being in this neighborhood does the trick. I grew up in a house identical to this and around folks who pretended to be accepting and welcoming, but behind your back, it was a whole different story.

"Where are we?" I ask as I lift the helmet off my head.

"My parents' house."

My eyes bulge. "What the fuck, Lucky? Why would you bring me here?"

"Sunday lunch." He shrugs. "My mama would be pissed if I didn't show up."

"That doesn't explain why you brought me."

His expression softens with his deep exhale. “I don’t know you and you don’t know me. But I’m pretty good at reading people, and something about you says you could use a little comfort. There’s nothing more comforting than a home-cooked meal and some wholesome family time.”

“Clearly, you don’t know me because if you did, you would know I don’t find families comforting.” My life may not be sunshine and rainbows, but at least I know where I stand. There’s not one person who isn’t honest about what they think of me. The men at the club who think I’m nothing more than a toy, my colleagues who see me as their competition, and even Neal, who sees me as a possession. They’ve never once tried to convince me I’m anything more or anything less than what I am to them.

Families are different.

“Then you haven’t met mine.” He takes my hand and pulls me toward the door. “Smile. My mama and sisters are no doubt watching us through the window, and I don’t want them to think I kidnapped you.”

“Didn’t you, though?”

“One hour,” he says. “Give me one hour, and I’ll take you home.”

“Fine.” What else can I say? Maybe if he knew what I was giving up to be here, he’d be a little more respectful of my time, but no. I can’t tell him that. My life is a delicate house of cards, carefully balanced one on top of the other. All it would take is a single misstep, and they would crumble to the ground, taking Myla and me with them.

Sure enough, when we round the corner of the garage to the front porch, I spot three pairs of eyes peering through the wide wooden slats of the blinds. They disappear, and seconds later, the front door swings open, revealing three women. The older one, clearly Lucky’s mom, is adorable with round cheeks and a neat bob. She’s dressed in what appears to be an expensive matching knit set with her cream, short-sleeved top tucked into the pants just in the front.

The two younger ones look like copy-and-paste versions of her, only with longer hair and trendier clothes. If I had to guess, they're both younger than Lucky's thirty-one. They're pretty and put together, but in a way that reminds me all too much of the girls I grew up with.

Lucky's mom beams a smile aimed directly at her son as she pushes through his sisters and opens her arms wide. "Wilder! I didn't think you were coming."

Wilder, huh? The name suits him.

The sisters each take her place in Lucky's embrace, and strangely, it appears genuine, though I can't imagine a family like this is happy with the way he turned out. A member of a 1%er biker club and part-owner of a brothel doesn't fit any parent's ideal image for their child.

"You didn't tell me you were bringing a guest," his mom scolds.

The fight or flight I felt growing up kicks in. Never knowing when the judgmental jabs were coming, or if the looks of disdain would show.

"Didn't think you'd mind." Lucky releases one of his sisters and turns to me. "This is Tinleigh. She's Myla's twin."

They know who Myla is? Why? How?

"Of course she is. You two must be identical, but I knew you weren't her." She narrows her eyes and cocks her head. "I can tell you have a bit more spice in you than your sister."

I blush, embarrassed at her appraisal. "That's what I've been told."

Before I realize what's happening, she's coming at me with open arms and wrapping me in a tight hug. "It's good to finally meet you."

I startle. "Oh. Okay. Thanks."

Gripping me by the shoulders, she holds me at arm's length. "I'm Connie, and those two are Carrie and Callie." She sighs as if she knows what I'm thinking. "My husband and I

made a deal when we got pregnant with Wilder. I got to name any boys we had, and he could name the girls.”

A tall man appears in the doorway and pulls Connie away from me by the waist. “Since my wife has the most beautiful name in the world, I decided to give my daughters names as close to hers as I could.”

Connie full-on blushes, leaning back into his chest and craning her neck to look up at him. “You’re ridiculous.”

“Dad, this is Tinleigh, Myla’s twin,” Lucky introduces me.

I jut out my hand as fast as I can to avoid any more awkward hugs. “Nice to meet you.”

Two dimples appear when he smiles down at me and takes my hand, making me wonder if Lucky has those same dimples underneath all that chaotic beard. “You too. I’m Steve.”

“Well, let’s go inside. Lunch is ready.” Connie claps her hands, and everyone files inside.

Everyone except me.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LUCKY



It only takes me a second to realize Tinleigh doesn't follow us into the house. When I turn to find out why, the woman standing on the porch doesn't even slightly resemble the hellcat who climbed off my bike a few seconds ago.

"You comin' in?" I ask, wondering if I made the wrong choice. I'd texted Mom earlier to tell her I might not make it today, but when I saw how happy Tinleigh was to be with her sister, it made me miss my family. I thought maybe bringing her here would give her the same warm and fuzzies she feels with her sister but judging by the twisted-up look on her face and the arms she's wrapped protectively around herself, I was wrong.

"I don't want to be here," she whispers. "Parents don't like me."

"Mine will."

"No. They won't. And I get treated like dirt enough at the club; I don't need to be treated that way on my only day off."

My face heats at her accusation. Closing the door to stop my family from hearing the bullshit she's spewing, I turn and square my shoulders as I face her. "My family ain't nothin' like that, and I don't appreciate you putting that on them."

"Aren't they?" She laughs humorlessly. "Let me guess. Earlier today, they were at church, singing hymns and praising God for their perfect life."

A conversation I had with Myla about religion comes back to me. She said she was raised in a conservative community

she never quite fit into. If she didn't belong, then Tinleigh was most definitely a black sheep. It would make sense why she's freaking out.

"They're not like that," I say before relenting a bit. "Yes, you're right that they were probably at church, but not how you're implying."

"So they don't care that you sell sex for a living, have probably killed people, and are in a gang?"

"Club," I correct before continuing. "And of course, they care, but they know who I am, and they love me."

"Maybe to your face."

"Fuck you, Tinleigh," I bite out. "You're being just as judgmental as you're accusing them of being."

She flinches at my angry words, but damn it, this conversation is fucked up on so many levels.

"Maybe I am, but at least I'm honest about it."

"This isn't honesty. You've known them for five seconds and think you know their truth?" I take a breath, running my hands through my hair, forgetting it's in a bun. Yanking the elastic free, I shake my hair loose, using the few seconds to calm the hell down. "Listen. Myla told me your parents fucked you both up pretty good, and I realize that gave you some scars, but all I'm asking is that you give them a chance."

"Why did you bring me here?" She repeats the question I thought I knew the answer to, but maybe I was wrong. Why *did* I do it? I have no reason to want to make this girl smile, and clearly, I don't know what it takes to accomplish that anyway. It was stupid.

"Honestly, I don't fuckin' know." I sigh. "If you want me to take you home now, I will. I told you all you had to do was say the words, and I wouldn't argue."

She sucks in her upper lip, chewing on it for a long second. "It would be rude to leave now, so I'll stay. But I swear to God, if you leave me alone—even to take a piss—I'll stab you in the throat."

Just like that, the fire is back in her eyes, and suddenly, I know exactly why I make every excuse to have her close. When she spews her piss and vinegar, I feel alive. She excites me in a way no woman has before, and I want more of it. But it has me wondering which version is the real her—the one from five minutes ago, or the one from five seconds ago. I hope I get to spend enough time with her to figure it out.

“Deal. If I have to piss, I’ll remember to take you with me.” I wink.

“You’d be so lucky.” With her head held high, she strolls past me and walks inside like she owns the place. Meanwhile, I watch the way her hips sway as she goes, mesmerizing me like a pendulum. “You’re already breaking our deal.”

My eyes lift to see her pointing at the ground next to her. And like a damn trained dog, I jump to attention, closing the front door and jogging to her side. Thank fuck my brothers aren’t here to see this. I’d never hear the end of it.

When we reach the dining room, my family is already wrapped up in conversation, their plates piled high with barbecue chicken, pasta salad, and roasted vegetables. Goddamn, I love home cooking.

I hand Tinleigh a plate before taking one for myself, encouraging her to dish up from where the food is laid out on the breakfast bar that separates the kitchen from the dining room.

“This all looks amazing,” Tinleigh says, grabbing the tongs and placing a chicken leg on her plate.

“My mom can really throw down in the kitchen. Being a nurse, she doesn’t get to do it often, so I basically grew up on frozen dinners. But no matter what, she always took Sundays off for church and family lunch. I looked forward to it all week.”

“What about your dad?”

“He’s an accountant, so he worked weird hours and basically lived at the office during tax season. But even if he had been around every night, he can’t cook for shit.”

She snorts. “My dad couldn’t either. One time, my mom went to a women’s retreat, and he tried to make one of those frozen lasagnas. He thought if he put it under the broiler, it would cook faster, but—”

“The top came out burned, and the bottom was still frozen?”

“You say it like you have experience,” she muses.

“My dad pulled the same shit once.” We share a look of commonality that hits me right in the gut.

Once we have food, we move to the dining room, and I say a prayer to whoever is listening that this will go well. The room quiets as I pull a chair out for Tinleigh, like the gentleman my mama raised, before sitting next to her. Dad and Mom sit at either end of the rectangular table while Carrie and Connie sit across, and I can’t help but feel all their eyes on us.

It’s not the first time I’ve brought a woman home—Myla’s come for two Sunday lunches—so I don’t know why they’re bugging out. Surely, I must’ve brought chicks around before that, too. Though now that I’m thinking about it, I don’t think I have. Still, they weren’t this weird with Myla.

“Tinleigh, tell us about yourself,” Mom says, and I glare at her for putting Tinleigh on the spot, but she ignores me.

“There’s not too much to tell. I grew up in Utah, I have a twin sister, which you already knew, and now I’m here. I’m really pretty boring.”

I huff at the lie, earning myself a kick to the shin.

“I doubt that.” Mom takes a sip of her favorite cheap wine cooler that she tries to fancy up by pouring in a wine glass. “Don’t you work at the Thirst Trap? That must be a fascinating job.”

Tinleigh blanches. “Um, yeah. I do.”

Mom leans in conspiratorially. “I’ve always wanted to know something: how do you manage an entire shift wearing those high heels? My feet would be a blistered mess after twenty minutes.”

Surprisingly, Tinleigh lights up. “There are some tricks of the trade. You buy shoes with straps and use a hair dryer to mold them to your foot. There are also powders and blister strips you can use, but even after all that, my feet are killing me by the end of the night.”

“I don’t know what you get paid, but I guarantee it’s not enough to deal with all that.”

“I’ve heard the same about nurses and what you all have to put up with.”

Mom beams. “You’re right about that.”

I settle in my seat, picking up my fork for the first time. It’s not that I worried about what my family would say, since I can’t ever remember there being a drop of judgment coming from their lips. I just didn’t know how Tinleigh would handle their honesty and unfiltered mouths.

“I do the taxes for a couple girls in your profession,” Dad says. “Even some who work at your club. I’d be happy to take a look if you ever need it.”

“That’s very kind. Thank you.”

Carrie’s nose scrunches. “Ew, Dad. You’re so cringe.”

“I am not *cringe*,” he replies, the word sounding exactly like what he’s arguing. “What does that even mean? It doesn’t make sense.”

Everyone laughs but Dad.

“Is your club hiring? Because my manager at the coffee shop is on my last nerve, and I probably make pennies compared to you,” Carrie says.

“Not a chance,” I growl out, not thinking that Tinleigh might take that wrong. It’s just... my sister.

“I am a sexual being, Wilder.”

“The hell you are.” Shivers run up my spine at the thought of my sister having sex.

She points at me. “Mom, tell him.”

“Carrie is right. We all are.”

I set my fork down. “Can we not talk about this? Especially when I’m trying to eat.”

“I have to side with your brother on this one,” Tinleigh chimes in. “But not for the same reasons. You’re a beautiful girl, and the club would be lucky to have you.”

“Then why?” Carrie asks.

My sisters may be a year or two older than Tinleigh, but you’d never know it after having a single conversation with them. Carrie and Callie are at the end of their college years and only keep a job to pay for spending money since my parents pay for their schooling and incidentals, while the only higher education Tinleigh has is from the school of hard knocks. The difference is evident in everything from their appearance to their naivety.

“Just trust me on this. I guarantee the owner of my club is worse than your manager.”

Each time she mentions Neal, there’s a tone in her voice I don’t like. Contacting the Royal Bastards to get more info just moved higher on my priority list. There’s no way I’m getting the truth about what Tinleigh’s up against from her. She’d just as soon handle her own shit than bring anyone else into it.

“Okay, fine, but if that douche asks me to pick up something he dropped so he can look at my ass one more time, I’ll sic Wilder on him.”

“What the hell, Carrie? You didn’t tell me that’s been going on.” I grip my fork so hard I feel the metal bend.

“And that’s why. Look at you.” She gestures to my rigid frame.

“What’s his name?” I demand.

“I’m not telling you.”

“Carrie,” I say, warning lacing my tone.

“If I need you, you’ll be the first to know.”

Tinleigh clears her throat and turns to Mom. “Tell me about what Luck—I mean, Wilder—was like as a kid.”

“How much time do you have?” Mom laughs. “From his very first breath, he’s embodied his namesake. He hit every milestone early, so by nine months, he was walking, and by his first birthday, he was climbing on furniture. Scared the life out of me.”

“He told me about his sugar allergy.” She throws air quotes over the last two words.

“Not the only lie we told him to save our sanity,” Dad says. “We almost didn’t have Carrie and Callie because we could hardly handle him. That’s why there’s such a big age gap between them.”

“I wasn’t that bad.”

“Yes, you were,” my family says in unison.

“And you still are. Colin, too.” Mom takes a bigger gulp of her wine cooler.

“Colin?” Tinleigh asks.

“Rigger,” I clarify.

“Oh, right. The bestie.”

“Those two knuckleheads are the reason behind every gray hair on my head,” Mom says. “When they moved into their own apartment, I thought for sure they’d starve or get locked up or both.”

“And did they?”

“Well, they didn’t starve thanks to me stocking their freezer with leftovers, but I’ve bailed one or both out of jail more than once.”

“Really?”

“Just dumb kid stuff,” I explain. “I haven’t been inside in years.”

“Anyway,” Mom says. “I don’t worry too much about my girls, but I worry about this one every second of every day.”

Tinleigh's brows bunch. "How do you feel about him being in the Sons?"

"His life is his own. That's the hard part about being a parent. Naturally, you feel possession over the person you brought into this world, but that's basic biology so parents won't leave their young on the side of the road after their first sleepless night. The truth is, they're autonomous beings. Our job is to teach and guide them. What they do with that is their choice. I raised an honest, loyal, kind son, and that's what matters most."

Tinleigh's eyes gloss over as she pushes away from the table. "My stupid allergies. Excuse me a minute. Where's the bathroom?"

"Down the hall, first door on the right." Mom points in the general direction.

"Be right back." She gives us a tight smile before taking off toward the bathroom.

"Did I say something wrong?" Mom asks.

"I don't think so." I stand. "I should go check on her."

CHAPTER EIGHT

TINLEIGH



Everything I ever wanted to hear growing up. I brace myself on the pedestal sink, willing the tears to go back to wherever the hell they came from. Lucky's mom just said everything I ever wanted to hear from my own mom.

That I was enough.

That she trusted me.

That my life was my own.

Instead, I was constantly harped on about not falling into line, and it destroyed my confidence to the point where I'm now crying in a stranger's bathroom after the most beautiful parental speech I've ever heard. This is just great.

Three knocks at the door have me standing upright and reaching for a tissue. Apparently, Lucky's secret knock for Myla has transferred to me.

"I'll be out in a sec," I call out, dabbing the inner corners of my eyes so my liner doesn't smudge.

The door opens, and Lucky steps in, shutting it behind him. Damn it. In my haste, I forgot to flip the lock.

"Lucky," I scold. "I don't want you in here."

"What's got you so upset?"

"Nothing. I told you, it's allergies." The lie is weak and pathetic, but I say it anyway.

He tips my chin up with a finger, forcing me to meet his stormy eyes. "Don't lie to me. Now I'll ask again, what's

wrong?”

This level of intimacy should feel awkward since I barely know the guy, but it doesn't. Not at all.

“I love your family. They're really great.”

“And that's making you cry?”

“A little.”

He nods when he sees how true my statement is, sliding his large palm over to cup my cheek. The scratch of his chapped skin feels good, and I find myself leaning into his touch, even though sane me would never allow this. Instead, I should push him out of the bathroom and get myself together on my own. Still, I allow it because, in this moment, I'm vulnerable and raw.

“Why?”

“I started my period today. I'm hormonal.” What does it say about me that I'd rather lie about being on the rag than admit my true feelings? I don't have time to think about that, though, because his thumb strokes my cheek, sending a rush of warmth to my core.

“Tinleigh.”

“What?”

“Stop lying to me and tell me what's got you so worked up.” The hand that's not cupping my face and sending shockwaves throughout my body snakes around my middle and draws me closer.

“I just didn't have that growing up.” I shrug and feel awkward with him touching me as I dangle my arms at my sides, so I reach under his cut and rest them on his hips. It shouldn't be a big deal since I've been touching him there all day while on his bike, but this feels different, more intimate or something.

“You had shit parents,” he says like it's a fact, and it is.

“Yeah.”

“That makes sense.”

“What does?” This close and personal, I spot a scar on his cheek that dips down into his beard, and I wonder how he got it.

There’s a lot about this man I want to know. It makes no sense. He pisses me off, he challenges me, and he makes me do things I don’t want to do. So why do I want to spend hours getting to know him before spending even more hours riding the monster cock I know he has? I felt it at the club and saw the outline of it in his jeans.

“Why you freaked out when we got here. And why you’re in here and not out there inhaling my mom’s food.”

“I left all that behind a long time ago, but being here and seeing how great they are... it just brought up some bad memories.”

“Sorry you went through that.”

“It’s okay.”

“No, it ain’t.”

“You’re right. It’s not.” I blink and realize we’re mere inches apart now. How did that happen? Did I lift up closer to him? Or did he dip lower to me?

“Tinleigh?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m gonna kiss you now. If that’s not okay, tell me now because I’m fuckin’ dying to taste your lips.”

Myla’s warnings are a billboard in my head, flashing with bright red letters. *Lucky’s off-limits. Lucky is a fuck ‘em and leave ‘em’ kind of guy.* But I’ve always been good at ignoring what’s best for me, especially when it involves a man.

I shift my gaze to his lips. The upper one is all but covered by his wiry beard, but the lower one? It’s out in the open, and I can’t think of anything other than how good it would feel pressed to mine.

Tipping my head back just a little more is all the invitation he needs. His mouth is on mine, and my hands roam up his

body, stopping on his broad shoulders, mostly because that's as far as I can reach. His lips are warm and taste of his lunch, but that's okay because I'm sure that's how I taste too. Besides, like he said, his mom's cooking is really good.

His facial hair tickles my skin as our lips move together, and I decide I like the way it feels. Even if it gives me a beard burn, it's worth it to have him this close. His tongue swipes along the seam of my lips, asking for entrance that I grant. In for a penny, in for a pound.

In an ultimate dance of tempting and teasing, he lifts me up by the back of my thighs and turns before backing me up against the bathroom door. My legs are too short to lock him in position, so I squeeze my thighs around his middle, which only makes the pulsing of my clit thrum harder. Especially when I feel the steel rod of his cock press into me.

While my hands are tangling in his hair, his are roaming up and down my jean-covered thighs and ass. As our kiss intensifies and grows hungrier, the urge for more is almost more than I can bear. All knowledge of where we are and who's just on the other side of the door leaves me completely. There's only the sound of my soft moans, the feel of him pressed against me, the scent of barbecue, and... barbecue?

We're at his parents' house. His entire family is waiting for us in the other room. What the hell is wrong with me?

I break the kiss, tipping my head back so he can't kiss me again, but it only opens my throat to him, and he takes advantage, biting and sucking between kisses. Holy shit, it feels so good, but no. This can't happen, not here or anywhere. Not only because of Myla's warnings but because I can't give myself to anyone. My life doesn't belong to me, and if I think for even a second that it does, everything will be ruined.

"Lucky, stop," I whisper shout.

He doesn't stop. Instead, he wedges his leg under my ass so I don't fall and skims his hands up my body until he reaches my heavy and sensitive breasts. The second his fingers flick over my tightly budded nipples, I feel the beginning of an

orgasm blooming low in my belly. My body doesn't seem to care that there's a layer of lace and cotton between us.

Fuck. I'll hate myself for this, but it has to be done.

"Lucky," I repeat, only louder and less breathy. "Stop. We have to stop."

As if coming out of a trance, he freezes in place, his lips still on my neck and his hands covering my breasts. Seconds pass as we both fight to slow our breaths and collect ourselves until he finally lowers me to the ground and turns, giving me his back.

"Shit," he curses with his head lowered.

"I-I'm sorry. It's just—"

"No, you're right. The first time I fuck you won't be in my parents' bathroom. I'll save that for holidays when we bring our kids to visit their grandparents."

My eyes widen, and all words leave me completely. It's not often I'm stunned stupid. There's no way I heard him right because it's been two days and one kiss, and he's already planning a future that involves kids? He really is insane.

He's smirking when he glances over his shoulder. "No arguments? Good. This'll be easier than I thought."

"Why would I argue when you're obviously joking?"

Facing me, he looks me dead in the eyes, all hint of amusement gone. "Not kidding, Tinny. I've never once even considered being with someone long-term. It never even crossed my mind. But the second I saw you up on that stage, that all changed. I know it's too soon, and you're scared—"

"I'm not scared of you." I stand firm while also melting on the inside at his use of the nickname Myla gave me when we were just kids.

"Not of me, maybe." He shrugs. "But of whatever this is between us? You're shakin' in your boots. And that's okay; it scares me, too."

"Lucky."

Laughter coming from the dining room interrupts us, and I breathe a sigh of relief.

“Come on. We can talk about this later.”

Little does he know, there won't be a later because I won't be seeing him again.



I cling to every last second of freedom on our ride back to the diner. But the second my feet are on solid ground, I'm on high alert, scanning my surroundings and eyeing everyone in the vicinity like a potential threat, because they are.

“Thanks for today. I gotta go,” I say to Lucky, who's studying me way too closely, his helmet resting under his arm.

“I can take you to your apartment, you know.”

“No, it's okay. It's just through that alley.”

“All right.” He holds out his hand, and I panic. I might be able to lie my way out of this somehow, but if he hugs me or, worse, kisses me, I'm dead meat. “Your phone, Tinny. Just asking for your phone.”

“I don't have one.”

Not one he can call. The only cell I have is in my nightstand at my apartment, in case Neal checked the location services today.

“Figured as much since that outfit ain't hidin' nothin'.”

Even though I'm just wearing a simple pair of jeans and a tee shirt, he's right. I didn't bring a purse, and he would've noticed a cell in my back pocket—not only because I caught him looking as I walked into his parents' house but also because his hands have been all over me.

“Guess not.”

He reaches into his saddlebag, producing his cell phone. "Here. Take this one."

I narrow my eyes. "I can't take your phone. What good would that do?"

"It's a burner. My number is the only one programmed in."

He holds the phone in his hand between us, but I can't take it. Someone could find it, and by someone, I mean Neal. A cell phone he knows nothing about would mean I'm keeping secrets, and Neal doesn't do secrets.

"You gonna take it?"

"It's not a good idea."

"Why not?" His tone is challenging, like he's daring me to expose the level of shit I'm in.

"I can't do this with you, Lucky. I don't have room in my life for whatever you think is happening," I say. He takes two steps closer, and I'm quick to back up, not missing the hurt in his eyes as I do so.

"I don't *think* shit. I know. And you do, too." He thrusts the phone in my direction but makes no other move toward me. "Just take it. You don't want to use it? Fine, but give yourself the option."

Not seeing another way out of this without exposing too much, I take it and quickly shove it in my bra. Thankfully, it's not a smartphone, just a thin little Nokia, so it's small enough to get swallowed up by my breasts.

"See ya around, Lucky." I turn to speedwalk down the alley.

"Not if I see you first," he calls out. It sounds more like a warning than a casual, flirty goodbye, but I don't have time to worry about his meaning. My mind has already jumped to what's ahead.

By the time I reach the end of the alley, I barely register the sound of his engine as it leaves the neighborhood. That's a lie because the further from me he gets, the more I miss him. Which is stupid.

I skirt my way through the small apartment complex where all Neal's employees live. Not just his girls but his goons, too. The violent threats he spews on a daily basis aren't enough to calm his paranoia; he has to have eyes on us, watching our every move. Which is how I'm certain I'm fucked.

Pulling the mail key from my pocket, I stop at the metal box and check for mail, though I know I only get junk mail here. Looking as nonchalant as possible, I pull the postcard advertisements from the box before locking it.

That's right. Nothing to see here. Just out for a little walk to check the mail.

I climb the steps to my studio apartment, not seeing anyone or anything out of the ordinary. Inside, the lights are out, and the blackout curtains are drawn, just the way I left them. It's not unusual, considering I usually sleep until right around this time every day.

Setting my mail key and the junk mail down on the counter, I finally allow myself to relax. All this paranoia for no reason at all.

"Did you have a good day?" a deep voice asks.

I jump, my heart climbing into my throat. I squint as I look into my combined living room and bedroom. There, sitting on the loveseat that's pressed against the foot of my bed, is a shadowy figure.

Fuck.

"What are you doing sitting in the dark?" I ask, moving to the window and pulling open the curtains.

"Waiting for you." There's no malice in his tone, but that means nothing.

"Oh. I didn't know you were coming by, or I wouldn't have taken such a long walk." I try to keep the tremble from my voice, but I don't know if I succeed.

"That's strange. I got a phone call earlier alerting me that one of my girls took off with a member of the Sons of Erebus. That wasn't you?" He stands, folding his arms across his

chest. By looks alone, Neal isn't an imposing man. But rage and a bad attitude go a long way.

"No. Like I said, I was just out for a walk." Needing an excuse to put distance between us, I step into my kitchen and pull a bottle of water out from my fridge.

I haven't even closed the fridge when he's on me, gripping my hair at my nape and yanking back hard. Pain erupts from my scalp, and there's no doubt I'll have a bald spot after this.

"Neal!" I cry out.

"You're lying to me, and you know how much I hate liars," he growls out.

"I just went to see Myla. That's all."

"That's all?" He releases me with a shove, sending my face into the handle of the freezer and dazing me. I groan, feeling a goose egg form in the middle of my forehead. That'll be a bitch to cover. "If you're so interested in whoring yourself out, maybe it's time for a promotion."

"I'm not. I swear. Myla was worried about me, and she wasn't going to stop unless she saw me in person."

He grips me by the throat, pushing me against the shitty laminate kitchen counter. The sharp edge digs into my back as he continues to push until the back of my head slams into the upper cabinet. His grip tightens, cutting off my air supply.

"You think I give a shit about how your bitch of a sister feels?" His narrow face screws up in disgust.

I shake my head as much as I can with his hold on me. Pressure builds in my head like a balloon threatening to burst, and my lungs burn with the need for oxygen. I claw at his hands, but it's only an instinctual reaction. I have no hope of getting him off me.

"You're mine. You know that, right? And if I ever"—he pulls me forward, only to slam my head back into the particle board—"hear about you going anywhere without clearing it with me"—again, my head is knocked against the cabinet, but this time it makes an indent in the material—"I swear to all

things holy, you'll be out on those streets earning me money the only way a lying bitch like you knows how."

My vision darkens, unsure whether it's from lack of oxygen or the blows to my head. Probably both. He releases me, and I lean forward, drawing in a long and painful breath.

It's over.

I'm still alive.

I survived.

I repeat those thoughts as I hack and wheeze, uncontrollably drooling onto the stained tile floor.

But I celebrated too early.

"You're making a mess, you dumb bitch." He moves to my side and shoves my head. I'm too weak to give any resistance, and I careen forward. My face collides with the tile, and everything goes black. It's more of a blessing than anything. At least now I have a reprieve from the pain.

Sometime later, my eyes flutter open and then immediately shut tight. Red-hot pain burns through my head and neck as I roll onto my back. I cry out, a pathetic and sad sound that I have no control over. It's then I realize I'm not on the hard kitchen floor any longer. Patting my side, I feel the fuzzy pillows I bought to spruce the drab room up.

Why would he move me to the bed?

I suddenly feel the cool breeze of the air conditioning on places that should be covered. With shaky hands, I skim my hands down my body and immediately regret it when I meet something cold and wet on my stomach. At least he pulled out this time.

Tears trail from my eyes, wetting my hair and pooling in my ears. Everything in me screams that this is enough. I should leave because next time, he might kill me, which would leave Myla unprotected.

Then again, I can't even protect myself. Just look at me.

This is such a contrast compared to my morning and afternoon. Why did I give Lucky so much shit about taking me to breakfast and his parents' house? I'm so fucking stupid. I'd give anything to be at either of those places right now, safe next to a man nobody in their right mind would fuck with, eating good food, and far away from this hell hole. This never would happen with Lucky around.

What if I call him right now? Would he come here and rescue me? Or would he tell me this isn't his fight and not get involved?

I reach between my breasts, breathing a sigh of relief when my hand meets hard plastic. Thank god Neal didn't take off my shirt. Flipping the phone open, I navigate to the contacts and see that, just as he promised, his number is the only one stored.

I shouldn't call him. He doesn't deserve to be brought into the mess that is my life. I'm not his problem, and I'm no one to him. But Myla is, and if Myla knew the truth, she'd want me to get help.

Closing my eyes, I swallow hard, the swelling in my throat making it damn near impossible. I don't know what the right answer is. All I know is that I don't want to die like this, beaten and bruised, covered in my enemy's cum. I bark out a laugh; Mom and Dad would feel so justified if they received a call to come pick up their dead daughter's raped and abused body.

This is exactly how they pictured my future, and nothing stokes the flames of my defiance like that thought. I refuse to give them that satisfaction.

So then, what do I do?

CHAPTER NINE

LUCKY



I wake up early, thoughts of Tinleigh the last thing on my mind last night and the first thing running through my head today. Nothing is more confusing than spending your life knowing how it'll end and then being thunderstruck when a tornado of a woman changes everything.

It seems unlikely what I'm feeling for her is real. What's more likely is that my dick is doing all my thinking, and if I get it in, just once, all this noise would quiet. Still, something about that rationale doesn't sit right with me. I've wanted a lot of women and was never so consumed with one that I couldn't be distracted by anyone or anything else.

What the fuck is wrong with me, and how do I fix it? Not knowing the answer, I decide to do the only thing that makes sense: learn more. And to learn more, I need to visit the Bastards over at Royal Treatment. So, after a shower—where I beat my meat into submission—I climb on my bike and head west to downtown.

It doesn't take long before I pull into the parking lot of the strip joint I've only ever heard about. Even just looking at the front of the building, it's clear that the Royal Bastards did for this place what we did for the Honey Pot. The building has been updated, and the signage is modern, taking away all the tackiness its competition possesses.

They're not open for business since it's still early, but two bikes and a car are parked near the entrance, telling me at least two Bastards are here. I knock on the door and flip my middle finger up at the camera pointed at me. There's no doubt in my

mind they can make out every hair in my beard since Sly, their resident hacker and tech genius, would ensure this place is secure. Same as what Satyr, our enforcer, does for the Honey Pot.

Seconds later, the door swings open, and Loki, their president, stands before me. “What the fuck do you want?”

“Hello to you, too.”

“Not interested in niceties. I got shit to do.” Believe it or not, this is a friendlier version of Loki than the one I had the pleasure of encountering a couple years ago. That man would’ve answered with the barrel of a gun aimed at my head. He’s softened up a bit ever since he hooked up with his ol’ lady.

“Had some questions about the Thirst Trap and thought you’d know more than most. That true?”

“Please tell me you’re not dumb enough to get mixed up with that fucker.” He folds his arms across his chest.

“Good Lord, babe. At least invite the man in.” A beautiful blonde appears at his side, wrapping an arm around his waist. “Sorry, he has no manners. I’m Bridgette.” She holds out her hand.

I reach for it but stop when I hear a growl come from Loki. My hand drops. “Lucky. Nice to finally meet the woman who tamed this bear.”

Her giggle is light and airy, proving her man hasn’t tainted her yet. “Let me let you in on a little secret. It’s all an act.”

“Birdie,” Loki bites out, but when he looks down at her, there’s nothing but love in his gaze. All these bikers going soft for their women. Yet another reason I shouldn’t be getting involved with Tinleigh.

I scratch the back of my neck, feeling awkward at seeing Loki being put in his place.

“Come on in. I’ll get you both a cup of coffee.” She positions herself in front of an unmoving Loki and shoves him back. “Maybe a calming cup of tea for you, mister.”

My lips twitch, and I follow them inside. Immediately, I'm impressed with how nice this place really is. The lights are on, so I know I'm not getting the full effect, but it doesn't matter. I'm still in awe.

Bridgette veers off to the bar while Loki takes a seat in a leather smoking chair below a human-sized bird cage suspended from above. I take the chair across from him, my eyes roaming the room. "You guys did this place right."

"Thanks," he mutters. "So what do you want to know? Like I said, got shit to do."

"One of our girls over at the Honey Pot has a sister who works for Neal. I get the sense things aren't quite right over there, and out of courtesy to our girl, I thought I'd follow up with someone who knows more about it."

"Neal is a goddamn predator who deserves a bullet to the brain," a deep voice rumbles from behind me. Turning, I see the VP of the Bastards, Khan, walk over. I stand and shake his hand. There aren't many men bigger than me, but he's one of them. "Good to see you, brother."

"You too." I sit back down. "He's that bad, huh?"

"Worse. I could tell you about it, but I know someone else who can give you more info than we can." Khan waves a hand at the back of the room, and I turn to see a striking woman with flawless brown skin and big doe eyes approaching us. "This is Karina. She used to work for Neal."

"Hi." Karina tucks her hair behind her ears before sitting down between Khan and me.

I give her a chin lift. "What can you tell me?"

"I worked at the Thirst Trap for two years. At first, it was great. I was making money, and Neal was good to me. See, I got kicked out of my house at eighteen, and he gave me somewhere to live, cash in my pocket, food to eat, and all I had to do was work at the club. Everything was great until I stopped earning as much as when I first started. That's when the threats started. He said he was going to move me down to escorting, which he eventually did. Escorting wouldn't have

been bad, except I was expected to do a lot more than go on dates with men,” she says, her eyes trained on the ground.

“He prostituted you out?” I ask.

“Yeah, and when I told him I didn’t want to do it anymore, he threatened me with something else.”

“What?”

“He sells women, and no one knows what happens to them after they’re sold. They just”—her voice catches—“disappear.”

“So you quit before that could happen?”

She laughs humorlessly. “There’s no quitting. Once he has his hooks in you, you’re his. He doesn’t let go.”

A pit forms in my stomach, connecting all this information to Tinleigh and Myla. If this is true, which I have no doubt it is, how did Myla get out? And does Tinleigh know this? Is this why she looked so fearful each time Neal was mentioned?

“So, how are you here now?”

“We’re protecting her,” Loki says. “She escaped and is hiding here until we can get her someplace safe.”

“It’s not a handout,” Karina defends. “I’m bartending to pay my way.”

“We didn’t ask that of her,” Khan clarifies. “She wouldn’t let us help any other way.”

I nod, realizing it’s a bone of contention between the bikers and the woman. I respect the hell out of her for it. “All the girls are in the same situation? None of them are excluded from these terms?”

She shakes her head. “It was the same for all of us. He preys on girls like me who are naive and in a tough spot. We’re low-hanging fruit for him.”

“Has he ever let a girl go?”

“Plenty of girls have tried to leave, but he always finds them. Always. Then he brings them back and makes us all

watch as she's... taught a lesson. After that, she's picked up by a buyer." A tear trails down her cheek for a second before she angrily wipes it away.

My blood boils. Not just because Tinleigh is the sister of my friend but because the woman somehow became something more to me in just one look. Being a stripper doesn't mean shit to me—I'd proudly have her at my side—but knowing she's in danger? I have to get her the hell out of there.

My phone vibrates in my pocket, and I pull it out, shocked as shit when I see a text from Tinleigh. I wait to read it until after I say my goodbyes.

"I gotta run." I stand. "Thank you, Karina, for sharing your story."

"You won't tell him where I am, right?"

"Fuck no." I turn to Loki and Khan, giving them each a pointed look. "If you need any help getting her out of town, let me know."

"Thanks, but we can handle our own business," Loki says. "But you might need us if you go after Neal. He's tied to people you don't want to piss off. That's the only reason we haven't touched him."

Just another example of how the man has softened. He's got something to lose now, and it's making him vulnerable.

"Good to see you, man." Khan holds out a hand before bringing me in for a man-hug. "Heard good things about your place out in Storey. Glad everything is calming down for you guys. Hope it stays that way."

Under any other circumstances, we'd be at war with the Bastards after they blew up the warehouse where we housed our spice lab. But back then, we had no idea our Prez was a fucking traitor, and when we found out, it was the Bastards who helped us bring retribution to the asshole, which left us on good terms.

"Thanks, man. Come by for a tour sometime."

“Will do.”

As I walk out of the club and into the crisp fall air, I mentally prepare myself for the war ahead. I hardly know the woman, but I know she won't accept help easily.

Straddling my bike, I pull out my phone to read her text. In just three words, I realize how wrong I was.

I need help.

I press her contact, feeling my heart thump as the first ring sounds over the speaker, since I know she didn't text me to come change a lightbulb or give her a ride to the store.

“Hello?” she all but whispers.

I try to decipher her tone, but the one word doesn't give me enough information. Does she sound weak or tired? Annoyed or injured?

“What's going on?” I ask.

She blows out a shaky breath that makes my gut clench. “If I didn't want to be here anymore, would you come get me?”

“Yes.” One word. No hesitation.

“There are things you should know.”

“Don't need to. You say the word, hellcat, and I'm there.”

“No. Really, Lucky. Neal isn't what you—”

“Know all about him. Even more after a conversation with the Royal Bastards just now. So like I said, say the word.”

She clears her throat, making an unnatural, crunchy sound that has my nostrils flaring, ready to kill. “I need to think.”

“Tell me something first. You okay?” I ask, setting aside the rage.

“Yeah.” Her voice catches, and I know she's lying.

“I'll be there in ten.”

She snuffles. “No. Not right now. Tonight.”

“You want me to come to the Thirst Trap?” Sounds like a horrible idea, but if that’s what she wants, I’ll be there. Guns blazing, if that’s what it takes.

“No. I’m not working tonight.”

Shit. That can’t be good. Now that I know more about the guy, there’s no way he’d give up profits unless the girl making them was so bad off, she wouldn’t make her share. There’s nothing sexy about a beaten woman, not to the kind who get their rocks off in public at a strip club anyway.

I can’t ask her about it, though. If I do and find out that what’s going through my head is true, she won’t be able to talk me out of going there right this fucking second. I don’t fuck with men who abuse women just because they can.

“Where?” I ask instead.

“You know Neal’s apartments, right?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m in unit five, building A.”

“Got it.” I repeat the location over and over in my head, memorizing it.

She swallows thickly. “Lucky?”

“Yeah?”

“Come alone, okay? No one should be around, but I don’t want to take chances.”

“Can’t do that.”

“What?”

“I don’t travel alone, not for something like this. I gotta bring at least one of my brothers.”

She’s quiet, but her thoughts are loud as fuck. She’s scared, and I get it, but there’s no need to be. My brothers and I are good at shit like this; she just doesn’t know it yet.

“Okay.”

“See you soon. And if anything changes, your first call is to me, okay?”

“Yeah.”

“I got you, Tinleigh.” With that, I end the call. If I spent any more time listening to her tormented voice, I’d ignore all plans and do something stupid.

I still might.

CHAPTER TEN

TINLEIGH



“He got you good,” Lindsay says, handing me an ice pack where I’m laid up in bed. I did manage a shower last night, but other than that, I’ve been here.

I accept it, placing it on my forehead and wincing. My interaction with Neal left me with a lump on my temple, the back of my head, and the bridge of my nose. I also have a split lip and bruises on my back and throat, but none of that can compare to the damage to my self-esteem.

I should be able to handle this, to take my licks and move on. That’s what I’ve always done, and it’s always worked. Until now. I spent one day with a good-looking biker who has a savior complex, and suddenly, I’m breaking down and asking to be rescued? Pathetic.

Still, I can’t regret it. I’ve never felt more relief than when I asked for help, and he said yes without even thinking about the implications. The guilt came later, after the call ended and I had more time to think. Because Neal won’t give up easily, especially since he just lost a girl.

Karina was a lot like me. She got herself involved with the club and only realized what that meant after there was no way out. The longer time went on, the more I saw the determination grow in her eyes. Neal saw it, too, and did what he does best—tried to beat it out of her.

He doesn’t know that girls like us don’t break easily. We survive. The more hits we take, literally and metaphorically, the more bravery builds inside us until we’ll do anything to get

free. I wasn't surprised when she disappeared one night, but Neal was.

Any privileges we had, like going grocery shopping or to appointments alone, were taken away. For weeks now, we've had his goons at our side the second we leave the building until we return. The longer Karina's gone, the worse it gets. I see the madness in his eyes growing, and my leaving will throw him over the edge.

Which is why I won't stay with the Sons for long. Maybe a night or two, and then I'll run. Myla will loan me some money, I know she will, and after I'm certain Neal can't find me, I'll repay every dime.

"I deserved it," I say robotically because Lindsay is a snitch. She's new and thinks shit like what happened to me won't happen to her if she plays teacher's pet. I used to think that, too.

"What were you thinking, anyway?" She flips her long black hair over her shoulder and sits on the edge of the bed.

"I don't know. I only went to the diner for breakfast, but this guy asked if I wanted to take a ride. You know how strict Neal has been lately, and I just wanted a minute to myself. I realize now how dangerous that was."

"Neal's only trying to keep us safe. Did you forget that Karina was taken only a few weeks ago?"

Taken. I wonder if she believes the bullshit she's spewing or if she's fooling herself on purpose. Anyone who knew Karina knows she wasn't taken anywhere she didn't want to go.

"I know." I close my eyes and push down my irritation. Neal can't get wind of what I'm planning to do. Allowing the tears that've been sitting right below the surface all day to spill free, I open my eyes and meet her gaze. "How will I make it up to him?"

"It won't be easy. Trust is the most important thing to him, and you broke that, babe." She sighs, placing a hand on my knee, making my skin crawl. "Hope it was worth it."

“It wasn’t. Not at all. I’m so disappointed in myself.” The lies roll off my tongue easily. That’s what happens when you spend your entire childhood convincing the people closest to you that you’re someone you’re not.

“You should be. Neal does a lot for us, and you took all that good and threw it in his face.”

“You’re right.”

“I know I am.” She stands. “Now I have to go get ready on my day off to cover your shift.”

“I’m sorry, Lindsay. Thank you.”

“What choice did I have? No one would make money tonight if you went out there looking like this.”

I want to drive a knife into her fucking forehead. Lord knows there’s enough real estate there. She needs to get the hell out of here before I lose what little control I have left.

“I’ll be sure to ice and rest so the swelling goes down and I can work tomorrow.”

“You better. Neal said someone will be right outside the door all night in case you need anything.”

Panic flares inside my chest. “What? Why? I’ll be fine, and I can call him if I need something.”

“Trust, babe. You lost it.” She walks out with an extra pep in her step. Only psychopaths get off on other people’s misery.

Once I’m sure she’s gone, I pull Lucky’s cell out from under my mattress. I can’t risk whoever’s on the other side of the door hearing me if I make a call, so I open the texting app.

Change of plans. Tonight won’t work. Thanks anyway

The little four-leaf clover he saved as his contact image pops up immediately, followed by three dots.

Need more information

Someone’s watching. It’s not safe

Not a problem. See you tonight

My fingers are shaky as I go to reply, my still-fuzzy brain trying to figure out how I can make this stop.

I don't want you to get hurt. Please! I'll figure something else out

Tonight works better for me. Don't worry. I got this

I gape at the winky face emoji that follows. Does he not understand? Did I not make it clear?

I'm not kidding. Don't come

I'm not kidding either. Be ready. No one will get hurt. Not anyone important anyway

My heart picks up its pace, pounding so loud there's a whooshing in my ears. I shouldn't have called him this morning. It was a bigger mistake than leaving the property with him yesterday. But when I woke up, feeling like I'd been hit by a semi, my emotions got the best of me.

Now it's too late, and when things go bad, it'll be all my fault. I'm so fucking stupid.



If I didn't have acrylics, I'd be gnawing my nails to the quick right now. Instead, I'm pacing. I have a limp, thanks to my fucked up back, but the anxious energy burning inside me won't allow me to sit still.

The sun went down an hour ago, and since we never established an exact time for him to come, I'm on pins and needles, anxiously assessing every sound coming from the

parking lot. Thankfully, there's not a lot since most everyone living here work nights.

My bag is packed, though there's not much I want to take. Definitely not any of my work clothes. I might end up regretting that since my only useful skill is stripping, and I'll most likely have to fall back on it when I get wherever I'm going, but just the sight of them makes me ill.

I stop my pacing to open the duffle once more, making sure I have everything I'll need. I riffle through the clothes and toiletries until I pull out the one picture I took from home. Myla and I are dressed in white from head to toe; our hair is wet and practiced smiles are on our faces. Mom and Dad stand behind us, hands on our shoulders and looking proud.

Sitting down on my loveseat, I stare at the photo Mom had framed. We were eight years old, making promises we had no business making. I remember not wanting to do it, throwing a tantrum over the sick feeling I got when the day came. That is until Grandma showed up carrying two beautifully wrapped gifts for us. Once I realized there were presents involved, I followed through with the baptism.

Little did I know, those boxes only contained sets of scriptures with our names engraved on them. I was so pissed.

Three knocks sound on my door, startling me. I was so lost in the memory, I hadn't been paying attention. Jumping to my feet, I peer out the window and see two large men on my darkened landing. The three distinct knocks sound again. That's Lucky's knock. It has to be him.

I throw open the door to find I'm right, and Lucky's joined by another man with insanely green eyes.

"Get in here before someone sees you." I grip Lucky by the arm and drag him in, hoping his friend follows. He does, and I close the door after them. "There wasn't anyone sitting outside of my door?"

"There was." Lucky's eyes land on me, and his smile drops. He pinches my chin between his fingers and moves my

head left and right, taking in my battered appearance. “This all him?”

“Neal? Yeah.” I stand tall, not wanting him to see how my injuries make me feel.

“That motherfucker.”

“I’m fine.” I push his hand away. “How did you past the guy at my door?”

“He’s taking a nap.” Lucky’s friend cracks his knuckles.

“Who are you, and what does that mean?”

“We’re talking about those bruises when we get to where we’re going.” Lucky pins me with a look. “This is my brother, Rigger. I told you about him.”

Rigger lifts his chin. “It’s nice to meet you and all, but we should get going.”

“Yeah, okay.” I shove the framed picture back into my bag and zip it up. “I’m ready.”

“That’s all you’re bringing? You still have clothes hanging.” Lucky motions to my clothing rack.

“I have all I need.”

“You sure because—”

“I’m sure.”

“Okay. Let’s do it.” He takes my duffle from me and lifts the strap over his head so it sits across his body.

“Let me go first.” Rigger opens the door, reaching behind his back and settling his hand on a black handle tucked into the back of his pants.

My eyes widen, realizing it’s a gun. Realization hits me that I’m leaving, that I’m putting these men in danger, and that things are about to get really crazy. My feet are frozen in place.

“It’s just a precaution, Hellcat.” Lucky takes my hand and pulls me out the door. But the second we’re on the landing, my

feet stop moving once again because one of the bouncers from the club is slumped in the corner, his head hanging forward.

I gulp, hoping I didn't get a man killed by asking the Sons for help. "What did you mean by 'he's taking a nap'?"

"He's not dead, if that's what you mean," Rigger says, scanning our surroundings. "But he'll have a hell of a headache when he wakes up."

"Oh." My eyes remain on the lifeless form as Lucky gives my hand a tug, and I follow him down the stairs.

"We're parked at the diner, same as last time," Lucky says in a hushed tone. "Didn't want to alert anyone to our arrival."

"Okay." It's surreal as we creep through the back of the complex and along a well-worn trail that leads to the alley right behind the neighboring diner.

We make it to the parking lot, where another of the Sons is straddling his bike, seemingly keeping watch. That was smart since this isn't the best neighborhood.

"Can you ride?" Lucky asks.

My back screams at me to say no, but I've come too far to let pain get in the way. "Yeah."

He hands me a helmet. "Let's go then."

Getting on the bike first, he moves my duffle to his front, letting it sit in his lap. I place the helmet on my head, ignoring the instant headache that the pressure puts on my injuries, reminding myself it'll feel worse if we crash and my brains splatter on the road.

I take Lucky's proffered hand and settle onto the bike. As though I've done it a hundred times before, and not just a few, I wrap my arms around his middle. Immediately, I feel safe. It's not rational. I have no idea what's ahead of me, how to get there, or why I called Lucky to help me in the first place.

But at least I know that at this moment, I'm not alone.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LUCKY



There are a couple things I should've done before coming to pick up Tinleigh. I should've had the maids get a vacant room ready at the Honey Pot, and I should've told Myla what was going on. But as I ride out of the city and feel Tinleigh rest her cheek on my back, I'm glad I didn't do either.

Taking her back to my place is risky. She might see it as manipulation, but I'm hoping she'll see my reasoning. Neal won't be happy, and he'll be on the lookout. It only makes sense to keep her where she's most protected. Having her in my space is just an added benefit.

We pull into our parking lot and ease the bikes next to the others. Tinleigh yanks her helmet off before she's even off the bike. Judging by the look on her face, it was causing her some discomfort. When I first walked into her place and saw how bad off she was, I wanted nothing more than for Neal to make a surprise appearance so I could show him exactly what I thought about him.

"You good?" I ask.

"Fine." She looks around. "Where are we? A bar?"

"Nah. This is the clubhouse."

"And why are we here?"

I prepare myself for fireworks. "This is where you'll be staying."

“Uh, no. I don’t think so. You can just drop me off at the Honey Pot. I’ll hide out there for a few days.” She moves to put the helmet back on, but I stop her.

“Sorry, Hellcat. That’s not an option. We have good security there, but they don’t need someone else to watch over.”

“Then a motel. Maybe one in Carson City, or Sparks, even. It’ll take Neal a while to get feelers out for me, and I’ll be gone by then.”

“Let’s talk inside,” I hedge, noticing the prying eyes already. Groups of bikers, hang-arounds, and club sluts congregate outside to smoke and talk without the loud music blaring inside.

“I want to talk right here.” Her hands move to her hips, drawing my attention there. She has on a similar fit as yesterday, a cropped band tee and holey jeans that hug her hips and thighs and then go straight, hanging loose around her calves. The outfit is nothing special, but she makes it look like the single most sexy thing a woman can wear.

“Don’t be stubborn about this. I don’t want all these people hearing your business.”

She glances over my shoulder at the entrance to the clubhouse, noticing the throngs of people. “Fine.”

“Let me give you a quick tour, then we can go somewhere private.” I take her hand, not wanting anyone to think she’s fair game. Thankfully, she allows it.

The clubhouse is a renovated warehouse that used to be two stories; the bottom level held back stock of whatever the hell the owners sold, and the upper level housed the office space. We tore out the second level but left the exposed beams and piping. And since it’s basically our home, we balanced the industrial aspect with brown and gold polished cement floors.

“This is where we hang out, hold our meetings, and party.” I motion to the open space that’s hard to see with the amount of people here.

“Is it always this busy?” she asks.

“Not always.”

As we weave through the crowd, I don't bother pointing out the obvious. There's a section with tables and chairs, a long central bar, a couple pool tables, and an area reserved for dancing, including a stripper pole on a small stage. Tinleigh takes it all in like it's business as usual. I guess the place is similar to a strip club tonight, so it's nothing she hasn't seen.

Seeing Cy sitting at the bar with his woman, Char, we make a pit stop. It took some convincing for Prez to allow tonight's mission. He doesn't like the idea of pissing Neal off, not even for one of our own since the girls who work at the Honey Pot are part of our family. Fortunately, I've been with this club since I was eighteen and have done everything that's ever been asked of me without demanding a thing in return, he gave me this.

“Cy,” I say, gaining his attention. He spins on his stool, and Char follows suit.

“Everything go okay?” He appraises me before turning his attention to Tinleigh. “This her?”

“Went as planned. No one saw nothing unless someone at that shitty diner spills. And yeah, this is Tinleigh. Tinleigh, this is our Prez, Cy, and his ol' lady, Char.”

I wouldn't dare say it out loud, but Char is a smoke show. She's all long legs and big tits wrapped in flawless dark brown skin. No idea how an old, fat, hairy, pasty bastard like Cy landed her, but he's a lucky man—not only because of her looks, but she fits in perfectly around here. She and a few of the other members' wives plan charity runs and family-oriented events that help offset whatever bad press gets printed about us.

“Good to meet ya.” Cy gives Tinleigh a chin lift.

Char stands, towering over Tinleigh, who takes a step back. Then Char's arms open wide, and she leans in for a hug that Tinleigh awkwardly accepts. Char whispers something in her ear that has Tinleigh nodding and relaxing into her hold.

When Char pulls away, she hands Tinleigh her phone before pointing a finger at her. “I mean it. Anytime, day or night.”

“Do you know the number on the phone you gave me?” Tinleigh asks me.

I rattle it off, thankful Char pulled out the welcome wagon. Tinleigh hands back the phone after programming her number in, and I make a mental note to pick her up a better cell. She doesn’t need to be carrying around a burner like we do.

“Thank you.” Tinleigh smiles, but the movement cracks her split lip open and bright red blood drips from the wound.

“Get her in to see Bones, yeah?” Cy directs.

“I will. Not tonight, but I’ll have him come by tomorrow.”

“Good. Now, I’ll bet this one could use some peace and quiet. Looks like she’s had too much action lately.”

“We’re headed back to my place right now.”

“We’ll talk soon, Tinleigh. It was nice to meet you,” Char says with a wave.

I reclaim her hand, loving how mine swallows hers completely, and lead her out the back door and down the path to my cabin. I punch in the code and flip on the interior lights before motioning for her to enter. It’s nothing much, just a small kitchenette with barstool seating at a breakfast bar, a bathroom, a living room big enough for a couch and recliner, and a loft where I sleep, but I love it.

“Make yourself at home.” I walk through the space, closing the blinds.

“It’s bigger than it looks on the outside,” she says, taking everything in.

The walls are pine paneling, but the trim, doors, and beam that runs the length of the room are stained black. I don’t have much on the walls, though last Christmas, Mustang’s Mom, Sugar, gave us all a framed picture of the club members that I hung between the kitchen and living area.

I don't have a lot in the way of knickknacks, either. Everything in my space serves a purpose, like the hooks by the door for jackets and the bowl on the breakfast bar I put my wallet and keys in. Even my four-foot-tall Twizzler bendy man figurine opens up on the top and is stocked with my favorite candy.

"Does Myla even know I'm here?" Tinleigh gingerly takes a seat on my sofa.

"Thought you'd want to tell her." I grab a fresh pack of licorice and sit in the recliner, giving her some space.

She rolls her eyes. "Liar. You just know she'd insist on me staying near her."

She's right, but I don't tell her that. Instead, I change subjects. "Want to tell me what happened last night?"

"What do you want to know?"

I huff. "All of it, or I wouldn't have asked."

"I told you someone was going to tell Neal I left with you, and someone did. He didn't like that."

"And?" I motion for her to continue.

"I don't even know you. Why would I tell you anything? Especially when you're holding me hostage here." Good to know Neal didn't knock the sass out of her.

"One, I'm not holding you hostage. You asked for help, and I gave it to you. And two, you don't have to tell me shit, but since I'm helping you, I feel like you owe me something."

She stands, throwing her arms out wide. "What do you want to know, *Lucky*?" She says my name like a slur, as if it offends her sensibilities.

"Whatever you'll tell me, darlin'."

"Don't do that. Don't make me feel like some helpless victim who needed a big, strong man to save her!" she shouts.

"Aren't you?" I can't help but goad her. She's cute when she's all worked up, but that's not why I'm doing it. She won't open up on her own, but I think if I piss her off enough, she'll

break. That's my theory, anyway. For all I know, I'm pushing her too far, and seconds from now, she'll walk out my door.

"Don't think you're doing me any favors. I could've gotten out on my own, but asking you was easier."

"Was it?"

She ignores my question. "You think I don't know why you did it? Or why you brought me here instead of the Honey Pot?"

"Oh, really? Why'd I do it then?"

"My whole life, men have looked at me the same way you do, and all that's taught me is that I can use you for my benefit."

I don't react because even though I *have* been looking at her some sort of way, we both know it goes deeper than how she's portraying it. I'm dense as fuck when it comes to women, so if I recognize there's something between us, it's got to be real.

"Oh yeah?" I feign disinterest.

She scoffs, kicking her shoes off and popping the button of her jeans. Suddenly, she has all the attention my unmedicated ADHD brain can muster and then some.

"Maybe you need a visual." She yanks her shirt off before pushing her pants to the ground, leaving her in a plain white cotton bra and panty set. Instead of getting turned on, I see fucking red. Neal fucked her up more than I thought, and suddenly, I realize why she was so desperate to get out of there that she called me.

"That motherfucker is dead." I lean forward, resting my elbows on my knees and cupping my mouth and nose with my hands.

"Allow me to walk you through my injuries." She pulls her hair up into a loose bun and secures it with a tie. "After ripping some of my hair out, he slammed my face into the freezer door. That's how I got this." She points to the goose egg on her forehead and the lump on the bridge of her nose.

“Then, he choked me while I was pushed up against the counter and slammed my head into the upper cabinet.” She traces along the finger marks I only saw a glimpse of with her high neck tee and her hair down, then turns to show me an angry purple and pink bruise spanning the length of her lower back. “You can’t see the knot on the back of my head, but I’ll let you feel it if you want.”

I shake my head, unable to reach the words to make this right. I’ve never been in a situation like this, never had to comfort someone who’s been through this level of shit. The closest thing I have to compare is seeing Navy after Rigger’s dad—Navy’s stepdad—raped her and beat the shit out of her. It was all kinds of fucked up, but she’s Rigger’s girl, and he was the one to handle it.

But Tinleigh’s my girl, so I better step the fuck up.

“Right before I blacked out, he let me go. I doubled over, trying to catch my breath, which gave him the opportunity to shove me face-first into the floor, and I blacked out. When I woke up, he’d moved me to the bed, where he pulled my pants down, raped me, and left a reminder puddled on my stomach, all while I was knocked out. So there you go. That’s what happened. That’s why I called you, but clearly, it was a mistake.”

I jump to my feet and storm over to her, not realizing how a big man charging at her would make her feel right after recounting her abuse. When her eyes widen, I slow my roll and do my best to soften my expression.

There’s a burning fire of rage deep within my soul that’ll deliver vengeance on that piece of shit. But not right now. Right now, everything in me is screaming to love on this woman after going through hell and coming out on the other side.

Scooping her up in my arms, I carry her over to the couch and settle her on my lap. She grunts her displeasure and struggles a bit, but only for show. If I got a hint of seriousness behind it, I’d let her go, no problem. That’s not what this is. I pull a blanket off the back cushion and drape it over her so she

knows this has nothing to do with me wanting my hands on her.

“I’m sorry. I’m so fuckin’ sorry,” I murmur into her ear. Fuck knows why I’m rocking her back and forth, but it feels right, so I keep doing it until she settles. That’s when I hear her tiny whimper and feel her wet tears through the cotton of my shirt. “I know it doesn’t feel like it right now, but it’ll be okay. If it’s the last thing I do, I’ll make it okay.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

TINLEIGH



The dam broke free, and I don't know if there was any stopping it at this point. Having Lucky rock me like a baby while I sob uncontrollably wasn't on my BINGO card for the year, but here we are. I can't even feel guilty about it because it feels too damn good.

He shushes into my ear, trying his best to console me, but I'm inconsolable at this point. I cry for the little girl who was taken advantage of by grown adults, for the teenager who didn't know enough to not trust men who offer things too good to be true, and for the woman who sacrificed herself to protect her sister.

I don't know how long we stay like that—could be five minutes or an hour—but eventually, I exhaust myself, and my tears run dry. Lucky's shirt is soaked through, and there are probably some snot stains I should be embarrassed about, but I'm not. His reaction to my breakdown wasn't of a weak man freaked out by women's emotions, so I doubt goobering up his clothing will bother him.

“Did that make you feel better?” he asks.

I shake my head. “No. Just needed a release.”

“I get that, but if you'll let me, I can show you a better way to get all that shit out.”

I lift my head. “How?”

“Never met a better way to handle being shit on than revenge.”

“I don’t want revenge. I just want to survive,” I say.

“Surviving ain’t worth a goddamn. People prey on those they know will roll over and take it just to survive. That what you want?”

Is it? I thought it was. I accepted the hands I’d been dealt, thinking that’s all there was. Have I been wrong this whole time? If I had fought back, would things be different?

“I’m not like you. My family didn’t build me up. They knocked me down until I was small and weak, and I wasn’t accepted into a group of bikers who would kill for me. It’s different for me.”

“That’s what they want you to believe. But life doesn’t just happen to you; it’s what you make it, and at some point, you have to decide what you want. I think that moment is right the fuck now because I’m here, telling you that if you want change, I can help with that.”

“I don’t know what that means.”

“We can talk about all that tomorrow. I think you’re tapped out for the day.”

I swipe at my nose. “Well, that was more than you bargained for, I’m sure.”

“I didn’t bargain for shit. When I told you I got you, *I got you*. Not just through the good, but through everything.”

“I’m not your problem to deal with.”

“You’re in my house, in my arms, telling me your ugliest truths, and I’m still here. That not only makes you my problem, that makes you my everything.”

“You can’t say shit like that to me.”

“Why not?”

“I might start believing it.”

He chuckles. “I don’t say shit I don’t mean. You’ll learn that lesson real soon.”

With those words, the bonds of trust grow. I feel it deep inside. Maybe it's my vulnerable state, maybe it's my desperation, but I hope it's because he's telling the truth. I might wake up tomorrow and realize that, once again, I was naive and hate myself for it. But worrying about giving my faith to the wrong person is tomorrow's problem. Tonight, I need something to believe in, and Lucky feels like a safe bet.

"We'll see." I yawn and fist the blanket, bringing it tighter around me.

"Come on, let's get you to bed." He stands, me still in his arms.

"Where?"

"You have to climb to find that out." He sets me on my feet, making sure the blanket keeps me covered.

Suddenly, I feel like an idiot.

I stripped down like that in a moment of insanity. I didn't really want to explain what I dealt with, what I've *been* dealing with, but he was being such a prick and wasn't going to back down until I broke. And break, I fucking did.

"Climb?"

He lifts his chin to the corner of the room. "Up that ladder over there. Now I wish I would've sprung for an elevator because it might hurt you gettin' up there."

"There's just one bed?"

"Technically, no. This sofa pulls out, which is where I'll be sleeping."

"I can't take your bed. I don't mind the pull-out."

He shakes his head. "You're taking my bed. I didn't change my sheets for nothing."

"Is that something you don't do often?"

"Me? No. Never."

"Lucky, that's disgusting." My nose curls, making my cracked lip ache.

He chuckles. “Sugar comes through once a week and switches out the towels and changes my sheets.”

“Sugar?”

“Yeah, she’s our club secretary’s mom. His name is Mustang. You’ll meet him at some point. I think you’ll like him.”

“Why do you say that?”

“You’re both tough as shit, and you both like dick.” He’s been waiting to use that line on someone, I just know it.

“How do you know I like dick?”

“Yesterday, you were grinding yourself all over mine like a hellcat in heat in my parents’ bathroom.” He smirks.

I roll my eyes and grip the steel frame of the ladder. “So, your room is up here?”

“Yup. I’ll be up there with your bag in just a second. Gotta wipe all this damn snot off my shirt first.”

My face falls. “I’m sorry.”

“I’m kiddin’. Just need to take a piss. You need to go before you climb up?”

“No, I’m fine.” I couldn’t eat or drink all day. If anything, I’m dehydrated, but I’m too tired to worry about that tonight.

I climb up the ladder and am pleasantly surprised. There are giant windows on both sides of the A-frame ceiling. The center is probably tall enough for Lucky to stand straight, but only just. One end is a wooden railing that’s painted black to match the downstairs, and the opposite side has two black doors, where I’m assuming his closet is. Positioned between two of the windows is a king-size bed with tan sheets, a blue comforter, and a gray throw. On the top of the bed are throw pillows in the same colors.

There’s an animal skin—not sure what kind—rug underneath the bed and a wooden bench at the base. Downstairs is bland and has no personality, but it’s both beautiful and masculine up here. I love it.

I drop the blanket covering me and climb under the covers, choosing not to wait for him to bring up my bag with a set of pajamas inside. I'm wearing my comfiest underwear, and thanks to my tantrum, Lucky's seen it all anyway.

Lying on my back, I realize the windows serve a bigger purpose than letting light into the small space. When I look up, the moonlit sky and twinkling stars are in my line of sight. It's incredible.

"You like the view?" Lucky heaves my duffle up before finishing the climb into the loft.

"I love it."

He walks over and hands me a remote. "It's nice at night, but it's shit if you don't want to rise with the sun. It's smart glass, so if you remember, press this button before you go to sleep, and it'll make the windows go opaque. It still lets light in, but it's better than the sun beating down on you at six in the morning."

"Thanks." I take the remote and set it next to me. "But I need a little more time with the moon."

He lies next to me but stays above the covers. "Tonight's a full moon. You know what that means, right?"

"No. Never been into astrology."

He chuckles. "Wait until you meet Bones tomorrow. You'll hear all about it, more than you want to, I'm sure."

"I meant to ask who Bones is."

"He's the club's doctor and also runs our weed shop. He's big into all that astrology and witchy shit," he says. "But I digress. A full moon is a time to release negative energy. I think you released a lot of it tonight."

I look up at the big, bright orb in the sky. "Guess I picked the right day to do it."

He pats my hand and climbs off the bed. "I'll let you sleep. That bottle of water on the nightstand is for you. Drink it."

He moves to the ladder, turning and stepping onto the rungs. Before he disappears completely, I stop him. “Lucky?”

“Yeah?”

“Thank you.”



I wake with the sun since I forgot to press the button to make the windows opaque. Or maybe it's because I hear Lucky talking in a hushed tone on the main level. I probably only got a few hours of sleep since it took some time to wind down last night, but I feel more rested than I ever remember feeling.

Sitting up, I reach for the water bottle on the nightstand and chug the whole thing down before climbing out of bed and digging a pair of sweatpants and a clean T-shirt out of my bag. After dressing, I climb down the ladder, not finding Lucky anywhere.

When I hear his voice again, I realize it's coming from outside. I peer out the window and see him talking to another biker on the porch. The other man has long brown hair that hangs well past his shoulders and is shorter than Lucky, with a slimmer build. His nose, lip, and eyebrow are pierced, and he has on a lot of jewelry. There's a thick silver chain around his neck, leather cuffs and bracelets on both wrists, and he has a belt loop chain on his hip.

Biker Jesus must feel my eyes on him because he glances over, and our gazes meet. He lifts his chin, and Lucky looks over. Holding up a finger to the other man, he steps inside.

“Mornin’.”

I clasp my hands in front of me. “Hi.”

This is awkward. I know he feels it, too. We keep getting ourselves into situations that are way too intense for two

people who just met. If I'm honest, way too intense for any two people, regardless of how long they've known each other.

"Bones stopped by to check you out. I told him you might need some time before—"

"I don't need a doctor. I'm fine. Really."

"If I don't let him check you over, he'll tell Cy, and I really don't want to get my ass chewed out by my Prez. You'll be doing me a favor just letting him take a look."

I comb my fingers through my messy hair. "Okay. Can I freshen up a bit first?"

"Yeah. Bathroom's back there. I put an extra toothbrush on the sink."

"Thanks."

Lucky's bathroom fits in with his design aesthetic, meaning there is none. The towels are black, the shower curtain is plastic and clear, and there are no products on the floating shelves above the toilet. Snooping in his medicine cabinet, I find a drugstore deodorant, a beard-trimming kit he obviously doesn't use, a toothbrush, a tube of toothpaste, and a brush. That's it.

After doing my business and cleaning myself up, I run out of excuses to put off this exam, though I'm not sure that's what it is. Bones doesn't look like any doctor I've been to, and we're in a cabin on a biker compound.

When I reenter the living room, Lucky's bed is back to being a couch, and both men are kicked back, shooting the shit.

Bones stands. "Hey, Tinleigh. It's Tinleigh, right?"

"Yeah."

"Cool, cool." He tucks his hair behind his ears. "I thought we could just talk for a minute, and I could take a look at some of your injuries. Is that okay?"

"Sure."

“She’s red like you,” he says to Lucky, and I furrow my brows in confusion.

“Your aura,” Lucky explains, as if it’s a natural thing for a doctor to say.

“Lucky, you wanna step out for a minute?” Bones asks.

“Oh, right. Sure. As long as Tinleigh’s comfortable?”

“I’m sure I’ll be fine,” I say because as awkward as this is, the only thing that’ll make it worse is having Lucky here.

“Bring her to the clubhouse when you’re done, yeah?” he asks Bones.

“Will do, brother.”

He steps out, and then I’m alone with white Biker Jesus.

“Lucky filled me in on what happened, so you don’t need to go through explaining it all again.”

“Okay.” I take a seat on the sofa, slightly relieved.

“Mind if I take a look at your lip and head?” He vacates the recliner and takes a seat next to me.

“Are you really a doctor?”

“I am. Board certified and all that shit. Just choose not to practice in a traditional medical setting. Though if the state medical board asks, I have a private practice in Reno.”

“Have at it then,” I say.

He scoots closer and cups my face, placing his thumb on either side of my split lip. “I’ll bet this bled like a bitch.”

“Yeah.”

“Mouth wounds tend to do that.” He turns my head from side to side, inspecting the cut from all angles. “Had I seen you the day it happened, I might have thrown a stitch or two in there just for vanity’s sake because, as it is, you’ll have a small scar, but not much I can do about it now. There doesn’t appear to be any kind of infection, but if it swells up anymore or the skin around it becomes hot, let me know.”

His warm hands move up my face and to the top of my head. Once again, he uses his thumbs to press along the edge of the lump in the center of my forehead. He's gentle and methodical, and now that he's examining me, I can see the doctor in him coming out.

"Normally, I'd send you in for an MRI to be on the safe side, but I think it's just a simple contusion." He palpates my nose, easing up on the pressure when I suck in a sharp breath. "Sorry, noses hurt like a bitch. Your bones are all in place, so I feel confident saying you didn't break it."

"That's good."

"Real good. You wouldn't like me much if I had to set it back in place." His hands fall away. "Anything else?"

"I hit the back of my head pretty hard, but it's like this thing." I point to the monstrosity on my forehead. "Just a lump."

"Hmm." He pulls a penlight out of his pocket. "Look straight ahead." He moves the light from the outer area of my vision inward a few times. "Any headaches or balance problems?"

"I had a headache all day yesterday, but it's gone now."

"Lucky should've called me in yesterday; you should've been on a concussion protocol. But it's too late for that now." His eyes dip to my throat. "What about that?"

I tug down my collar. "I think it's okay."

"Your voice always hoarse like it is now?"

"No."

"Any problems swallowing?"

"No."

"Probably strained your vocals chords some," he says to me and then mutters to himself, "Asshole doesn't even know how to choke someone properly."

Biker Jesus has a dark side.

He opens up the canvas backpack I hadn't noticed until now, producing a jar of something yellow. "This is a homemade arnica salve. I recommend putting this on your bruises. It'll bring down the swelling and help with the pain some."

"Homemade salve," I repeat.

"Yeah, I make big batches of it every couple of months." He hooks a thumb toward the main house. "Those assholes are always hurting themselves." He digs back in the bag and produces a baggie with what appears to be homemade cigarettes. "And I recommend smoking a fatty if the pain is bothering you. This is a new sativa strain I'm carrying over at the shop, but this shit'll knock you out, so don't smoke unless you're ready for a nap or right before bed."

"Thanks," I draw out, taking the baggy.

"Doctors prescribe too much medication these days when good ol' Mother Nature gave us everything we need. Don't you think?"

"I never thought about it before. Actually, I haven't been to the doctor in a long time."

"When was the last time?"

I look down, suddenly becoming fascinated with the Oriental rug under my feet. "I was thirteen."

"Routine visit?"

"It was actually a gynecological exam."

"Everything normal?"

My cheeks heat, and I wonder how much I can tell him without it getting back to Lucky. He knows enough of my dark secrets; I don't need him to know this one.

"Just because this isn't a traditional exam doesn't mean I'm not bound by HIPAA. Whatever you tell me won't leave this room."

I take a deep breath. "I was being molested from age twelve to thirteen. When my mom found out, she took me to

the doctor. I think everything was fine, though I don't know for sure because no one spoke to me about it."

"I'm real sorry that happened to you." He zips up his backpack. "How about this? We have a female doctor who works over at the ranch. Why don't I give her a call and set you up with an appointment? If you haven't been since thirteen, it's probably time anyway, especially given the circumstances."

Lucky must've told him what happened with Neal, and I appreciate his discretion in not mentioning it. This has been humiliating enough without talking about the many times Neal took liberties with my body.

"You're probably right."

"Can I help you with anything else, young lady?"

"Young lady? You can't be much older than me."

"I'm forty years young, nearly twice your age."

I'm taken aback. The man looks good, not a day over thirty. "I wouldn't have guessed that."

"Vitamin E oil, that's the trick." He stands. "Like I said, Mother Nature gave us all we need. Now, let's go find that man of yours."

"Oh, he's not my—"

He cuts me off with a laugh. "Keep telling yourself that."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LUCKY



“**H** heard you’re hiding away a girl.” Sugar leans over the bar.

I scowl, adding packets of sugar to my coffee. “Not hiding her away.”

“But there *is* a girl?”

“Yeah,” I say, stirring.

Mornings around here are chill. With a lot of the brothers off at their respective jobs, the ones who aren’t are served breakfast and coffee by Sugar. Yeah, we’re grown men who can take care of ourselves, but why would we when she actually likes doing this kind of shit for us?

Years back, Mustang’s mom fell victim to an abusive boyfriend. When Mustang got word, he gathered a few of us up, and we got her out of that situation, taught her douchebag ex a lesson he won’t forget. After that, she moved in here and never left. Now the club pays her for all the shit she does—cooking, cleaning, and keeping the club sluts in line.

“Ha! The playboy met his match.” She grins.

“Why am I the playboy? I don’t fuck around any more than some of the other guys.”

Sugar’s gaze shifts to the back door, and her face falls. Fuck. Of course Tinleigh would walk in right now.

“She’s right there, isn’t she?” I say lowly.

“Sure is.” Her smile returns, though this time it’s fake. “Hey, you must be the girl my boy can’t stop talking about. Come on over and take a seat. I’ll get you some breakfast and coffee.”

I swivel on my stool, not surprised when I see hurt on Tingleigh’s face. There’s no way Myla didn’t tell her about my past, but that’s different than walking in on a conversation like that. We’ve been so busy putting out major fires the last couple of days that we haven’t had time to talk about the small stuff. But it’s coming.

“Thanks,” she says, sitting down, not on the stool next to me, but one down.

Sugar sets a plate in front of her and a coffee mug. “I’m Lisa, but everyone calls me Sugar.”

“Tingleigh. And thank you. This looks good.”

“No problem.” She pours Tingleigh a steaming mug of coffee. “Now I have some dishes to do. Just holler if you need anything else.”

“What about me?” Bones whines.

Sugar hands him a thermos of coffee. “Like you’d eat any of this anyway.”

“I’d still like an offer.”

“I don’t have time for your shit.” She shoos him away. “Be gone.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Bones turns to us. “She’s right. I’ve got to get over to Dope. Tingleigh, I’ll get your number from Lucky and text you later with that appointment.”

“Thank you for everything.” She smiles at him, and it’s genuine. Fucker went and charmed her.

“Anytime.” He winks at her, and I growl, earning me a laugh from him. “Put your dick away, playboy. Tingleigh is my patient.”

I grunt, still not liking how familiar they became in just twenty minutes. He’s still laughing as he walks out the door.

“Not hungry?” I ask, noticing she’s moving her food around with a fork but not actually eating any of it.

“Not especially. Though I need to eat because I was too stressed out yesterday to think about food.” She stabs a chunk of scrambled egg and puts it in her mouth.

“You shouldn’t skip meals.”

“You shouldn’t tell a grown woman what to do.”

I frown. “Listen, about what you heard—”

“It’s none of my business.”

“It wasn’t, but it is now. I think I’ve been clear on what I want, so until you tell me there’s no place in your life for me, that’s all in the past.”

She huffs. “So you’re just going to wait around in the hopes I give you an in?”

“Pretty much. Yeah.”

“That’s not how *playboys* operate.”

I slide down a stool so I’m next to her. “Is there a place for me in your life?”

“I have a lot to figure out; there’s no place for anyone right now.”

I tip her chin up, but she doesn’t give me her eyes. “Could there be?”

She stares at her breakfast for a long minute. “Maybe.”

“That’s good enough for me.” Saying all I had to say, I give her back her space, sliding to my own stool. “What’s this appointment Bones was talking about?”

A few of my brothers begin to file in, but they keep their distance from us.

“He said the Honey Pot has a doctor I should see.”

Monroe is the gynecologist the club pays to do all the STI testing on the incoming girls and be around for any questions or concerns they have. After what Tinleigh told me about that fucker Neal raping her, Bones was smart to suggest it.

“I’ll make sure he has your number so you can make that appointment.”

“Thanks.”

“I have some shit to do today. The first thing is just right in that room by the front door, but no one’s allowed in there, so don’t come looking for me.”

“What do you do in there?”

“Church.”

“Didn’t take you guys for the religious sort.”

“We’re not,” I say until Judge’s ugly mug pops into my head. “Most of us, anyway. It’s just a meeting with all the ranking members. Prez, Rigger, Riot, Golden, Dutch, Satyr, and me. Depending on how that goes, think you’ll be okay if I dart out for a few hours?” I ask.

“Or you could take me to the Honey Pot, and I can hang out with Myla.”

“I told you, you’re not safe there.”

“I can’t stay locked up here for the rest of my life.”

“It hasn’t even been twenty-four hours.”

“I guess.” She rubs her eyes, still looking exhausted, and I wonder if she slept last night. I know I didn’t. Knowing she was only feet away, sleeping in my bed, it was all I could do not to climb up that ladder and hold her all night. Fuck, I sound like a pussy, but it’s true. All I want from her right now is to be in her space.

“Did you call Myla yet?”

“No.”

“Maybe start with that.” I stand. “Sugar’ll be around all day if you need anything, and you have my number. You can stay in here and explore or go back to my place. Whatever you want. If you see a ginger-haired creeper lurking around, ignore him. I told him his life depends on your safety, so he most likely won’t stray far.”

“Who is he?”

“Tigger. He’s a prospect.”

She tilts her head. “Prospect?”

“He wants to patch in, but we don’t let just anyone wear our colors. So he prospects, and if he passes all our tests for a year, he’ll earn a patch.”

“MC rules are so weird.”

“Sometimes shit gets real around here. We need to make sure we can count on the brother standing next to us or the one guarding our girl,” I say, the implication intentional.

“Lucky!” Rigger shouts. “Church.”

“I’ll be fine,” she says.

“See you in a bit then.” I drop a kiss on the top of her head and move to leave, but before I get out of arm’s reach, she grabs my hand and gives it a squeeze. She doesn’t turn to look at me or acknowledge me in any other way—just a simple squeeze to say all the things she doesn’t have words for yet.

I get the feeling no one has ever truly cared for her except her sister, and she doesn’t know how to trust it. That’s fine by me. I’m not going anywhere.



“Fuck you, man. If you were in my situation—”

“I wouldn’t be in your situation,” Riot shouts back at me.

“Calm the fuck down.” Cy bangs his gavel on the copper table.

I dig my thumbs into my eye sockets, feeling a headache brewing. “I know we aren’t social justice warriors, and I’m not looking to start a war. I just want to teach him a lesson and let

him know what'll happen if he comes anywhere near Tinleigh again.”

“And you don't think that'll start a war?” Riot asks.

“Wars are bad business, and his clients won't tolerate the exposure if shit goes bad.”

“I agree with Lucky. Neal's main focus is money, and he has no shortage of women to take Tinleigh's place. He'll be pissed about getting some sense knocked into him, but then he'll move on,” Rigger says, and I give him a nod in thanks.

“And who's still paying on your debt, Rig?”

He glares at Riot. “I didn't ask you to do that. You fuckin' volunteered because you're a sadistic asshole.”

“Say that again, motherfucker. I dare you.” Riot stands, cracking his knuckles.

“Gladly.” Rigger gets to his feet, but before a fight can start, Cy's banging on the table again.

“Enough!” he roars. “We'll settle this like everything else. Let's take a vote. Everyone in favor of Lucky giving that prick at the Thirst Trap a lesson, say ‘aye.’”

As we go around the room, each of my brothers gives their support. All but Riot. I don't know what his fucking problem is, and I don't care. What happened with the Costa family has nothing to do with this. I'm not asking him for anything, and if shit goes sideways, he'll be the last person I ask for backup.

Cy bangs his gavel. “It's decided. Once it's done, I want everyone on high alert. Report back if anyone on the streets even looks at you sideways.”

“Thank you,” I say. “Anyone who wants to come, I'm headed to the Thirst Trap right after they open for the night. Figure that's when the least amount of security will be around.”

Rigger lifts a finger. “I'm in.”

“Me too,” Golden says.

“Jenson is in the middle of a cleanse, so if this is the only way for me to get some action this week, I’m in,” Mustang chimes in.

“A cleanse?” Satyr asks.

“Yeah. He’s drinking some nasty-smelling juice instead of eating food. It makes him shit his brains out, and he won’t let me near him.”

My lips pull back. “What the fuck? Why?”

“It’s some rich dude shit. I don’t fuckin’ know.”

“Jesus Christ.” Cy tugs on his long beard and turns to me. “Looks like you’ll have enough men. Let me know how it goes.”

His final bang signals the end of the meeting. Riot’s the first one out, storming off to his hobble. The property came with the cabins we all call home, and while the rest of us put some money into ours, making them livable, Riot left his as is. I’m shocked it’s still standing.

“Ready to head over to the Honey Pot?” Rigger asks as we walk out.

“Yeah. Just let me say goodbye.”

“You claimin’ her or something?”

“Nah. Not yet, anyway.”

“Does Myla know?”

“What do you think?”

“Maybe you should trade your shift with someone else because if she finds out you’re making moves on her sister, shit will hit the fan,” he says.

“You think?”

“Bro, not even *you* are that stupid. It’s her sister—her twin.” He gestures in my direction. “And you’re you.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Last week, Amelia was running around here, tellin’ everyone how you sucked her toes.”

Amelia is one of the girls who hangs around on the weekend. During the week, she's a preschool teacher at a local Christian church, but come Friday night, that woman is wild. We've hooked up more than once, and yes, I did suck her toes last week.

"I'm a different man now," I say, making a mental note to tell her to zip her trap about the shit we've done and make sure she knows it won't happen again.

"All I'm sayin' is, if this blows back on the ranch in any way, I'll kick your ass."

"Like to see you try." I walk away from my oldest friend in the world and head straight for my newest one. Tinleigh is still at the bar, drinking coffee and staring at her cell phone. "I'm heading out. You good?"

"Yeah." She sighs. "Just thinking of what to say to Myla."

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure." She sets the phone down.

"How did Myla get out? Because from everything I've learned about Neal, he doesn't just let his girls go."

Her gaze shifts to the bar top. "I made a trade."

"What kind?"

"If he let her go, he could have me," she says carefully.

"What do you mean, have you?"

"A lot of the girls he picks up didn't have good home lives. They grew up on the streets or in trailer parks, while I grew up among wealthy, white men—God-fearing men, the same kind of men who are Neal's clients for his other businesses. He knew I'd look good on his arm when he went to events to draw in more customers or meetings where he needed to impress people. But he also knew I wouldn't do that shit willingly."

"Do you know what those customers were buying?" I ask.

"I didn't at first, but now I do. I know that makes me a shit person; I get that, but Myla's not like me. She has a good heart and believes the best in people. I was the one who got us

mixed up with Neal, so I had to be the one to get her out before Neal destroyed everything that makes Myla, Myla.”

“So you took shifts at the Thirst Trap and impressed assholes when he needed it. That was the trade?”

“Not just that.” Red tints her cheeks and neck. “I had to agree to do anything he asked. I was his property.”

Something inside me dies at that admission. It doesn’t change how I feel about her, but it sure does change how I look at her. She’s been out there suffering every day of her life just so her sister can be free to live however she wants, and she told no one.

I bend to wrap my arms around her middle and hug her tight, lifting her off the stool. “All that’s over now. Your life is your own. I’ll make sure of it.”

Her arms go around my neck, and I feel her subtle nod against my shoulder. “Thank you.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LUCKY



Normally, my first stop when I start a shift is Myla's room, but as I walk down the hallway of the residential suites, I wonder if this is a smart move. I don't know when Tinleigh was going to reach out to her sister, but I'd like to steer clear until that's over.

Or would that make me look like I was hiding something? I don't fuckin' know. This is why I never had friends who were girls before. If I stepped on one of my brothers' toes, we'd have it out, throw a few punches, and be done. Girls are different.

I pick up speed as I reach Myla's door, ultimately deciding to avoid her for now, but she steps out into the hall right as I attempt to pass unnoticed.

"You." She points her finger at me. "Get your ass in here."

I give her a salute, keeping things light as I walk through the doorway. "I'm taking it you talked to your sister?"

Her face falls. "What do you mean? Is Tinleigh okay?"

Shit. "If you didn't talk to her, why are you ordering me in your room?"

"I just wanted to see if you talked to Rigger about this weekend." She shakes her head. "That doesn't matter. Do you know something I don't about my sister?"

I didn't ask Tinleigh if I could say something or if she wanted to be the one, but there's no way out of this unless I give her at least part of the truth.

“When I dropped her off the day before last, I told her to give me a call if ever needed anything. She made that call yesterday, and by nightfall, I had her safe at the clubhouse.”

“What?” Her eyes bug out. “Why?”

“Neal knocked her around some. Guess it scared her into leaving.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

“I think she needed a minute. She said she’d call today,” I offer up like a consolation prize.

Myla sinks to the bed. “Is she okay?”

“Yeah, she’s fine. I had Bones look at her, and he’s making her an appointment with Monroe.” I realize the mistake I made seconds after the words leave my lips, but Myla’s not as quick on the draw.

“With Monroe? Why?”

I see the moment it hits her why Tinleigh would need to immediately see the lady doctor, and it nearly breaks my heart in half. I didn’t mean to be the one to tell her that her sister was raped. But just like the apologies I keep throwing at Tinleigh, telling Myla I’m sorry doesn’t mean shit, so I keep it in.

“She’s okay, My. I swear to God.”

She stands. “Well, go get her. She should be here with me, not at the clubhouse.”

“That’s not gonna happen. We can’t protect her here like we can at the compound.”

“Why does she need your protection?”

“Jesus fuck.” I scrub a hand down my face. Tinleigh kept her so in the dark that she doesn’t even know who she was working for. That’s a mighty heavy load for one person to carry.

“What?” she asks, exasperated.

“My, Neal’s not a good guy. He won’t let Tinny go easily.”

“Tinny?”

I need to get out of this. I’m digging my own grave at this point, and the hole keeps getting deeper and deeper.

“Isn’t that her nickname?”

“It’s *my* nickname for her.”

“Okay, sorry. I won’t use it again.”

Note to self: come up with a different nickname because, Christ, who names their kid Tinleigh? I care about the girl, but even she has to admit it’s a strange name. Tinny just rolled off the tongue better.

“What’s really going on here?” She narrows her eyes on me.

I feel like I’m betraying my friend by not answering, but I don’t know what Tinleigh and I are or how to define it. That should come from her sister.

“I told you everything I know.”

“So you’re not moving my sister in with you because you want to get with her?” Her head cocks to the side. “Because it’d be really fucked up to make a move on her at a time like this.”

“That’s not what this is about.” *Lies.*

“It better not be.”

“Get off my dick, Myla. I’m trying to do the right thing here.”

“You forget I know how you operate.”

“How I *operate*?” I repeat, getting pissed she’s throwing so much shit my way, even if she has every reason to be cautious.

“All I’m saying is Tinleigh deserves a man who can give her all of him, not some biker with a wandering dick.”

“You’re right. She does,” I say, not bothering to explain how her sister already owns every piece of me. Even I know it’s too soon to admit that shit to anyone, let alone Myla.

“I’m glad we’re on the same page.”

I don't say shit. Instead, I answer with a nod.

"I'm assuming she doesn't have her cell phone with her?"

"I gave her a burner. I'll text you the number."

"Okay. Thank you for getting her out of there. I know she thinks I don't know what kind of guy Neal is, but I do. That's why I begged her to quit when I did, but she refused."

I feel like a piece of shit accepting any kind of thanks when my motives weren't purely genuine. Would I have ever even offered to help if she wasn't my type? Probably not.

"No problem. I gotta run, but I'll get you that number, okay?"

"Okay."



"You ready?" Rigger steps into the security room, where I've been getting my mind right for the last half hour. And by getting my mind right, I mean I've been recalling every detail of what Neal did to Tingleigh over and over, letting the rage build until my fists are itching for some action.

"Hell yeah." I stand.

"Let's ride."

Outside, Golden and Mustang are already on their bikes, waiting. In case shit goes sideways, their cuts are off. Getting pinched wearing them carries a higher sentence for being gang-related, and we're not taking chances. We've all had various forced vacations at the pen and will probably go again at some point, but there's no point in extending our stints for longer than they need to be just because of our colors.

"Tobi's been sitting on the place all evening. Neal got there an hour ago, and from what he can tell, there's a security guy at the entrance, one in the main space, and one by the private

rooms,” Rigger says as we remove our cuts, tuck them into our saddle bags, and strap on our domes.

“You sent Tobi?” I pull my Glock out of the back of my pants and release the magazine to make sure it’s fully loaded. I don’t plan on killing anyone tonight, but I’m not against it either. I reinsert the magazine and tuck it away.

“The kid looks like he’d spend an afternoon at a strip club. Figured he wouldn’t raise suspicion.” Our newest prospect is in his early twenties and gangly, though he’s been putting hours in at the clubhouse gym, trying to bulk up.

“Yeah, he does,” I agree, straddling my bike. “You guys can secure the muscle, and I’ll hunt down Neal.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Golden says, and we fire up the bikes.

Rigger takes lead since he’s the VP, followed by me and Golden, with Mustang taking the rear. Excitement thrums through my system, thinking about how good it’ll feel to pound that asshole’s face in. I want to see him try to impress all his clients with his jaw wired shut.

We park at the adult bookstore next to the club so the security guard at the entrance doesn’t get tipped off before we’re ready.

“I’ll have Tobi come hang with the bikes,” Rigger says, producing his phone and typing out a message.

“Good thinkin’.” I move my gun to the front of my pants, and we cross the lot to the club.

As we approach, Tobi walks out. His black hair, normally kept in tight corkscrew curls on the top of his head, is a mess, and even through his golden-brown complexion, I can tell he’s flushed. It makes me chuckle. Looks like the girls in there worked him over pretty good.

He glances over at us through his periphery but keeps walking, like he has no clue who we are. It impresses me that he has his head on straight. I’m sure the kid will be patched in when his probation is over.

I eye the man standing outside with a black Security shirt on. He's about five foot eleven and two-fifty, but his mass isn't from muscle. If we can't keep him quiet with a gun, we can outrun him, no problem.

"Welcome, gentleman. Just need to see some ID and go over a few rules."

Golden lifts the front of his shirt, revealing his Beretta. "How about you and I go over a few rules instead?"

The man lifts his hands. "Don't want no trouble."

"Then there won't be any. We're just going to stand here and have a conversation while my associates take care of business inside, okay?"

"Sure, man."

Golden nods to us, keeping his hand on his gun. "Have a good time, boys."

From there, we move fast. Rigger spots the guard standing watch over the main floor right where Tobi said he'd be, and Mustang walks up the steps to the private rooms while I move past the bar and to a door with a *No Entrance* sign.

"Hey, you can't—" The bartender quiets when I flash him what I'm packing, and Rigger walks the guard he's secured over to the bar, keeping an eye on both of them. Not sure if there's an alarm behind the bar, but Rigger'll make sure it's not used.

I walk into a short hallway, quickly assessing the two doors. The first is unmarked, and the other says *Storage*, which makes picking the right one easy. When I turn the doorknob half a rotation and don't feel any resistance, I know it's unlocked. Pulling my gun out, I push the door open and step inside the room.

Neal's eyes widen when he looks up at the intrusion. He's relaxed back in his executive chair, his pants unbuttoned and one of his girls on her knees in front of him. She turns her head, Neal's cock still in her mouth, and screams.

I hold a finger up to my lips. “Shh. None of that. We don’t want to disturb the customers out there.”

The club only had a few patrons, but they were too busy gawking at the talent to care about us walking in.

“What do you want?” Neal asks.

“I want to not be staring at your pork and beans. Mind putting that thing away, darlin’?”

She pops off him, and with shaky hands, she fumbles around, trying to tuck his deflating dick into his boxers. Neal grows frustrated and slaps her hand away before standing to put himself together.

“Now, care to tell me what the hell you want?” he sneers.

“Darlin’, I think it’s best you move over here.” I motion to the couch on the other side of the room.

She nods, her movements jerky and frightened. Lifting onto shaky legs, she does as I ask, and I take her spot next to the pissed-off asshole who practically has smoke coming out of his ears. If this pushes his buttons, how’s he going to feel about the next part?

With my left hand, I reach into my pocket and take out a pair of zip ties. Tucking my gun back in my pants, I manage to secure one of his wrists to the armrest of the chair before the fucker gets fresh with me and throws a punch into my side while he tries to get away. Except his wrist is already fastened into place.

My ribs scream in pain, but it only fuels my rage.

“You dumb motherfucker.” I shove his ass back into the chair and secure the other wrist, stepping on his toes as I go, just in case he kicks. “There.”

“I have men right outside.”

“If you were hoping for a rescue, it ain’t gonna happen. Your men are otherwise occupied.”

I don’t miss the flash of disappointment. “You want money? I have a safe over there.”

“You think I want your dirty cash? What I want is to send you a message you won’t forget.” I wrap my leather glove-covered hand around his throat and squeeze. “Tinleigh isn’t yours. And if I get wind you even asked around about her, my next visit won’t be this pleasant.”

I throw a punch that lands squarely on his nose, relishing the cracking sound it makes and the gush of blood that explodes over both of us. His head rears back, and I lose him for a second as his head wobbles back and forth like a goddamn bobblehead.

“You have her?” he mumbles as he comes to.

“Doesn’t matter who has her, only that you don’t, and you won’t ever again.” This time when I hit him, I aim for his right cheek, sending his head whipping to the side. The skin splits open, adding to the gory sight in front of me.

The girl screams, and I glance over, holding a finger to my lips. She covers her mouth and tucks her legs up to her chest.

“She owes me,” Neal says, blood and spittle flying from his mouth.

I spot a baseball bat in the corner that must serve as a deterrent for out-of-line customers. Grabbing it, I give it a spin, testing its weight, and decide it’s perfect because this asshole isn’t getting the message.

“I don’t give a shit what she owes you. Consider her debt paid in full, you hear me?”

His gaze locks on the bat and then up at me. “Okay. Whatever.”

“No, see, I don’t think you understand. Because I know what kind of man you are. You’ll say or do whatever it takes to get out of this situation alive. But the second I’m out that door, you’ll make some calls, find out who I am, and have the audacity to come after me. Am I right?”

“No. I don’t give a shit about Tinleigh. That cunt is nothing but problems.”

“Wrong thing to say.” I move to his side and, with all my might, swing the bat, hitting him across his arms and chest.

He doubles over, howling as the air leaves his lungs and giving me the opportunity to lift the bat above my head and slam it down on his upper back. The girl sucks in a sharp breath but doesn't scream.

I toss the bat into the corner and grab a fistful of his hair, sitting him upright. He moans and whines, blubbering incoherently. “If I have to come back here, I will kill you, and it won't be fast. It'll take days, maybe even weeks, until you're begging me to end your miserable life. Nod if you understand.”

His breaths are coming fast and furious, spraying blood with every exhale, and his eyes are wide as saucers, finally showing me true fear. Good. He nods as best he can with my hold on him.

“I knew you had some brains in there somewhere.” For good measure, I land one final punch, this one right to his temple. If Tinleigh has to walk around with a lump there, so does he.

The hit knocks him out, and I leave him there, tied to a chair, bleeding, and hopefully knowing who not to fuck with.

“Wait five minutes before you call for help, yeah?” I ask the girl, who can't be much over eighteen.

She nods, and I open the door. I haven't even made it past the threshold before she's at his side, digging around in the desk, probably looking for something to cut him free with.

I shake my head. She's not my problem.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

TINLEIGH



As if summoned by my thoughts, the phone I've been staring at on and off all day buzzes in my hand, and the number I recognize as Myla's flashes across the screen. I flip off the TV and mentally prepare myself for this conversation.

I wish I could say I was busy all day and just didn't have time to make the call, but that would be a lie. After I picked at my breakfast, I came back to Lucky's cabin and have been on this couch ever since, mindlessly watching reality TV. It should've been a treat, since I never get the chance to veg out, but the guilt of not reaching out to Myla stopped me from enjoying it.

I accept the call. "Hello."

"Tinny?"

"Hey, sis. How are you?" I put enough cheer in my voice to lay the groundwork for when I try to convince her I'm okay.

"I'm fine. How are *you*?"

"Good. Great, even."

"Try. Again," she grits, calling me out.

"I'm taking it you spoke to Lucky?"

"Yeah, this morning."

"Why did it take you this long to call?" I ask, not really wanting to know the answer because it'll only add to my guilt.

“I was giving you the chance to do the right thing and call me, but I couldn’t wait any longer since my shift starts soon.”

“I’m sorry. I don’t know what’s wrong with me. Maybe it’s the concussion.” It’s pathetic to blame my procrastination on that when I know it has nothing to do with it, but sympathy is better than anger. I can’t handle it when she’s mad at me.

“Concussion?” Her voice pitches high.

“How much did Lucky tell you?” I ask.

“Pretend I know nothing and tell me what happened.”

I recount the entire situation, leaving out details that have to do with Lucky. My feelings about what is or isn’t going on between us are already so jumbled, I can’t add her opinion to the mix. Even if I know what that opinion will be.

“I’m gonna kill him,” she says after I finish speaking. I have to give her credit. Besides the huffs of frustration, the gasps of shock, and a few quiet tears, she managed not to interrupt.

“No, you won’t. Lucky said he’ll keep me safe until this all blows over.” *Plus, I’ll be the one who kills him.*

The more I dissect my conversation with Lucky last night, the more I realize what he was trying to say without spelling it out. He wants me to stop being a victim and take control of my life, something I can’t do until Neal is no longer a threat.

I wasn’t in the position to fight back before, but now I have Lucky, and I know he’ll help me get revenge.

“Why didn’t you come to me? We could’ve figured this out like we always do. Together.”

“This is nothing like anything we’ve handled before. Neal wasn’t playing fair, Myla. It’s a whole different ballgame.”

She sighs. “I still think we could’ve thought of something, but it’s not too late. I have enough money to get us out of Reno. We could start fresh somewhere new.”

Maybe her plan would’ve worked, maybe not. I considered it as I lay on my bed, broken and bloody. But I’ve always

protected Myla, and I won't stop now. I'd rather die than bring her into this.

"Lucky and the Sons are protecting me for now. Let's see how it plays out. If it goes bad, I'll let you know, and we'll be on the first plane to Aspen."

"Aspen? Why Aspen?"

"It's beautiful there, and we love to snowboard." Memories of Dad taking us snowboarding as kids flood my mind. While we lived in the desert and didn't get much of a winter, the drive to the mountains was short and something I looked forward to each year.

It wasn't all bad growing up with parents like ours. There were good times. But no matter whether it was a vacation, a shopping trip, a movie, or a holiday with family, religion always tainted it. We couldn't stay a full weekend snowboarding because we had to be back for church on Sunday. We couldn't buy trendy clothes because they were too risqué. We walked out of more than one movie because the language was vulgar. And our favorite uncle wasn't invited to Christmas after he finally came out to the family.

It never made sense to me.

"Okay. Aspen it is."

"*If* things go bad," I say.

"Right. If things go bad."

The keypad to the front door beeps, signaling Lucky's return. I smile to greet him, but it falls as quickly as it appeared when I see he's covered in blood.

"My? I gotta go. Lucky just got here."

"Wait. That's the other thing I wanted to talk to you about."

"I'll call you tomorrow, okay?" I end the call before she can argue more and rush over to Lucky, looking him up and down, trying to find the source of the blood. "What the hell happened? Is Bones here? Let me go get him."

“It’s not mine.”

“Not your what?”

“Not my blood.” He kicks off his boots and hangs his cut by the door.

“Whose is it?” I ask, not knowing if I want to know the answer.

“Neal’s.”

His name stops my heart completely. I involuntarily sway and feel the blood drain from my face, a whirring sound filling my ears.

“Tinleigh?” He reaches for me, gripping me by the arms. “Come sit down.” He guides me over to the sofa, and I lower slowly. “Is it the blood? You have a weak stomach or something?”

When I don’t answer, he strips off his white tee and wipes his face and arms with it, which does next to nothing to help the situation since it’s dried on, but I do get a good look at his bare chest. He has a thick patch of hair on it that starts just under his Adam’s apple and goes past his pecs, where it thins and tapers to a happy trail that disappears into his pants.

He has abs, a lot of them, all stacked on top of each other like rungs on a ladder. He also has two shallow grooves running down and in from his hip bones. What is that called? An Adonis belt? Whatever it’s called, it’s sexy. Continuing my perusal, I’m forced back to reality when my eyes catch the blood splatters on his jeans.

“What did you do?” I ask.

“To Neal?”

“Don’t play dumb. Yes, to Neal.”

“I paid him a visit and told him what would happen if he ever came near you again.”

“Why would you do that?”

“The fake answer is because I didn’t want you to be afraid of him anymore.”

“And the real one?” I ask.

“I wanted to punish him for what he did to you,” he says with his jaw clenching and his lips pressed tight, punctuating each word so there is no question about the truth behind them.

How many times have I wanted someone to step in and protect me? Ten? Twenty? More? When I was twelve, I had a dream about a knight rescuing me. I’m sure it had something to do with the fact that I watched *A Knight’s Tale* at a sleepover and had a crush on Heath Ledger, but that dream sparked a fantasy, one I would cling to in my darkest moments.

The man sitting in front of me is in no way a white knight. He doesn’t ride a horse; he rides a motorcycle. He doesn’t have a longsword; he has a gun. He doesn’t wear armor; he wears a leather vest. Still, none of that makes him any less of a hero to me. I fling myself at him, needing to give him a hug. He wasn’t expecting it, so he flies backward onto the couch, and I land on top of him.

“Thank you,” I say.

“You’re welcome.” His arms wrap around me, holding me tight and making me feel safe.

Later, I’ll go back to being angry with myself for not handling this on my own because I shouldn’t need a knight or a hero or a Lucky to solve my problems. When that happens, Lucky will get pissed at my stubbornness and call me out, and we can go back to the way things were. Right now, though, I put all that on the back burner to appreciate the fact that someone out there cares enough about me to want to help.

We stay like that for a long time, my body pressed into his while I soak up this feeling. That is until I feel something hard press into my hip. Is that his—oh my God.

I lift my head, and our gazes lock, mine confused and his... I don’t know what his is. His pupils are blown, leaving the barest ring of stormy blue-gray. There’s no tension in his face, the usual small wrinkles around his eyes and on his forehead nonexistent.

“I really want to kiss you right now,” he says, his voice weighted and rough. “If that’s not what you want, I’m gonna need you to pry your hot little body off me.”

“Wanting has nothing to do with it,” I say. “But I think I need to listen to my gut.”

“Okay, so what does your gut say?”

“It *should* be saying there’s something seriously fucked up with both of us, considering you’re covered in blood, and I’m covered in bruises, both from the same man.”

“I think that makes this moment poetic, don’t you think?”

He’s only proving my point. We are darkly disturbed individuals to be turned on right now.

“Don’t answer that,” he says, thinking better of it. “You said that’s what your gut *should* be saying, but what *is* it saying?”

That’s easy. It’s telling me that all I want right now is to not think about my shitty life and my shitty past. The only way I can think to make that happen is to let this man make me forget with his mouth.

Instead of blurting all that out, I answer by shifting so our pelvises are aligned and his hardness is lined up with my softness. My clit thrums a steady beat, and a rush of arousal dampens my panties. Lucky swallows thickly, tilting his hips to give me the barest of friction.

Until him, I thought I was dead inside. Nothing turned me on, not when I tried and failed to make myself come, not when I had an attractive customer to grind on, and definitely not when Neal would show up at my door to remind me how much I owed him.

As it turns out, all I needed to make my body spark to life was Lucky. That knowledge doesn’t give me an ounce of comfort. His words are pretty, and he’s definitely put in more effort than anyone else in my life ever has, but I worry that’s just who he is, and once he’s put me back together and made me happy, he’ll get bored.

He leans in until our lips are so close that his unruly mustache and beard tickle my skin. Our warm breaths combine with our gazes, but he stays there.

“What’ll it be?” He wants me to make the first move, to be the one to make the choice.

So before I can talk myself out of it, I crash my lips into his. It starts out messy and hungry, our teeth clanging as we each vie for control. But when his talented tongue spears past my lips, slipping and sliding against my own and making me dream up all the other places I want to feel it, I give up the reins.

Lucky pushes up to sit, bringing me with him and turning us so he’s resting against the back of the couch, which forces me to spread my legs to straddle his hips. Though forcing is the wrong word because I want nothing more than to be as close as possible to this man.

He bites my lower lip, reopening the wound there so the taste of him is replaced by the metallic tang of blood. I pull away, swiping my finger over it and coming away with a red streak.

“Shit. It keeps reopening.”

“Don’t care, Hellcat.” He leans in and swipes his tongue over the place where it’s split before diving back in to kiss me some more. When my pussy throbs in response, there’s no doubt just how darkly disturbed we are.

He pushes my shirt up, and our lips part so he can tug it over my head. Thankfully, I took a break from the TV long enough to shower and change, which means I’m now wearing a lacy black bra.

But he surprises me when he ignores my breasts completely and, instead, plants kiss after kiss on my throat, right where the bruises in the shape of fingers are, and I wonder if he’s doing it on purpose.

“I know I can’t kiss away the marks, but it makes me feel better knowing I was the last person to touch you in all these places, not him,” he says before getting back to work.

“Lucky.” I close my eyes, committing this moment to memory as he rights the wrongs he didn’t commit, expecting nothing from me in return. Is this man even real, or another figment of my imagination like my knight was?

He sure feels real.

“Stand up,” he orders once he’s satisfied.

“Why?” I ask, but he pins me with a look that says, ‘Stand up, or I’ll make you stand up,’ and I climb off to position myself between his outstretched legs.

He pulls my tight cotton shorts down to my ankles, and I kick them away, leaving me in a tiny thong. Again, he ignores my near nudity and instead grips my waist to turn me around so I’m facing away from him.

This time, I don’t have to wonder what his intentions are. He braces my hips with his strong hands, and I feel his soft lips and the tickle of his facial hair reverently move along my back, where I’m bruised and sore, kissing every inch.

I don’t recognize this feeling burning in my chest, but it’s overwhelming, and I don’t know what to do with myself. I want to cry, laugh, kiss, fuck, and scream all at the same time. But what I want most is for it to never go away, which frightens me.

Turning me back around, he gazes up at me, looking absolutely feral with his scruffy beard, dried blood splattered on his cheeks, and hungry eyes. “Tell me what you want.”

There’s no doubt in my mind that if this was as far as I wanted to go tonight, he wouldn’t say shit about it. He’d put my clothes back on, tuck me into his bed, and walk away.

But that’s not what I want at all, so I gather up all my confidence and say, “Fuck me, Lucky.”

“You sure?”

“Very.”

“You need to understand what that means.”

“I know what it means.”

His hands trail up and down my sides. “Oh yeah? Tell me.”

My face flames. “Myla told me you have certain tastes when it comes to sex.”

“Certain tastes?” His tone is amused.

I shift my weight, building the courage to spell it out. “She told me you’re freaky, okay?”

He throws his head back in a loud, booming laugh, embarrassing me even more. I shouldn’t have said anything, but it struck me he might think I’m too broken or damaged or whatever to satisfy him the way one of the women from the club can.

I step out of his hold, but before I can get away, all humor falls away, and he grips me by the back of my thighs, pulling me close and encouraging me to straddle him once again.

“That’s not what I fuckin’ meant. Not at all.” He rests a hand at the base of my throat. It should terrify me, all things considered, but his hold is possessive, not cruel. “I’ve made it clear that I want you to be mine. Not for a week or a month or a goddamn year—I intend for this to be a forever-type thing. But you’ve made it clear you’re not ready for that, and while I can respect that, I don’t like it.”

“Luck—”

“Not done.” His hand moves to my chest, his giant palm covering my heart. “When—not if—but when I fuck you, any respect I have for your wishes is off the table. The second my cock slides into this pussy”—his hand goes lower, his fingers teasing the edge of my panties, sending a jolt of desire through my core—“I’m not letting you go.”

“You don’t mean that.”

“The fuck I don’t. I can’t tell you I’ll be good at this whole relationship thing—never done it before—but I can tell you with all certainty that I mean every fuckin’ word. You’ll be mine—even when I come home covered in blood, even when you’re my one phone call from the county jail, even when I forget to text back or call, and even when you want to spend time with me, but I got club shit to take care of.”

“Don’t oversell yourself,” I snark, the lust fog clearing from my head.

“Haven’t gotten to the good part,” he says. “Because you’ll also be mine when I do everything in my power to make your dreams come true, when I force you to recognize your power and harness that shit, when I make you my equal partner, when I put a ring on your finger, and even when I fill your belly with my babies.”

The damn fog returns. My whole life, I watched as Mom took a backseat to her wants, dreams, and even her needs until she couldn’t change the brand of laundry detergent she used without consulting Dad. She lost all ability to make decisions for herself completely.

When I left home, I promised myself that would never be me. That no one would dictate my life the way Dad did hers. Then, without even realizing it, I allowed it to happen with Neal. I wonder if that’s how it was for her, too. Was it such a slow process that she didn’t see it happening until it was too late, like me?

What Lucky’s proposing is the exact opposite of that, even though he’s skipping about forty thousand steps between what he wants and where we’re at, which is where I get hung up. It seems highly unlikely that out of all the women he’s met and all the women he’s been with, he’s never met one he at least wanted to date?

I’d be flattered if this were a fairytale, but it’s not; it’s my life. I’d be an idiot not to give him the chance to prove me wrong, though, because he’s right, there is something between us that I can’t explain, and despite the bad timing, I can’t walk away.

“Fuck me, Lucky,” I repeat with more confidence this time.

“You sure about this?”

“Not about the babies, but we can talk about that later,” I tease.

Once again, I'm being flipped on my back, the weight of his body pinning me down. "Oh, there *will* be babies. Lots of them. Matter of fact, if we're going to get that right, we should start practicing."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LUCKY



I pop the button of my jeans before dipping down to kiss the shit out of her while I try and get my mind straight.

What the hell am I doing? And what the hell kind of speech did I just make? Fuck, did I just tell her I want babies?

The uncontrollable urge to possess this woman has things flying out of my mouth that I never thought I'd ever even *think*, let alone *say* to someone. She's got me all kinds of fucked up, and I'm thanking my lucky stars she didn't bolt out of the cabin, scared that some biker she's only just met licked blood off her face and is trying to knock her up.

I don't regret it though. Not one word. Because as crazy as it all sounds, I meant it. It's not love at first sight; I don't believe in that. But it's something, and whatever it is, I can't control it. And more than that, I don't fucking want to.

Her lips part, and this time, it's her tongue sliding in to dance with mine. The fact that she's still here proves she's just as nutty as I am, but at least she has enough smarts to have doubts. I saw them written in her eyes. She's going along with this, but she doesn't trust me enough to believe my words.

I'm not a patient man, but I am a determined one, so I'll do whatever it takes to prove I'm not fucking around.

My cock throbs, pressing painfully against the zipper of my jeans as I nip and suck on her sweet lips, hungry to taste every inch of her. Unfortunately, this couch doesn't allow us much room to do anything. I need her in my bed where I can

spread her out properly and take the first steps in convincing her I'm a safe bet.

Time to get her back in my bed, this time with me in there, too.

I pry myself off her and pull her up. Patting the back of my shoulder, I turn and crouch low. "Hop on."

"What?" She giggles.

"Hop the fuck on."

"Oh my God." She stands on the couch and climbs onto my back. "You can't take me up like this."

"The hell I can't." I walk over to the ladder and grab the metal rungs. "Hang on tight."

Her thighs squeeze tighter around me, and her hold around my neck strengthens. She's light, and I'm a big boy, so it's not a difficult feat to climb up to the platform and march us over to the bed. Turning around, I help her off before facing her again.

Even with a softball-sized bruise on her forehead, a split lip, and demons in her eyes, she's still the most beautiful woman I've ever laid eyes on. Her strength shines through in everything she does, even when she's breaking down, because it takes guts to show your vulnerability.

All that said, I can't take my eyes off the way her fat tits spill over the top of her bra and how her hips flare out to accommodate her dump truck of an ass. Respectfully, of course, I want to do things to her that are illegal in twenty-seven states.

There'll be time for us to explore and learn all the many ways we can get each other off, but now's not it. I need to be inside her, and I need it right the fuck now.

Standing on the bed, she's at the perfect height for me to unclasp her bra, tug it off, and bury my face in those glorious tits. She's soft, so fuckin' soft, and smells like my spice and pine soap.

"You used my soap," I say around a handful of tit.

“Sorry, I forgot to bring my body wash.” She pulls the elastic from my hair, releasing it. Her hands comb through as I pinch down on her nipple.

“Don’t ever stop. I like you smelling like me.”

“Okay, caveman,” she sasses but is cut short when I suck a nipple into my mouth, taking long draws. “Oh, fuck.”

I move to the other side, loving the way her fingernails scratch along my scalp as I show this one the same attention as the other. But it’s still not enough. I need more. Pulling away, I unzip my jeans and push them down.

“Holy shit,” she says when my cock bobs free. “You don’t wear underwear.”

“Good observation.” I smirk.

“And you’re pierced.”

“Nothing gets by you.” My dick bobs at her attention. “Now, lie down.”

She lowers to the mattress, positioning her head on the pillow. Getting on the bed, I kneel at her feet and hook my fingers in the flimsy strings running up her hips. With a quick yank, they break at the seams.

“Show me,” I demand, tossing the scrap of fabric over my shoulder, my eyes lock on her clean-shaven slit. She draws her legs up and then drops her knees to the side, giving me what I want. “Goddamn knew it.”

“What did you know?” The question comes out breathy and sexy.

“That you’d have the prettiest pussy I’ve ever seen.” I claim the space between her legs, my focus on her center as I spread her lips apart to find her glistening with arousal. “This for me, Hellcat?”

“You know it is.”

Adjusting myself, I lower to my belly and come face-to-cunt with my next meal. “I can’t go another minute without knowing how you taste.”

Her hips undulate, telling me she wants it too, so I swipe my tongue up her seam, moaning as her flavor bursts on my tongue. Hooking my arms under and around her thighs, I use my thumbs to open her up. I flick her swollen clit a few times before flattening my tongue to lap up her arousal.

Paying attention to the sounds she makes and the way she moves, I quickly figure out what she likes and build a rhythm until all I hear are her sharp intakes of breath, her thighs drawing up to squeeze my head.

“Fuck, Lucky. God, yes. Just like that.”

“Come for me,” I say before increasing my efforts.

Gazing up at her, I watch as her eyes squeeze shut and her hands move to my hair. She fists the long strands, pulling me closer and grinding against my face. The sting shooting from my scalp only serves to spur me on. Sex is all about sensation to me. Doesn't matter if it's pain, pressure, or a tickle, I want to feel it, and I want my partner to as well.

She moans loudly as her pussy spasms, leaking more of her sweet juices that I savor as I carry her through her orgasm. It's a goddamn thing of beauty.

When her body goes lax and her hold on my head loosens, I crawl up her body, leaving biting kisses on her pubic bone, up her stomach, and on the fleshy part of each tit, finally arriving at her throat where my kisses turn gentle.

Her legs wrap around my waist, and I hike a thigh up higher, dragging my length through her center and relishing how wet and warm she is there. I kiss her, forcing her to taste herself on my tongue. She moans as I grind against her, not entering yet, just stroking against her clit to rev her up again.

“Tell me how good I made you feel,” I say.

“God, Lucky. That was amazing.”

“You ready to feel me inside you?”

“Please. I need it.” Her nails scratch up my back.

“Let me grab a condom.” With all the willpower I can muster, I pull away to reach for the nightstand and the sleeve

of condoms, tearing one off. “You on birth control?”

“No.”

That surprises me, but there’s a lot I don’t know about the ins and outs of her relationship with Neal.

“Did you see Monroe today?” I don’t want to risk killing the mood, but we skipped right past an important talk that should’ve happened before we got going.

“No, Bones made an appointment for tomorrow. He said he’d pick me up.”

Thinking of her on the back of that Jesus motherfucker’s bike doesn’t sit well with me. “Like hell. I’ll take you. What time?”

“Ten in the morning.”

I tear open the wrapper and sheath my cock. “Good. I want you to get tested and get on birth control. I don’t want anything between us, not even a layer of latex.”

“I was going to do that anyway.” A flush creeps along her cheeks.

“You worried about that?” I run my hands down her sides, settling on her hips.

“Maybe.” She lifts a finger to her mouth, biting at a fingernail.

I knock it away. “You have nothing to worry about.”

She rolls her eyes. “I could be sick right now.”

“You could be,” I agree.

“We probably shouldn’t be doing this then.” She tries to roll away, but I stop her.

“You think there’s anything Monroe could tell you that would change the fact that you’re mine?”

“There might be.”

I lean over her, lowering to my elbows and boxing her in, my hair making a curtain around us. “Thought I made it clear, but it sounds like you still don’t understand. You’re mine now,

and there ain't nothin' that's gonna change that. Through sickness and health and all that shit."

"Lucky..."

"My mind's made up. I licked you"—I make a show of lifting my hips and gazing down her delicious body—"fuckin' everywhere. That means you're mine."

"That only works on children."

I lick her cheek to prove my point.

"And apparently bikers," she mutters.

Lowering back down, I drag my cock through her center once again while I feast on her lips. That conversation sidetracked us, but I'm ready to get us back on course. She wraps her legs around me and tilts her hips, giving me better access as I tease her with my length.

Once she's writhing under me, I pull away to kneel in between her legs so I can witness the moment her pussy swallows my cock. I position the tip at her entrance and push in an inch or so before pulling out, only to do it all over again. I'm desperate to sink all the way in, but I fight it, wanting to enjoy every second of our first time.

"Look at the way your pussy cradles my cock." I push in further. "You're goddamn perfect."

I grab her knees, pushing them up to her chest as I ease myself in further until I'm fully seated. My head rolls back on my shoulders, and I swallow hard. Not only is she a tight fit, but everything about being with her is new to me. I've never cared so much about someone I've fucked, never had the knowledge that I'm fucking the same pussy I'll be fucking tomorrow and the day after until forever. It's monumental, but it feels so right.

I peel my eyes open and gaze down at Tinleigh. There's a sheen of sweat along her collarbone, her arms are stretched wide, hands fisting the sheets, and her puffy lips swollen. Knowing Neal's most likely at the hospital being treated for various injuries right now helps to calm the rage over seeing all the marks on her, but it doesn't feel like enough. The man

should be six feet under or being shoved into an incinerator, preferably alive.

The only marks on her body should be from me. From when I spank her ass, or bite her skin, or cuff her to my bed. I have so many plans.

Not now, though. Right now, the only thing I want to do is make her scream my name and forget that the last forty-eight hours ever happened.

I pull out, watching the second she realizes what that apadravya piercing is all about. I wouldn't willingly have someone shove a needle through my dick unless it served a purpose, and this one, along with my pubic piercing, served a big purpose.

I'm pierced for her pleasure.

"Oh my god. Do that again," she says.

"Yes, ma'am." I thrust back in, rotating my hips. The steel ball drags along her G-spot, making her gasp.

"I get it now. I *so* get it." She giggles breathily.

Wait until she sees what my pubic piercing does.

I flip us over so she's on top. Her teardrop breasts are all-natural, and they sway as she settles into position, straddling my hips and placing her hands on my chest for purchase.

"Grind down on me," I say.

She looks at me questioningly, but she does it, rewarding me with the same surprised look she gave me before. Slowly, she figures out the best way to make the steel balls at the base of my cock please her.

"I'm your own personal sex toy." I smirk.

She grinds on me, circling her hips before lifting up and slamming back down. I enjoy every second as she works me over until her movements become jerky, and I know she's about to come again. Reaching out, I pinch one of her perfectly budded, rosy nipples, paying attention to her

reaction. When her cunt squeezes me and she starts panting, I know I'm on the right track.

She curses as a gush of warmth soaks my balls, and she picks up speed. Her face screws up, her eyes squeeze shut. I pinch down harder, giving her nipple a little tug. She comes hard, choking the life out of my cock. Tingles spread up my spine, alerting me to my own impending orgasm.

Once I feel the telltale pussy spasms, I grip her hips and move her to my own rhythm. She catches on, helping me get there. As I thrust up, she comes down, giving me the perfect amount of friction. My balls draw up tight as I watch her tits bounce up and down. I grit my teeth, the pleasure spreading through my body until—

“Fuck!” I roar, spurting into the condom but picturing my cum coating her insides in my head.

I push her hips down, holding her there as I pulse out the rest of my release. Fucking hell, that felt so good, better than any orgasm I've ever had before, and I know it's because of her.

She collapses at my side, panting and exhausted. I quickly take care of the condom before drawing the covers up over us both and pulling her into me. Resting her head on my shoulder, her fingers weave into my chest hair, and I rest my hand on her bare ass.

This would normally be the time I'd climb out of bed and get dressed to leave, but so much has changed. For one, we're in my bed, somewhere I've never allowed another woman. There are spare rooms in the main house for that. For another, I don't want this woman out of my sight, not for one second, especially now that I know what it feels like to be inside her.

This is going to get complicated.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TINLEIGH



“Did you really get piercings so it would feel good for the person you’re sleeping with?” I ask.

“I’ve never slept with a woman before, but if you’re asking about fucking, then hell yeah, I did.”

I let out a small laugh. “You’re something else, Lucky.”

“You can’t tell me you didn’t enjoy it.” He gives my ass a little squeeze.

There’s no point in denying it. I used his body like a playground. Any self-consciousness I had flew out the freaking window when I realized what his bodily accessories could do for me.

“You know I did.” I scoot closer, draping my leg over his body. There’s a euphoria to this moment I want to soak in forever. It’s a new feeling for me; I wonder if he feels it, too or if this is just what he does.

I believe that he wants me; obviously, he does. But anything more that I’m not sure I trust. I think Lucky might have a bit of a savior complex, and once all this blows over and we’re met with boring day-to-day life, he’ll lose interest in me. There’s nothing wrong with that, and I’m thankful just to have had him in my life, no matter how fleeting the moment is.

He’s given me hope and forced me to remember why I left home in the first place. My yearning to live my life the way I want is back full force, and I’ll stop at nothing to achieve it.

“What’s the pirate theme all about?” I ask, tracing a finger along the octopus arm that wraps around his shoulder.

“When other people ask me, I tell them I got it just because it’s badass.”

“What about when I ask?”

He rests the hand that’s not gripping my ass on my arm draped across his chest. “That changes things. My future wife gets the truth.” He peers at me through his periphery, watching for a reaction.

“Okay, what truth do you have for your future wife?” There’s no harm in playing along, even though I know this man will break my heart someday. Hopefully soon because every second spent with him is another second I grow attached to the way he makes me feel.

“You met my family, so you know how they are.”

“Yeah, they’re amazing.”

“They are, but you can also probably guess at how much I didn’t fit in with them.”

I think back to his mostly strait-laced family. Sure, they’re open-minded and accepting, but their lifestyles couldn’t be more opposite of Lucky’s. I can definitely see how he might’ve felt like the black sheep.

“They love you,” I reassure him.

He hums his agreement. “They also don’t understand me. Never have. I always had too much energy and not enough of an attention span for their liking. When I was young, that meant I got yelled at a lot and was always in trouble. The happiest day of my mom’s life was when I started kindergarten, and she got a break.”

“That’s not true.”

“It is, but it was the happiest day of my life, too, because my teacher saw something in me that everyone else wrote off as just being a rowdy boy.”

My head lifts to look at him fully. “What?”

“She had a meeting with my mom, the principal, and the counselor to ask if I’d ever been tested for ADHD. My mom was beyond offended. Back then, people still had the opinion that doctors were over-medicating energetic little boys because they couldn’t handle them.”

“What did your dad think?”

“He thought I should get tested. He’s more even-keeled and logical than my mom is. You might’ve picked up on that.”

“Yeah, nothing seems to rile him up much, not even a family lunch with a stripper.”

He chuckles. “Anyway, he talked my mom into getting me to see the doctor, and obviously, I was diagnosed with ADHD. The doc prescribed some meds that helped a lot, at least with school and shit, but I was still me. I still didn’t fit into their perfect vision. I was, and still am, a rebel. That’s what the tattoo means. It symbolizes me living a life of freedom despite everything and everyone who tries to tame me.”

“I love that.” I cuddle into him again.

“Now it’s your turn.”

“That’s easy, I don’t have any tattoos.”

“I mean, it’s your turn to tell me what made you into who you are today.”

A jolt of panic crawls through my body, making my skin itch. “You don’t want to hear my sob story. Trust me, it’s not that interesting.”

“You’re wrong. I want to know everything about you until I know what you’re gonna say before you say it.”

I bite my lip until the closed cut opens, and I taste blood. At this rate, it’ll never heal, and I’ll definitely have a nasty scar. Not that I care—the only reason I put stock into my appearance is because I know that’s all I have going for me. Without my looks, I’m nothing.

“Why don’t you want me to know?” He turns to face me, keeping my leg hiked up on his hip and an arm around me.

“Some truths are better left in the dark.”

“What are you afraid might happen if you say it out loud?”

“Right now, you like me, despite the bruises and knowing what I’ve recently been through, but how much is too much? How much honesty will it take until all you see is the damage that’s been done?”

“There’s no measurable amount. I’ll only like you more knowing you went through it and are still here.”

God, there is so much more to this man than meets the eye. At first glance, he’s just a boisterous, obnoxious, intrusive, pestering prick, but underneath all that is the biggest heart and the most caring person I’ve ever met. I kind of hate him for how amazing he is.

“You know I grew up in an ultra-religious household.” I pause for his nod. “Well, when boys and girls turn twelve, they begin to have annual meetings with a church leader. These meetings are held in a private office with a closed door, just you and him.”

The corners of his eyes turn down as he studies me, probably already knowing where this is going. And he’d be right, but I power on anyway.

“The first time I went, I remember being terrified because I knew what he was going to ask, and those things felt too personal to tell a stranger. But my parents didn’t give me a choice; I had to go. So, I sat in front of this old man as he asked me intrusive questions, and even though it felt all kinds of wrong, I was honest with him. Yes, I had impure thoughts. Yes, I touched my body inappropriately because, on accident, I figured out it felt good when I rubbed a washcloth between my legs, so I did it each time I took a bath.”

“Jesus,” he mutters, rubbing a hand up my back.

“I left that meeting feeling so ashamed and gross.” It’s been a long time since I’ve experienced that feeling, but admitting all this to Lucky has it washing through me again.

“I can’t believe your parents would allow that.”

I huff. “Oh, they not only allowed it, but when that same leader asked to meet with me again the next week, they drove me there, despite me throwing a two-year-old tantrum over it.”

“Fuckin’ sick.”

“At that meeting, he made me sit next to him on a sofa. He tried to make his hand on my knee seem like he was giving me comfort as he read through scriptures, but all it did was make my skin crawl. And looking back, I see that’s the moment it all started. He told my parents I needed special counsel once a week because I was struggling with my faith. That was true, but it’s not why he wanted to meet with me. Slowly, he convinced me to let him touch me since I was already such a filthy girl. And I believed it.” My voice hitches, remembering how he preyed on my insecurities. I clear my throat. “Anyway, that went on for an entire year. We didn’t meet every week, but close to it. I think he thought people would get suspicious, but no one ever did. Or if they did, they didn’t do anything about it. He touched me, made me touch him, and made me put my mouth on him, but he never... you know.”

“Doesn’t make it any better.”

“Maybe. Maybe not. I’m glad I didn’t have to find out.”

“So what happened after a year? Why did it stop?”

“I complained to my mom about a couple sores in my mouth.”

“The asshole gave you an STI?”

“Well, she didn’t know what it was, so she took me to the doctor, where I was diagnosed with syphilis. She was so pissed. She assumed I was off having sex with classmates. I told her the truth, but she didn’t believe me. She called me a liar and a sinner for even suggesting a man of God would do such a thing.”

“What a cunt,” he sneers.

“To be fair, I hated church, even as a child. Every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, when I was expected to attend church or church functions, I suddenly came down with a stomachache. It wasn’t a lie, but I also wasn’t sick. I now

know it was anxiety because something in me always knew that place wasn't right for me. But to my mom, telling her about what happened was just a progression of my lies to get out of going." I'm blinking back tears as I admit, "Not even Myla believed me."

"That must've hurt worst of all."

I nod. "Unfortunately, she learned the truth the hard way because when we turned thirteen, Myla was due for her annual visit with that same church leader. Soon after, she came down with the same sores. Mom was quick to dismiss it as sharing a straw with me or some bullshit. She never once admitted that I was telling the truth, but after what happened with Myla, neither of us had a meeting with that man again."

"It took your sister getting sick to make her believe you?"

"Yeah, but we were never allowed to talk about it, not even to my dad. We were forced to keep it a secret."

"That's fucked up."

"I had questions about the religion before, mostly just that feeling of it not being right, but after that, I was done. I did the bare minimum to keep my parents off my case, but it was never enough. I was a constant source of embarrassment. Myla was one hundred percent with me after what happened to her, but she had an easier time changing who she was around my parents."

He nods. "I can see that. She's one way with customers and a whole different person with everyone else. Still sweet, just less fake."

"I never had that ability, not even when Neal would drag me to those awful events. People laughed it off as me having a dry sense of humor, but that's not what it was. I was just being honest with them, and they didn't want to cop to the truth."

"I'm sorry you went through that."

"It is what it is, right?"

"I guess, but it's not what it should've been, and it's not what it will be. Not if I have a say in it." He pushes a strand of

hair off my cheek. “You’re the bravest goddamn person I know.”

“I’m not. If I were, I wouldn’t have gotten myself in the same situation I was running from.”

“That’s not on you. That’s on him.”

I reach up and scratch a flake of dried blood off his forehead.

“Shit.” He glances down and sees that his arm has the same splatters. “I should go shower.”

Maybe he forgot it was there, but I didn’t. I memorized the placement of each drop as he fucked me, and it turned me on knowing what he did for me.

Now, that’s a truth I’ll keep to myself.

Lucky climbs out of bed, giving me a better look at his naked form. His shoulders are broad, his abs are defined, his cock is a thing of beauty, and his ass is round and high. I stretch, relishing in the fact that, at least for now, he’s mine.

“Come with me and keep me company,” he says, opening his closet, digging through a chest of drawers, and producing a pair of boxers.

“So the whole free-balling thing is a choice and not just because you’re too lazy to buy underwear?”

“Focus,” he repeats. “Shower time.”

I’m tempted, but I also feel like I could use a minute to process how intense the last couple of hours have been.

“Tinleigh, get your ass up. You’re coming with me.”

I quirk a brow at his demand. I’m not surprised because he’s been this way since I met him, but I wouldn’t be me if I didn’t question his authority.

“Please,” he adds, tossing the covers off me. He pauses to take me in the same way I did him. “Goddamn perfection. Now come on.”

His cock reacts to my nudity, growing in size and girth, the little stainless-steel balls fixed to the top and bottom of his glans tempting me. My mouth goes dry, and my clit pulses, making the choice for me.

“Fine.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TINLEIGH



Monroe knocks on the door to the small exam room and opens it a crack. “You ready for me?”

Not surprisingly, Lucky didn’t allow Bones to bring me to my appointment. Instead, I rode in with him on the back of his bike. It obviously wasn’t the first time I’d ridden with him, yet it felt so different. I’m confident and comfortable touching him now, so much so that I even slipped a hand underneath his shirt just to touch his skin, and he didn’t shy away from reaching back at every stoplight to rub up and down my thigh, checking in on me with a single touch.

That was an hour ago, and between then and now, I’d stopped in Myla’s room so she could see I was okay. She cried when she saw the ugly bruise in the middle of my forehead that’s now puke green and yellow, and my lip that’s scabbed and crusty, but since I was glowing from the inside after having one of the best nights of my life, it was easy to convince her I’m more than okay. I’m fucking thriving.

I kept my feelings about Lucky a secret, though. Whatever we have going on is filling me with so much hope and joy that I’m not quite ready to share it with her. I know once I do, she’ll flip the fuck out, and I just want to hold onto this feeling for as long as possible before that happens.

“I am,” I say, adjusting the paper sheet covering my lower half.

When it was time for my appointment, Lucky introduced me to the gorgeous doctor who directed me to strip from the

waist down and cover myself with the flimsy material. That's when the nerves kicked in, and now, I'm facing a truth I've been denying for a long time because there's a very real possibility that I might have some sort of STI.

She walks in, her white coat doing little to cover up the chic but revealing outfit underneath. Her silk blouse is unbuttoned enough to expose a good deal of cleavage, and her black skirt is tight and short. Lucky told me they hired her because she got herself through medical school by working in the sex industry, which makes her more understanding and relatable to the women here.

Sitting on a black stool, she scrolls through the paperwork I filled out on her tablet. "First, I want you to know that whatever we discuss is between us. I won't share it with anyone unless you give me permission. My files are all electronic, and my tablet is kept at my private practice, under lock and key. There's no chance of anyone here gaining access."

"Okay. I appreciate that."

"So, I see your last physical and gynecological exam was some time ago, and during that appointment, you were diagnosed with syphilis?"

My cheeks flame red as I nod.

"I'm assuming you were given a round of penicillin?"

"Yes."

"Okay, good." She rests the tablet on her lap and looks up at me. "So, what can I do for you today?"

"I've been in a bad situation the last two years and haven't exactly been safe," I say, hoping I don't have to spell it out for her.

"Okay. Why don't I do an exam, take some samples, get some blood, and run some tests? That sound alright?" There's not a drop of judgment on her face, and I breathe a sigh of relief.

“That sounds good. Thank you. I’d also like to discuss birth control, if that’s something you can do?”

“Of course.”

We go over different methods, and I ultimately choose an IUD so I don’t have to worry about filling a prescription if I ever have to go on the run—not that I tell her that. Lucky seems to think Neal won’t come for me after he kicked his ass, but I’m not so sure. I’ve never known the man to let something go, especially when it has to do with his girls.

Once I’ve made my choice, Monroe stands and sets the tablet on the counter. “Lie back and try your best to relax. This won’t take but a minute.”

Monroe is efficient, performing a pelvic exam, placing the IUD, and then drawing a couple vials of blood, all in less time than it takes me to shave each morning. By the time she’s done, she has me smiling and joking around with her. I can see why they hired her; never once did she make me feel bad for my reasons for being there.

“That’s it. Now, I’ll send these to the lab and should have the results later today. As for the IUD, you’ll probably have some cramping the next couple of days, so take some ibuprofen if you need relief,” Monroe says, pulling off her gloves.

“Okay.”

“And you shouldn’t insert anything into the vagina for three days, which includes tampons, dildos, and intercourse.”

I nod, biting my lip.

“I mean it. I don’t care what that man standing on the other side of the door says.”

“Okay,” I say, but little does she know I’m the one she has to worry about. After the things Lucky did to me last night, I’m looking forward to our next time.

“I’ll step out while you dress, but you’re free to go after that.”

“Thank you, Doctor Monroe.”

“Just Monroe. It’s common for doctors to keep formalities so there’s a separation between them and their patients, but given the patients I see, I don’t find it necessary.”

I smile slightly. “Okay. Thanks, Monroe.”

“Anytime.” She throws me a wink and walks out.

After dressing, I walk out to find Lucky right where Monroe said he was, leaning on the wall right outside the door, a piece of licorice hanging from his mouth.

“All done?” he asks.

“Yep.” I steal his candy, making him pout and me laugh. “What now? Are you going to take me back to your place?”

“Yeah. Unfortunately, I have a shift at the Garage I couldn’t get out of.”

“It’s okay. I’m a little tired and crampy, so I could use some rest.”

“Are you okay? What did she do to you in there?” he asks, his tone concerned.

“I had a birth control device inserted, and that’s just a side effect.”

“Oh yeah?” He waggles his brows, all concern gone.

“Don’t look too excited. No sex for three days.”

He takes my hand, guiding me to the exit. “I waited my whole life for you. Three days is nothing.”

I frown, glad he can’t see it as we walk side by side. I’m sure most girls would swoon at a statement like that, but all it does for me is raise flags. No man is this perfect, especially when he was a certified player last week. While I didn’t tell Myla about Lucky and me, she must have her suspicions. While I was in her room earlier, she made it a point to tell me even more stories about his sexcapades.

I took it with a grain of salt because I do believe Lucky is infatuated with me. There’s no questioning that, but I do question his future intentions, so I need to protect my heart and not get caught up in all his flowery words.

It'll suck if wakes up one day and doesn't want me anymore , but I'll be okay. I have to be. I didn't make it through all this just to be destroyed by yet another man. It also won't stop me from enjoying my time with him while it lasts, so as we ride back to the compound, I hold him a bit tighter than normal, soaking up how good it feels.

"You already know the Garage is just right next door," Lucky says after safely delivering us back to the compound. "So I'll be close in case you need anything. Sugar's somewhere in there too."

I lift onto my toes and place my hands on his chest. "I'll be fine."

He dips down to kiss me, but this one's gentle. He didn't like the way my lip looked this morning and swore he'd be careful until it healed. I told him it didn't matter, but he's obviously sticking to his promise.

He grabs two handfuls of my ass. "See you later, okay? I'll take you out to dinner, or if you're not feeling well, we can order something."

"We can have dinner with the club. There's no need to change your routine."

Lucky told me that most nights, all the members who live in the cabins have dinner together. Apparently, Sugar makes a big spread. It sounds fun, and I want to check it out.

"We'll see." He rubs the top of my head, messing up my hair. "Bye."

"You ass," I say, fixing my hair into place as I watch him walk off.

I knew the Garage was next door, but I never paid it much attention. Shading my eyes with a hand, I see that just beyond the iron fence that's topped with barbed wire is a dumpy-looking car garage, and beyond that is what appears to be a junkyard, exactly what you'd expect from a motorcycle club. Intentionally unassuming and boring, they might as well fly a flag that says *Nothing to see here, Mr. Policeman.*

Once Lucky is out of sight, I walk through the front door of the compound, set on going to Lucky's cabin and reclaiming my spot on the sofa. I have more reality TV to watch. I stop when I see a man I don't know sitting at the bar, an e-reader in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. Not unusual, but what has my attention is the clerical collar he's wearing underneath his cut. It's unexpected.

Hearing my footsteps, he looks up and smiles big and warm. "You must be Tinleigh."

News travels fast around here.

I stop, tucking my hands in my jeans pockets. "I am."

He takes me in long enough to make me feel uncomfortable, but when he realizes what he's doing, he shakes his head. "I'm sorry. That was rude. I'm just intrigued by the woman who caught Lucky's eye."

"Oh. Right." I lift a hand. "That's me."

"Are you busy? I'd love it if you could join me." He stands and motions to the stool next to his.

I hesitate, not having the best track record with religious figures. They make me uncomfortable.

He holds out a hand. "Sorry, I didn't introduce myself. My name's Judge. I'm the club's, well, I guess you could say I'm their conscience."

I reluctantly shake his hand and, not seeing a way out of it, sit down. "That must be a big job."

"Not as big as you'd think," he says through a chuckle. "The Sons are good men. Mostly, anyway. Can I get you a cup of coffee?"

"Sure."

He walks around to the other side of the bar and pours a steaming cup before setting a bowl of creamer and sugar packets in front of me. I pretend to busy myself with doctoring the coffee, but really, I'm studying him as he walks back to the stool. He's older than Lucky, maybe in his forties. He's handsome in a put-together way, with styled brown hair that's

longer on top and shaved at the sides. His facial hair is kept short and trim, and he has the bluest eyes I've ever seen.

"I won't pretend I haven't heard some about you. Bones and I are close friends." He settles back in his seat.

I nearly choke on my coffee, thinking this man knows all my dirty secrets. Swallowing hard, I look at him expectantly.

"Nothing personal," he says, reading me. "Bones wouldn't do that."

"Oh. Okay."

"Just the basics. You're the twin sister of one of the Honey Pot women, and Lucky stepped in to get you out of some trouble. That's all I know."

"That pretty much sums it all up."

"I'll bet there's more, but I can tell I make you nervous, so I won't pry."

"I'm not nervous," I say in a way that confirms I am, indeed, nervous.

He just smiles, not calling me on my bullshit. "Either way, I just wanted to welcome you. From what I understand, you might be around a while."

"Maybe. Still working some things out."

"If you ever need help doing that, people tell me I'm a good listener."

"Are you a pastor?" I ask.

"Not in the sense that I have a church or congregation." His expression goes slack as he quietly adds, "Not anymore."

"Maybe I'm the one who shouldn't pry."

"No, you're fine." His posture straightens. "I don't know one person who hasn't been through some shit, me included."

With that, I decide he's all right. He obviously believes in God if he acts as some sort of spiritual leader to the club, but he curses, which, for some reason, puts me at ease.

“Cheers to that.” I hold up my coffee mug and clink it against his, bringing back his smile.

“I like you, Tinleigh.”

“I like you too.” I grin back at him, motioning to his e-reader with my mug. “What are you reading?”

“A zombie thriller. Do you like to read?”

“I haven’t picked up a book since high school,” I admit. “But I did enjoy it.”

“Maybe you’ll get back into it someday.” He picks up the device and presses a couple buttons until the cover of the book is on the screen. “Right now, I’m into apocalyptic thrillers. This one is about a girl who loses her family in a zombie attack. As she moves from place to place, she meets the craziest characters, and they form this family of sorts as they try to survive.”

“That sounds good.”

“It is. I’ve done nothing this morning but read.”

“What is it you normally do?” I ask.

“I try not to keep too busy; it’s better for my mental health. Keeps me mentally charged in case I’m needed by one of my brothers.”

“That’s kind of what I’m doing now. I should be thinking about finding a job and a place to live, but all I really want to do is snuggle into the couch and watch trashy TV.”

“You should give yourself some time. From the looks of it, you deserve the break.”

I reach up to touch my lip. “Guess it’s pretty obvious that I’ve been through some shit.”

“It is.”

We sip our coffee in a comfortable silence, both of us lost in our own thoughts. I don’t know where his mind went, but mine is wondering how long I can take advantage of Lucky’s generosity. We haven’t spoken about next steps, but I can’t hide at the clubhouse forever. At some point, I’ll need money

for an apartment. I push it away, making it tomorrow's problem.

Judge sets his coffee down, and my thoughts veer to him. Maybe he can help with something that's been bothering me.

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Of course."

"Do you have any experience with ultra-conservative religions?"

"A little."

"Do you think they really believe what they teach? Or do you think they know it's all bullshit but get off on the power?"

His brows lift. "Wow. Okay. Um, I don't know for sure. I take it you come from one of those religions?"

"Yes, and I always wonder about it. Seems like there's no way they could actually believe it, not when their actions go against the things they teach."

"That's a big generalization," he says.

"It is, but it's also not. I mean, corruption exists on every level. I've seen it."

"I don't disagree, but I have my own issues with organized religion."

"How do you deal with it? How do you wear a collar and be a man of God when you know religion hurts so many people?" My eyes well with unexpected tears, and I angrily wipe them away.

Judge hands me a napkin. "It took me a long time to realize what I'm about to tell you. God isn't inside a building or represented by a person. That's why I say I am spiritual but not religious. Humans are sinners, and to me, that automatically makes them unqualified to lead a congregation. Me included. "

"But isn't that what you do?"

"Here?" he asks.

“Yeah.”

“No. I stopped preaching many years ago. What I do here is what I’m doing with you now. I talk things out and let people come to their own conclusions.” He meets my gaze, his blue eyes peering into me and showing me his truth.

“Then why still wear the collar?”

“So that I remember.” He doesn’t expand on what that means, and I don’t ask.

“I don’t think I believe in God. Not anymore.”

“That’s valid.”

I adjust my position on the stool. “See, how can you say that?”

“Tinleigh, my relationship with God has nothing to do with you, so what would I get out of trying to convince you? It’s obvious you’ve been hurt deeply by religion. But that’s not me. Being spiritual means I believe and have faith. There’s no room for you in there.”

My shoulders slump as I realize how rude I’m being. “I’m sorry. I don’t know why I was trying to get an explanation out of you when you’re not the one who hurt me.”

“I wish I had the answers you need.” He rubs my shoulder, the touch comforting and forgiving. “Can I offer you some advice?”

“Please.”

“Let it go.”

“Really? That’s all you got?” I joke.

“If you had all the people who hurt you standing in front of you right now, is there anything they could say that could make you forgive them? Any explanation that would satisfy you?”

I think about that. What *could* they say? The answer is nothing. There are absolutely no words to take back what was done.

Judge takes both my hands in his, and I give him my attention. “Let it go, sweetheart. The only person you’re hurting by hanging onto all this anger is you. I guarantee they don’t give a fuck.”

Shit. I think he’s right.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

LUCKY



After working on cars all day, I come home to find Tinleigh on the couch, looking like she's ready for a night out. She has makeup on, her hair is curled, and she's wearing what I now recognize as her standard outfit, meaning a cropped band tee and torn jeans.

"You look sexy as fuck," I say, stopping to kiss the top of her head before heading to the kitchen to scrub my hands with the orange degreasing soap I keep there.

"Thanks." She joins me in the kitchen, watching as I use a wire brush to clean my nails. My calloused hands are permanently stained from the hours I spend under the hoods of cars, but I try anyway.

"You got plans I don't know about?"

"No. I just want to look nice if I'm going to meet your friends."

"If that's the case, go change and clean that shit off your face."

She frowns, tugging on the ends of her hair. "You just said I looked nice."

I dry my hands on a towel before drawing her close, my hands going to their favorite place in the world, her ass. "No, Hellcat. What I said was you look sexy as fuck. You think I want those horny bastards seeing you looking like every man's wet dream?"

“You’re an idiot.” She smiles, and it’s goddamn breathtaking.

“Yeah, but I’m your idiot. What does that say about you?”

Her face falls, but she keeps the joking tone in her voice as she pulls away from me. “That I must be an idiot too.”

I frown, noticing she does that whenever I mention a future with her. I thought after I spelled it out last night that she’d get it, but maybe I was wrong, or maybe I’m reading too much into it. She did agree to be mine, even after I told her what kind of future I could offer, and she did open up, telling me about her past.

I never wanted to settle down because fucking the same pussy every night felt boring, and I never wanted to answer to anyone. Turns out, the biggest problem with finding a forever kind of girl is this constant worry that I’ll lose her.

“I take it you won’t be changing then?” I call after her retreating form, hypnotized by her swaying hips.

“Nope.” She throws a middle finger up over her shoulder.

I shake my head, grinning like a loon. “Gonna grab a shower, then we can head over.”

“Okay.”

After washing up, I step onto the tiled floor and wrap a towel around my waist when I hear a knock at the door. I open it, and Tinleigh steps in, hiding something behind her back.

“What’s up?”

“What do you usually do when you get out of the shower?”

“Come again?” I ask.

“You just got out of the shower, what do you do next?”

I furrow my brows. “I run a brush through my hair, slap on some deodorant, and finger comb my beard. Now and then, I take some scissors to my mustache so it doesn’t curl into my mouth.”

“Can I try something?”

“Like what? I’m not into the whole manscaping thing if that’s what you’re getting at. Don’t got time or energy for that shit.”

“Just give me five minutes.”

I sigh, but it’s all for show since I’d do anything for her. An image of her curling my hair and shaving my balls flashes through my mind. Okay, almost anything.

“Do your worst,” I say.

“Yay!” She pulls a small fabric bag out from behind her back and lifts herself onto the small vanity. “I won’t do anything crazy. Just a little grooming because, babe, you look like you just stumbled out of the wilderness after being lost for a good five years.”

I scowl. “I thought you liked how I look.”

“I think I’ve more than proven I’m attracted to you.” She wraps her arms around my neck, drawing me in for a sweet kiss. “But I think I kicked up a pigeon last night after you begged me to scratch your chin.”

“You did not.”

“Just hold still.” She digs through the bag, producing a jar and a small pair of scissors. “This won’t hurt a bit.”

I settle between her legs, rubbing up and down her thighs as she works. She’s fucking adorable as she concentrates on trimming my overgrown beard, snipping away with one hand, and catching the clippings with her other.

“Don’t take too much off,” I say, mostly just to tease her.

“I could take a weed whacker to this thing and still not take too much off.”

I cackle, earning me a pointed look. Straightening, I go back to watching her work. But when she scoops some cream out of the jar, I pull away.

“What is that shit?”

“Just a little pomade to give it some hold.”

“Goddamn,” I curse, but allow her to work the citrus-smelling shit through my beard.

Her fingers tug and twist at strands until she’s finally satisfied. “There!”

“All right. Let me take a look.” I step to the left and am a little taken aback at how much better it looks.

“So? What do you think?” Her smile is blinding.

“I like it.” Returning to my spot between her legs, I pick her up. “I look like I deserve to have you on my arm.”

“Really?”

“Really. Thank you.”

“I can teach you how to do it for when I’m not around.”

That stops my forward movement into the living room. “Why wouldn’t you be around?”

“I just mean if I’m working or after I get my own place.”

“No,” I say simply.

“What do you mean, no?”

“I mean, you’re not getting your own place or getting a different job. It’s not safe.”

“I know it’s not safe right now, not until we see if Neal retaliates, but at some point—”

“Even then. You’re with me, so you’ll stay here.”

“Lucky.”

“I mean it, Tinleigh.”

Her legs loosen from around my waist, making it awkward to keep a hold of her, so I lower her to the ground. She rubs her hands together as she puts distance between us, moving to the couch where she sits.

“What’s this all about?”

“You’re going to get sick of me,” she says.

“Like fuck.”

“You only think that because you’re in some kind of savior-induced hyper-fixation.”

“I don’t know what that means.”

“It means you’re a good guy, Lucky. A really good guy. But when the day comes that there’s no threat and I don’t need saving, I’ll just be some fucked-up girl with no future. And there’s nothing attractive about that.”

“I can’t have this conversation in a towel. Hold on a second.” Needing a minute to process whatever the hell kind of bullshit she’s spewing, I return to the bathroom and throw on some clean clothes. I’m back in front of her a minute later and find her unmoved. “I didn’t ask you to be with me because you needed saving. If anything, you’re a complication I don’t need.”

She glances up at me, tears in her eyes. “In that case, I’ll leave now.”

Fuck me. I run a hand through my damp hair. “That was meant to be a flattery.”

“You might need to work on your complimenting skills.”

“I probably do. All this is new to me. You know that.” I take a seat in the chair kitty-corner to her. “All I meant was, I put a lot at risk to do what I did. If Neal comes after me, he comes after my club, which means I endangered my brothers, and that’s not something I’d do unless the reward is worth it. And baby, *you’re* worth risking my life and theirs. Hell, you’re worth risking the whole damn world for.”

“Except I’m not.”

“Then you don’t see what I do, and that’s what the real problem is.”

“I just don’t understand how this could all happen so quickly. It doesn’t make sense.”

“It doesn’t have to make sense. You just need to accept it. Can you do that for me?”

“I don’t know.”

“Can you try?” I ask.

She lowers her gaze, still bent over with her arms resting on her legs, as she rubs her hands together. I prepare myself for her rejection because as much as I’ve tried to ignore it, she’s been half out the door ever since I brought her here. She seems to think this is all just a fantasy that’ll come crashing down around her. The thing is, I don’t have the ability to play pretend. I’ve seen too much reality for that, and what I feel for her is as real as it gets.

“Can you?” I ask again.

“I can try,” she whispers.

Grabbing her hand, I pull her up and over to me. She comes willingly, straddling my hips and worming her arms around my middle. I hold her there for a long minute, loving the way she fits so perfectly. This would be an ideal time for me to fuck the indecision out of her, but given her doctor’s appointment earlier, that’s not possible. So, I settle for inhaling her clean scent and kissing her exposed neck.

“Can we go eat now? I’m starving,” she says.

I smack her ass. “Let’s do it.”

As we walk outside, she’s the one taking my hand, which feels important. After what just happened, though, I’m worried I’m reading into it too much and we’re doomed for a repeat of the same conversation tomorrow. Not looking forward to that, but if I have to spend every day of the rest of my life reassuring her, then that’s what’ll happen.

“What the fuck happened to you?” Rigger asks as Tinleigh and I make our way to the buffet-style meal set up on the bar.

“I tamed the beast,” Tinleigh says proudly.

“The man himself or the one growing on his face?” Rigger chuckles, earning a swat to his belly from Navy.

“I think you look handsome,” she compliments, making Rigger nearly foam at the mouth.

“Tinleigh, this Navy.” I introduce the two women. I imagine they’ll be spending a lot of time together in the future

since Rigger and me are as close to being real brothers as we can get.

“It’s good to finally meet you,” Navy says.

“Same.” Tinleigh returns her smile.

“Come over and sit with us after you get a plate.”

Tinleigh looks up at me, not knowing how things work around here, and I give her a nod.

“Okay. See you in a minute.”

“You okay?” I ask when we’re left alone.

“Yeah, I just didn’t know what to expect. There are more people than I thought would be here. You only talk about a handful of guys.”

I scan the crowd, noticing that there are more here than usual. “There are over fifty patched-in members, but they don’t normally show up on a weekday night. I think news about us has traveled, and everyone’s itchin’ to meet you.”

“Why?”

“The same thing happened when Mustang got with his boyfriend, Jenson. Then again, when Rigger hooked up with Navy. It’s not every day a ranking member gets himself an ol’ lady.” Realizing she doesn’t know what that means, I clarify. “Claims someone.”

“Claims?” She pins me with a look. “Like I’m a contract you rubberstamped?”

“It’s not that deep.” I grip her hips and turn her toward the food. “Now, fill that sassy mouth up with a roll or something before I stuff it with my dick in front of all these people.”

She elbows me in the gut but takes a plate. Once we’re loaded up with food, we make our way over to the table Rigger, Navy, Mustang, and Jenson are at and sit down. I motion to the two men Tinleigh doesn’t know. “Mustang, Jenson, this is Tinleigh.”

“Hey,” Mustang says curtly before shoving a forkful of food in his mouth.

“Ignore him.” Jenson reaches a hand over the table that Tinleigh shakes. “I’ve seen you walking back and forth between the cabin and here.”

“That’s right. You’re always sitting on the porch, typing away.”

“He’s a workaholic,” Mustang mutters.

“Guilty.” Jenson lifts a hand. “Come by next time you see me. We can have a cup of coffee and talk shit about these guys.”

“I will.” Tinleigh beams.

Golden joins our table, his little boy in tow. I introduce Tinleigh to Golden while his kid runs around the table, giving everyone a hug. When he comes to Tinleigh, he stops short.

“Who are you?”

“My name’s Tinleigh. Who are you?”

“My name’s Tyson, but everyone calls me Ty.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Ty.”

His little head cocks to the side. “Who are you with?”

“She’s with me, little man,” I say, ruffling his hair.

“Ty, come sit down and eat.” Golden holds his chair out.

“Okay.” He skips back around the table.

“He’s adorable,” Tinleigh says to Golden.

“He’s a pain in my ass,” he replies but looks down at Tyson with pride.

“You said ass,” the kid accuses.

“So did you,” Golden points out. “Now eat.”

With introductions out of the way and our table full, everyone dives in, chatting comfortably through the meal. I’m relieved when Tinleigh hits it off with Navy and Jenson. While I hope I’m enough to make her want to stick around, knowing she’s making friends here will only solidify her place in my life.

That's the goal, anyway.

CHAPTER TWENTY

TINLEIGH



After a long day, I'm happy when Lucky and I get back to his cabin. We brush our teeth side-by-side, and he stays to talk with me as I wash the makeup off my face. Once that's done, we climb up the ladder to head to bed.

He watches as I strip off my clothes, his gaze turning hungry.

"Don't look at me like that," I say, slipping on a tank top.

"Like what?"

"You know nothing can happen." I climb under the covers, still awed by the view of the stars from here, but my attention shifts when Lucky takes off his shirt and pops the button on his jeans. My lips part, knowing what's next because the man likes to go commando. The only time I've seen him in underwear is when he throws them on to walk around the house.

"Don't look at me like that." He mocks me with my earlier words.

He pushes his jeans down, revealing his big, beautiful cock that's already semi-hard. My core clenches involuntarily. How am I going to make it three whole days? The answer is I'm not. Well, technically, I won't have sex, but that leaves so many other things to do.

"When Myla told me you were freaky, what did she mean?" I ask, pushing off the covers and crawling to his side of the bed.

“I don’t fuckin’ know.”

“Tell me.”

“She probably just meant that nothing is really off the table with me.”

“Nothing?”

“I don’t want to get pissed on or lick your eyeballs or anything, if that’s what you’re thinking,” he says.

“What are some things you do like?”

“Can we not talk about this when I’m not getting laid for the next three days?” He points at his now fully erect dick.

“Just because we can’t have sex doesn’t mean we can’t have fun.” I slide off the bed and onto my knees in front of him.

“Fuck me.”

“Is that one of your kinks?” I ask, half joking.

“I wouldn’t say no.”

“Really?” I wrap my hands around his length and rest the tip on my lower lip. “Has anyone ever done that to you?”

“There’s been a finger once or twice.” He swallows hard.

I wrap my lips around him and hum, tasting his earthy and salty but clean precum. Asking him about that specific activity was mostly just to see how far he’d go. I wasn’t expecting him to say yes, but now that it’s out there, I can’t deny it holds some appeal.

Swirling my tongue around his tip, I play with the metal balls, using my hands to stroke him. He moans in response, his hips thrusting forward in a silent ask for more. I flatten my tongue and take him in as far as he’ll go, which still leaves me a little room to stroke him since he’s a big boy.

Building a rhythm, I fuck him with my mouth, my gaze climbing up his body until I meet his stormy half-lidded eyes. Pleasure is written all over his face, filling me with pride at making him feel like this.

“Your mouth feels so good. Almost as good as your tight cunt.” He clenches his jaw. “Now spit on it.”

I don't count what happened to me as a girl as my first for anything, so the title of my first blow job goes to Seth Carson in the twelfth grade, if you can even call it that, since he couldn't keep an erection. His dad was a leader at our church, and I'm certain the guilt and shame of it all had something to do with it.

After that experience, there was only Neal, and there was nothing enjoyable about what I did with him since I only did it because the consequences were too great.

What I'm doing for Lucky is different. I want him to own me, to take all the parts that I gave to other people and claim them for himself. No, I don't just want it. I *need* it.

So I follow his direction, pulling off with a *pop* and spitting the excess saliva and precum from my mouth onto his cock.

“Now use that for lube to stroke me.” There's a fire in his eyes, but he's gentle when he rests a hand on my head, and I know it's because I'm injured. I can't wait to be healed so he can do the dirty things I know are running through his head right now. I stroke him from tip to root until he's covered in my spit. “Good girl. Now suck.”

Wrapping my lips around him once again, I bob up and down, pushing my limits until I feel him at the back of my throat. He sucks in a sharp breath, lightly encouraging me to hold him there by his touch on my head. I relax, trying my hardest not to gag, but there's no controlling the tears that spring to my eyes or the way my throat constricts around him.

I shouldn't want this, shouldn't want to hand over control for basic needs like fucking air, but nothing about this feels like any other experience I've had. Damn me to hell, but I trust Lucky. Someone I just met who has a violent streak big enough to come home covered in blood after beating the hell out of a man. Yet instinctually, I know he'd never hurt me. If anything, he only wants me to feel good.

And boy, do I ever. My thighs quiver, and arousal pools between my legs as he takes control, thrusting in and out of my mouth, choosing when to push deep and when to go shallow. His piercing only hits my teeth once, and after that, he seems to know how to adjust.

“Lose the shirt. I wanna come all over your beautiful tits,” he says, releasing me.

I suck in a lungful of air as I pull off him and scramble to yank my tank over my head because I want that too. I want to bathe in him, have him mark me everywhere, and spread his scent all over me until I feel like this is real.

Once situated, I take notice of his heavy sack. I keep one hand wrapped around him, swiping my thumb over his tip while I reach lower with my other, cupping his balls and testing the weight. His head rolls back on his shoulders as he groans in pleasure.

I squeeze my thighs together as I open up to take him in my mouth once again. I wish I could do this all day, but my jaw is beginning to ache. I’m ready to watch him lose control, so I increase my efforts. Hollowing my cheeks, I suck him off, switching between rolling his balls in my palm and giving them a slight tug, something he seems to enjoy.

“Are you wet for me?” he asks, and I nod. “Good. Now reach into your panties and play with your pussy.”

Releasing his balls, I skim a hand down my body and spread my legs wider. I’m soaked, and the second my fingers make contact with my clit, I know it won’t take long to get myself off. He gathers my hair into a ponytail, holding it loosely as he guides me up and down, my fingers working overtime in small circles.

“Shit. I’m gonna come. Are you ready, baby? Are you almost there?”

I nod with his cock in my mouth, moaning around him. His breath hitches, and he pulls out, taking himself in hand and jerking roughly. I arch my back, presenting my breasts to him.

As soon as the first spurt of thick cum lands on my chest, my pussy spasms, and I come hard.

Rope after rope of his seed paints my skin, our mutual cries of pleasure filling the air until we both sag, our sounds reducing to panting breaths.

“Fuck me, beautiful. You look sexy covered in my cum.” He helps me stand, his gaze locked on the mess. Reaching out, he swirls a finger around my budded nipple, smearing his work of art before bringing it to my mouth. I part my lips and lick it clean. “Goddamn.”

He takes a step back, turning away from me, and wipes a hand over his forehead as he chuckles. “What the hell are you doing to me? Never thought I’d be this guy. I gave Rigger so much shit over being this guy, yet here I am, fucking obsessed to the point of madness.” He looks over at me, determination in his eyes. “I’ll never let you go. Not fucking ever. And I know how crazy that sounds, but what I’m feeling is beyond my control.”

I stand there, naked and dripping in his cum, finally believing every word he’s said since we met.

“Does that scare you?” he asks.

“No,” I answer quickly. “It should terrify me, especially given my history, but there’s nothing about you that scares me anymore.”

He closes the distance between us, cupping my face with his hands and tilting my head up to look at him. “Good.”

“Good,” I agree, lifting onto my toes to kiss him. “Now, can we go shower?”

“Hell yeah.”

A half-hour later, we’re clean and tucked into bed, my head on his shoulder and our legs tangled together.

“I really like Navy and Jenson. Your brothers are cool, too,” I say, playing with the hair on his chest.

“They liked you.”

“There was one I didn’t meet, though. He sat next to Dutch at dinner, but when we went over to say hi, he left. Who was that?”

Lucky grunts. “That’s Riot. Don’t take it personally; he’s an asshole.”

I did take it personally, though. He glared at me as we walked over, quickly gathering his plate and disappearing into the kitchen. It was as if I’d done something to piss him off, but that can’t be since we’ve never met. He wasn’t the guy who came to the club with Lucky, and he wasn’t one of the ones who came to rescue me.

“Is he mad I’m here?”

“No, not really. He’s just worried Neal won’t back down and will come after the club. Some bullshit went down with Rigger and Navy a few months back, and Riot got sucked into the whole thing.”

“What happened?”

Lucky proceeds to tell me how Navy is actually Rigger’s stepsister, and his dad had been sexually abusing the girl for years. Rigger got kicked out of the house before it began and had no idea what was going on, but when he finally found out, all hell broke loose. His dad was protected by some crime family, and in order for Rigger to make things right for Navy, Riot had to commit to taking care of the crime family’s dead weight for a while.

“Two questions,” I say after he finishes the insane tale. “Where’s Rigger’s dad now, and what exactly is Riot doing for them?”

“There’s a lot I won’t be able to tell you when it comes to club business—not because I want to keep secrets, but because the less you know, the better.”

“Why?”

“Plausible deniability,” he says.

“Meaning, in case the cops question me?”

“Not just that. Everyone knows Church is sacred, and anything we discuss is kept between those four walls so you’re less likely to be their target.”

My stomach sinks, putting together enough pieces to know Rigger’s dad is probably dead and Riot is probably acting as a hitman for that family.

Growing up, the closest I got to crime was hearing about it on the news, but the last two years have opened my eyes to the criminal underbelly of the world quite a bit, so not much shocks me anymore. Least of all hearing that Rigger would murder his own dad for raping his stepdaughter. To me, that’s vigilante justice.

I settle my arms on his chest and rest my chin on my hands. “Be honest with me. Is your life always in danger?”

“No, not always. Especially not since Cy became Prez. He’s all about not making waves and keeping legit businesses.”

“So then he probably didn’t want you to get involved with Neal, huh?”

He sighs, rolling us over and caging me in with an arm at either side of my head. “So many questions tonight.”

His deflection is answer enough, and I feel guilty for dragging him into this. Hopefully, it’s over and done with, and Neal will stay the hell away from me.

“There’s a lot I don’t know about you and the club.”

“You will, but you don’t need to know it all tonight, do you?”

“Guess not.”

“Good. Now kiss me goodnight.” His lips lower to mine, moving tenderly. I hold him close, loving the pressure of his body on mine, like my very own weighted blanket, calming my nervous system and keeping my anxiety at bay. I wish I could keep him like this forever; then, I’d never be afraid again.

With one last peck, he rolls over, bringing me into his side.
“Any more of that, and there won’t be any sleeping tonight.”

“Goodnight, Lucky.”

“Night, Hellcat.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

LUCKY



“The Chevy in bay three is done.” I toss Tigger a set of keys. “Make sure you add extra labor to that work order. I don’t pry mangled birds out of engines for free.”

“Will do.” Tigger salutes and turns in his stool to face the computer.

I walk out of the office and into the garage, spotting Cy hunched over an engine. The man loves cars as much as he loves the club, and even though he doesn’t need to get his hands dirty now that he’s the prez, he refuses to stop.

“That was my last one, so I’m out of here,” I call out over the noise of music blaring, engines revving, and the guys yelling back and forth.

Cy stands upright, wiping his hands off with a dirty rag. “Got time to talk for a second?”

I’m itching to get back to Tinleigh, but I can’t say that, so I nod and follow him back to his office.

“What’s up?” I ask.

“Shut the door behind you,” he says in his gravelly voice, sitting behind his desk. I shut it, wondering what the hell is going on. I can count on one hand the times Cy’s called me to his office, and usually, it’s because I pranked one of the other guys who work here and got caught.

We used to have this guy working here who refused to wear a belt, so we all had to look at his hairy ass crack all day,

every day. The whole shop took to randomly sticking stuff in his crack—harmless things like a wrench or a chip, things that were easy to remove.

One day, I was feeling extra spicy, and I stuck the tip of a pneumatic grease gun down his crack and filled it with grease. The dude thought it was hilarious, but he had to leave for the day to clean himself up, and it put us behind schedule, which pissed Cy off. That was the last time I was in here. I haven't done shit around the shop lately, so why now?

“Whatever it was, it wasn't me,” I say.

He shakes his head. “You're lucky Craig didn't sue after you used the acetylene torch to heat up all those quarters you scattered around the shop. The man has no fingerprint on his thumb anymore.”

Shit. I forgot about that one.

“Craig's fine. He laughed about it.”

“That's not why I brought you in here, though. Rigger called about an hour ago. The overnight shift at the Honey Pot has noticed a blacked-out SUV circling the ranch every night for a week now. The cameras couldn't pick up the license plate number since we don't have any on the road. All they could tell was that it was the same vehicle each time.”

“What's your theory?”

“Could it be Neal?” he asks.

I scrub a hand down my face. “Can't rule it out, I guess.”

“I'm putting you in charge of finding out.”

“Yeah, okay.”

“And keep it quiet for now. We don't need everyone getting their panties in a twist if it's just a looky-loo trying to build up the courage to walk in.”

I rap my knuckles on his desk. “I'm on it.”

As I walk home, I unzip the top half of my coveralls and push them down, tying the sleeves around my waist. The fall chill is setting in, but after that talk with Cy, I'm running hot.

If the car does belong to Neal, and he's scoping out the property for an attack, I'm in deep shit.

When my cabin comes into view, I push all thoughts of Neal away. Tingleigh doesn't need to know about this. Not yet, anyway, because things are finally feeling settled.

It's been two weeks since I brought her home and decided I'm keeping her, and I've fucking loved every second of it. We have a routine where we wake up and have a cup of coffee before I head out to work. Then, while I'm either at Honey Pot or the Garage, she hangs out with Sugar, or Judge if he's there. Sugar loves the extra help, and she's developed a strong friendship with Judge.

Still not sure how I feel about that, but he seems to be helping her through some religious trauma, so I'd look like a royal dick if I tried to put an end to it. Can't say I don't get jealous, though.

After I get home from work, we have dinner at the clubhouse before coming home to fuck like rabbits. I love that part the most. I'm trying not to freak her out, so I've been taking it slow, watching for her cues, but tonight, I'm ready to ramp it up a little. My cock twitches at the thought of what I have planned, but first, I have to make it through dinner.

"Honey, I'm home," I call out, getting down on a knee to untie my boots. When I don't hear a response, I pull out my phone and shoot her a text asking where she's at.

No response.

That's weird. She's usually quick to return my texts. Pushing my feet back into my boots and trying not to lose my shit, I walk over to the clubhouse. Apparently, the recent mention of Neal bothered me more than I thought, and now all I can picture is him taking her. It'd be virtually impossible for him to get on the property, but what if he did somehow?

I pick up my pace to a near jog until I reach the back door and fling it open to find no one hanging around. Not unusual for this time of day, but still, it makes me nervous.

“Sugar?” I call out to no response. Popping my head into the kitchen, I find it as empty as the bar area.

My heart pounds a little harder in my chest as I jog through the building and out the front door. I look to the left and the right and see Riot and Judge’s bikes but no one else’s. Maybe one of them knows something, so I sprint through the building and back out the back door.

The second I’m outside, I hear women laughing and slow my pace. To the right, Tinleigh is walking out of Dutch’s cabin with a basket full of laundry. Relief floods my system as I bend forward, bracing my hands on my knees and slowing my breaths. I feel like I just ran a marathon.

“You okay, babe?” Tinleigh asks as they draw closer.

I stand upright, placing a hand on my chest. “Fine.”

“You don’t look so good.” She hands the basket to Sugar and rubs my back.

I feel like my heart just broke into a million pieces and then put itself back together in the wrong order.

“Just tired,” I say.

“I’ll help you wash all that tomorrow, Sugar. I think I better take this one home.”

“Sure, honey. Will I see you both for dinner?”

“Of course. I didn’t help make those braised ribs to turn around and not eat them.” Tinleigh waves goodbye, then takes my hand and guides me to our place.

Once inside, I kick my boots off, still feeling off. It occurs to me that this will keep happening no matter how much time has passed. As long as Neal’s out there, and if I don’t know exactly where she is, my mind will always assume the worst.

“Get over here,” I demand.

Dutifully, she comes close. I wrap my arms around her middle and squeeze her to me, lifting her off her feet. Fuck, I’m falling hard and fast. I don’t like it. Actually, I fucking hate it. Having someone you care about who’s fragile as fuck,

walking around in the world where I can't be there at all times to protect her, makes me sick.

"I need you," I say, lowering her to the ground.

She pouts. "But, dinner."

"Dinner can wait."

"No, you can wait." Her tone is teasing, but I'm not in a teasing mood.

"Christ, Tinleigh. Just listen this once without arguing." It comes out harsh, but with the way I'm feeling, I just need to be inside her.

Her face falls. "What's wrong?"

"Does something need to be wrong for me to want to fuck you?"

"No, but—"

"I had a shit day, okay? Just wanna be alone with you for a while."

"Okay." She walks over to the ladder, glancing over her shoulder and frowning before she climbs.

I run a hand through my hair, pacing as I try to calm myself. She's fine. She was always fine. But it doesn't matter how much I try to convince myself I'm overreacting; I still feel out of control and pissed.

Neal did this. He's turned me into this person. It's just another reason to hate that motherfucker.

After a few calming breaths, I climb up and find her sitting on the edge of the bed, her arms wrapped around her middle. Shit. I upset her. Of course I fucking did. I'm acting like a goddamn lunatic.

"Lucky, if I did something—"

"Swear to God, this has nothin' to do with you."

"Okay. Tell me what you want."

"I want your clothes off. Then I wanna fuck you hard and fast until you're screaming my name," I say, circling her like

prey.

With pursed lips and a tightly drawn-together brow, she pushes her jeans to the ground, stopping me in my tracks. I can't imagine any piece of lingerie is sexier than this. Her gray cropped tee stops just below her tits, and her panties are V-cut, pointing like an arrow straight to her cunt. Her hair is mussed, and she doesn't have a stitch of makeup on today, which only emphasizes the deer-in-headlights expression on her face.

When she pulls off her shirt, I decide I want to do the rest. My finger skims from her neck to her unlined lace bra, and I trace the edge of it, watching as goosebumps dot her skin and her nipples pucker. I love that she reacts to me this way.

"You're so beautiful," I say, reaching behind her back and unclasping her bra with one hand before pushing the straps off her shoulders and down her arms, letting it fall at our feet.

She stands on shaky legs as I cup her breasts, running my thumbs over the stiff peaks. I pinch each nipple between the crook of my thumb and first finger while palming the fleshy part.

"Tell me if it's more than you want or more than you can handle."

"I will." Her words come out breathy.

I release her and kneel to lower her panties, exposing her pussy. The scent of her arousal fills my nostrils and makes my mouth water.

"Hands behind your back." I use her panties to bind her wrists together behind her back. Gripping her by the waist, I push her forward until her thighs meet the mattress and kick her legs apart. With a hand on her back, I give her a slight shove. Without her hands to stop her, she falls forward onto the bed.

"Lucky," she moans.

"What? Feeling a little helpless and exposed?" I cup her sex, pushing through her slick outer lips. "Do you like this game?" When she doesn't answer, I pull away and slap her ass, groaning when it bounces from the strike. "Answer me."

“Yes,” she hisses.

“Good.” I slap the other side.

“Why’d you do that? I answered.”

I admire my handiwork. “Just wanted them to match. Now they both have my handprint on ’em.”

Kneeling behind her, I cup her cheeks and spread her wide, exposing every inch of her. Her pussy glistens with arousal, and her puckered hole winks at me. I’ve yet to explore that forbidden part of her, but that changes now. I dive in, face first, taking a long and languid lick from hole to hole.

She gasps. “Lucky.”

“You think there are parts of you that don’t belong to me?” I chuckle.

“It’s just—”

I cut her off with another slap before spitting a stream of saliva down her crack and moving back into position, tapping my thumb against her back entrance. “Mine, Tinleigh.”

“Oh god,” she whimpers as I press inside her, just barely.

While my thumb teases her hole, my fingers rub circles around her clit. She’s getting wetter by the second as I enter push two fingers inside. Slowly, I stretch her hole until my thumb is hooking her from the inside.

“I want you to come for me just like this.” I worm my free hand under her hips, holding her in place as I pick up speed, finger fucking her. She soaks my fingers, and the room fills with the erotic sound of wet suction as I move in and out of her.

Both her pussy and her ass tense around my fingers as an orgasm draws near. Her thighs quiver, and a low moan grows louder and louder until she’s all out screaming. A rush of warm liquid spills from her as her pussy spasms, surprising even me.

“That’s it, baby. Give it all to me. Every last drop.”

“Don’t stop,” she cries.

She lifts up on her toes, her butt cheeks clenching as she squeezes the life out of my fingers. I circle my thumb and hook the fingers in her pussy until I feel her G-spot. Using a *come-hither* motion, I carry her through her orgasm until all her tensed muscles relax, and she lowers to the balls of her feet.

“Oh, fuck,” she says, sounding exhausted.

“Good girl,” I praise, pulling out and slapping her ass with my wet hand.

“What was that?”

“I believe you squirted.”

“Shit. Sorry, that’s never happened before.”

“If there’s one thing you don’t ever need to apologize for, it’s that.” I chuckle. “That was hot as fuck.”

Realizing I’m still dressed and I don’t want to be, I move to the side of the bed and strip off my coveralls, along with the T-shirt and jeans I had on underneath. She watches me, her eyes widening like they always do when my cock springs free. I’m already leaking precum that I use as lubrication to coat my shaft, stroking as I take her in.

She’s still bent over the bed, hands bound and completely helpless.

When I’m not with her, I want her to be strong, capable, and able to fight back, but when I’m with her, I want to control, dominate, and protect her. I want her at my mercy. I don’t need a head doctor to tell me how fucked up I am.

“I’m not using a condom. Not anymore,” I say.

Even though Monroe told her that her IUD kicks in almost immediately, Tingleigh was worried. I’ve respected her wishes for two weeks now, but nothing short of her protest could stop me this time. I’ve never been bare inside a woman, and I can’t imagine sharing this first with anyone else.

“Okay.”

Not wanting to waste another second without feeling her tight heat around me, I position myself behind her and line myself up at her entrance. In one fluid movement, I push in to the hilt, holding myself deep inside. Fuck, she feels even more incredible without the latex between us, and my cock is even more sensitized.

She moans in response, her fingers weaving tightly together at the base of her back. The bruise that was there is all but gone now. Yet the memories still remain as vivid as ever. It's not her fault, but I still punish her with another slap to the ass that has her clenching around me. I trust her to tell me if I'm going too far, the same way she trusts me to stop, but the only response I get is a pleased gasp.

“Goddamn, baby. You feel so good.” I pull out, my gaze fixed on my cock, now covered in her arousal. This time when I push in, I bend my knees, ensuring I hit her at the right angle for my piercing to do its job.

“Oh, god,” she moans, her inner walls clamping down on me.

“Now be a good girl and take what I give you.” Pushing her hands up her back, I pin her wrists between her shoulders, bending over her body. With fast and punishing pumps of my hips, I fuck her hard.

The skin-slapping sound we make each time I drive into her is the perfect soundtrack to the mood I'm in. Beads of sweat form at my temples as I work through my feelings the only way I know how to when it comes to her.

Leaning down to just above her ear, I growl, “You're mine.”

“I'm yours,” she agrees, the words choppy as I slam into her.

I release my hold on her arms and stand upright. My earlier tease was just that, a tease, but now I want to push her even farther. Spreading her cheeks apart, I slow my pace and spit into her crack again, watching as it settles on her hole. She tenses, already knowing what's coming.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TINLEIGH



“Say the word, and I’ll stop,” he reminds me.

I say nothing because it’s clear he needs my submission right now, but even more than that, I want this. Each time we’re together, he tiptoes around me and holds himself back, so concerned he’ll say or do something to trigger me. That has to end. All of me wants to know all of him, even when he’s crazed like he is tonight.

He pushes a finger in while continuing to fuck me from behind, and I can’t believe I’m actually enjoying this. That has always been an exit-only spot for me, but Lucky has me rethinking my stance.

“You like it, don’t you?” he asks as one finger becomes two.

“Yes. God, yes. More.”

On a forward thrust of his hard cock, he pushes his fingers in deeper, and I lose myself, body and soul. Every nerve ending comes alive as I go from allowing him to control the pace to fucking him back in return. He hits depths inside me he’s never reached before, and his fingers bottom out inside my ass. The added pressure sends me to new heights, and I can’t hold it in any longer.

Then he pulls out, and I whimper.

“Not yet.” I hear him move around, then the sound of a bottle cap opening. Cool liquid hits my back end, and I hear a packet opening. He’s putting on a condom. I don’t know why after we just agreed to go without, but one thing about Lucky

is that he always has a plan. A few seconds later, there's something bigger pressing against my hole.

"Shit," I say, in half-excitement, half-nervousness.

"Relax. This can only happen if you relax."

I close my eyes and focus on releasing all the tension in my body. Once he feels it's okay, he pushes past the first ring of muscle. It stings like a bitch, but it also feels strangely good.

"Okay?" he asks.

"More."

"Greedy girl." The words sound more like pride than admonishment.

Ever so slowly, he pushes in further before pulling away just a bit. His piercing drags along my insides, only adding to the sensation of being stuffed full and the arousal from this forbidden act. My sister wasn't lying when she said Lucky is freaky. He likes all things dirty, messy, and rough. It's been eye-opening to realize I like it, too.

"Play with your pussy," he instructs, releasing my hands.

He doesn't have to ask me twice because as good as this feels, there's a key component missing, and the second my fingers touch my swollen clit, I realize what it is.

Lucky works himself deeper into my ass while I rub circles against my clit. Once he's satisfied with his depth, he finds a good pace, moving faster and faster, never bottoming out inside me, which I'm grateful for.

"Put two fingers inside your pussy and fuck yourself."

He's a goddamn genius because when I do and feel his cock moving in and out from the inside, I lose my shit. I'm so full, and this is so taboo, that the orgasm hits me like nothing I've ever felt before.

Lucky grabs two handfuls of my ass and spreads me open, using his hold on me for purchase as he fucks my ass in earnest. I speak in tongues, my cries of pleasure not making

any sense, but I have no control over anything right now as I chase the high.

I explode from the inside out, my vision narrowing to the point where I'm worried I'll pass out. When it ebbs, I come down from the high of my life. Sucking in lungfuls of air, I don't know what to think. I'm weak and emotional from that overwhelming experience.

He pulls out slowly, and I hear the condom being ripped off. Suddenly, I understand his plan. I know he's been looking forward to the day when he can come inside me; he didn't want to give that up, yet he also wanted to fuck my ass.

My man's a thinker.

Seconds later, he's shoving inside my sensitive and swollen pussy. There's no chance of me being able to come again, but it doesn't stop me from enjoying the way his unsheathed cock feels inside me. I squeeze around him, wanting to give him what he just gave me.

"That's it. Milk my cock, baby," he says through gritted teeth as he fucks me hard and fast. He must've already been on the brink when he pulled out of my ass because I sense that he's close, his movements becoming erratic. "I'm going to fill you so full, I'll be leaking out of you for days."

"Do it, Lucky. Give me your cum."

Then I feel it, a burst of warmth coating my insides. His fingers dig into my hips as he moves with short, hard thrusts, pulsing his release into me, a guttural sound coming from deep inside him. His hips jerk against me once, twice, and after a third time, he collapses onto his arms over me.

My shoulders ache from my wrists being bound, my legs shaky and threatening to give way, and I'm exhausted, but none of that matters because I'm blissed out in the best way possible. That was beyond incredible.

"Just give me a second, and I'll get off you," he says, panting.

"Take your time. After what you just did to me, I feel no pain."

He chuckles, groaning as he stands. “I’ve been waiting for this moment.”

“What moment?”

“This one.” He pulls out, and once again, he spreads me open for his viewing pleasure. Cool air hits my overly sensitized core as I feel his cum trickle out of me and drip down my thighs. “Fuck me.”

“That’s what you wanted to see?”

“Hell yeah.”

I grin and squeeze my tired inner muscles, knowing it’ll give him an even better show. He hums his approval, dragging a finger up and down my slit before pushing it back into me.

“I was lucky before you, that’s how I got my road name after all, but no amount of near misses on my bike or run-ins with the cops I managed to talk myself out of compares to how lucky I am to get to fuck this beautiful pussy whenever I want.”

I giggle. “That’s the only part of me you’re lucky to have, huh?”

He pulls me up and turns me around to face him. With a smirk, he cups my breasts. “I’m lucky I get to play with these too.”

“Tits and pussy, got it.”

He wraps his arms around my neck, hugging me tight. “Nah, Hellcat. You’re the whole package.”

I breathe him in, returning his hug. “I know.”



I wake with a start, excited to get the day going. Jumping out of bed, I throw on one of Lucky’s shirts, my nose wrinkling at the disastrous state of our room.

We never did make it to dinner, but Sugar was nice enough to drop plates off for us that we ate in bed. It was a good idea at the time, but waking up to dirty plates on the nightstands and the smell of braised ribs and mashed potatoes was not the best way to start the day. Gathering them up, I perform a balancing act as I climb down the ladder one-handed.

“Goddamn it, Tinleigh. Hold on,” Lucky calls out from the kitchen, rushing over to help me.

“I got it.”

“Yeah, or you don’t, and you end up falling on your ass.” He takes the plates from me as I finish my descent.

Lifting onto my toes, I kiss his cheek. “Thanks.”

“You’re bubbly this morning.”

“I’m always bubbly in the morning,” I lie, following him to the kitchen. He pins me with a knowing look. “Okay, maybe not, but after a cup of coffee, I am.”

“Which you haven’t had yet, so what gives?”

“It’s Myla Day.” I pour myself a cup of coffee and settle onto a stool.

Today is the first since I moved in here that Myla’s off her tour. For the next two weeks, I have my sister’s full attention, and I can’t wait. I’ve managed to keep myself busy, but cleaning up after and cooking for grown men all day, every day isn’t how I want to spend my life. I gladly do it to feel like I’m contributing, but taking a little break to hang with my sister is too good of an opportunity to pass up.

His jaw ticks. “That’s right. Tell me your plans again.”

“She’s going to come pick me up and take me to her apartment, which we definitely won’t leave, not even to sit outside. We’ll order food and have it delivered and keep the shades drawn and the doors locked.” I give him the answer he wants to hear. How much of it we’ll end up doing, I don’t know. Probably most since I’ve been warned Tigger will be standing guard. “Then you’ll come get me after work.”

“I have a shift at the Honey Pot, so it won’t be until late,” he reminds me.

“I could just stay the night.”

“Not happening.”

“Neal doesn’t even know where Myla lives.”

“You think that information’s hard to come by?”

I roll my eyes. “Fine.”

He spins the stool so I face him and strokes my cheek with the back of his hand. “Behave today.”

There’s an intensity in his eyes, the same one I saw last night. Something is bothering him, something he’s not telling me, and no amount of coaxing has drawn out. Maybe it has to do with Neal, or maybe something is going on with the club that I don’t know. I just wish he would tell me.

“I will.”

What starts out as a sweet kiss quickly progresses into something more. Before I know what’s happening, he’s fisting my hair, and I’m arching my aching breasts into him while he claims my mouth with his tongue. It’s been weeks of this, but no matter how many times we exhaust ourselves with endless rounds of fucking, it’s never enough. I always want more.

Pulling away, he rests his forehead against mine, his eyes closing. “Give me a second. I can’t walk across the parking lot with a hard-on.”

I giggle and palm his cock, which is indeed hard as granite. “I could alleviate the situation real quick.”

He groans, taking a step back. “Don’t tempt me. We did that yesterday morning, and Cy reamed my ass for being late.”

“Are you saying it wasn’t worth it? Maybe I need to work on my skills.”

“You’re trouble,” he says, pointing a finger in my direction.

“But you already knew that.”

I watch as he moves to the front door. “You’re right about that. See you later.”

“I love y—” I freeze, the sentiment nearly leaving my mouth without thought. “Your ass in those jeans.”

If he realizes the near slip, he plays it off perfectly. “I do look good in them, huh?”

Awkwardly, I wave as he walks out, lock the door after him, and slap a palm to my forehead. God, I’m an idiot. It’s only been a few weeks. That’s not nearly enough time to make a declaration of love, but isn’t that what this warm feeling in my chest is whenever I so much as think of him? Maybe not the kind of love that one feels after decades together, but it’s definitely the budding of something I know will either grow into that or destroy me.

As I fret about whether I scared the man off or not, I rinse my mug and head upstairs to grab a change of clothes. I need to shower and get myself ready for when Myla shows up. She’s been to the clubhouse before, but I’m excited to show her the place through my eyes so she can see I’m thriving and happy.

I’ve long since taken up a section of Lucky’s closet, but it’s a small section. It was a mistake to not bring much because I’ve quickly grown tired of wearing the same three outfits over and over. Maybe Myla will let me raid her closet and bring a few things home with me. Even better, I’ll shoot Lucky a text and ask if Tigger can escort us to the mall so I can grab a few more items.

Walking across the room, I grab my cell that’s been charging on the nightstand and see I have a text message waiting for me. I grin, expecting to read that Lucky’s whining about how difficult his morning walk to the Garage was, but it quickly falls when I see an image from a number that’s not programmed into my phone.

I still have the piece of shit burner, so it takes me a second to make out the pixelated image. But when I do, my legs give out, and I fall to my knees, the phone slipping from my hand

and landing on the floor. Tears blur my vision as I scramble to pick it back up, hoping I was wrong.

But I'm not. Wiping my eyes, I see a picture of Myla tied to a chair, her eyes wide in terror and blood running down the side of her face from an open wound on her temple. Standing behind her is a man holding a gun to her head. It only shows him from the neck down, but I don't need to see his face to know who he is. I'd recognize him anywhere.

I read through the accompanying message four times before the words register. Once they do, I'm on my feet, throwing on clothes and forming a plan in my head. Thanks to Sugar, I know where the keys to the vans the club owns are kept. She told me this so I could move one that was blocking her car when she needed to get to the store, but it's coming in handy for a whole new reason now.

Rushing out the front door, I quickly scan the area. In front of me is the clubhouse's backyard with its outdoor seating, rock-lined fire pit, and a small patch of grass. It's not surprising that no one's out here, given the early hour. Looking left and right, I make sure the porches of each cabin are empty and no one is walking down the gravel path that leads back to the clubhouse. Thankfully, I'm in the clear.

My heart races, and my stomach is in my throat as I jog to the clubhouse, praying I don't run into anyone. I know my luck has run out when I step inside and see Riot sitting at the bar with a cup of coffee.

Though I've been living here for a few weeks, I still haven't formally met the man with dark features and an even darker vibe, and I don't want to change that right now. Unfortunately, it's too late since we're alone in the open space, and his menacing glare is freezing me in place. I fold my arms to stop him from seeing my shaking hands and take a calming breath. Of all the brothers I could've run into, why does it have to be him?

"Hi," I say, wincing as it comes out as a squeak.

He says nothing as he lifts his coffee mug to his lips, his gaze still fixed on me. Every second that passes is another that

my sister is being tortured by a man much scarier than this one, so I swallow my insecurities, determined to get out of here as fast as possible.

“Okay, good talk.” I step behind the bar and into the kitchen, stopping only long enough to grab a set of van keys. Tucking them in my pocket, I walk back out. “Have you seen Sugar?”

Once again, I’m met with no response. God, I hate this guy. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn’t be able to hold myself back from ripping him a new asshole for being so rude, but there’s no time for that. I’ll never see him again after today, so that’s one thing to be thankful for.

But if that’s true, then I’ll also never see Lucky again.

Tears prick my eyes, but I’m quick to blink them away because it doesn’t matter what I’m losing—only that my sister will be okay.

Ignoring the asshole, I walk out the front door and to the left, where there are three nondescript white vans on the side of the building. Pulling the keys out of my pocket, I get a hit of good luck when they unlock the first van I come to. I slip into the driver’s seat, start it up, and slowly pull forward, trying to keep the sound of crunching gravel to a minimum.

I pull up to the gate that has a metal post with a keypad mounted to it. Lucky and I have been in and out so many times, I couldn’t help but memorize the code he typed in each time. Or maybe I knew it would always come to this when I needed an escape plan. I don’t know. Either way, my shaky finger enters the code, and I hold my breath as the creaky gate opens.

When I’m not bombarded by bikers trying to find out who’s taking a van, I breathe a sigh of relief and pull out onto the road. As I barrel toward the highway, I keep an eye on my rearview, making sure I’m not being followed. It feels too easy when I make it to the busier road and am not chased down, but maybe the vans are in and out so frequently that no one questions it. Reaching over to the passenger seat where I tossed my cell, I glance down to read the message once more.

He didn't have to tell me where to go because I'd spent hours upon hours at the Thirst Trap and had long since memorized the cheap vinyl chair Myla was tied to and that tacky carpet in the background.

Biting my lip, I toss the phone back down and place both hands on the steering wheel, gripping it so tight, my knuckles turn white. Anger rolls through me until I can't take it anymore, and I scream, not caring if the passing cars see my distress.

I'm so fucking pissed at Lucky. It's misguided since Neal is the one with a gun to Myla's head, but the only reason I'm in this situation is because of him. If he had just minded his own damn business and not come to the club that night, Myla wouldn't be in this mess, and I wouldn't have believed things could be different for me.

I would've recovered from Neal's punishment, and things would've gone back to normal. Sure, that normal sucked and eventually I'd fuck up again, and maybe Neal would've kicked me to the escort side, but I was already resigned to that being my life. Then Lucky had to come and put hearts in my eyes, convincing me he could protect me. Now I have to live the rest of my shitty life knowing there's better out there. A better man, a better life, a better home, and a better family.

I pull off the highway and park in front of a gas station five miles from the club. After tucking the keys in the visor, I pull up the phone number for a cab company and make a quick call. I only have cash, so I'm thankful that even with the influx of technology, this was still an option.

I sit down on the curb next to the van to complete my final task. Before I have time to doubt myself, I quickly type out a text and hit send. Setting the phone down next to me, I lean over and hug my thighs as I allow my tears to fall.

This is how it was always meant to be, and I was dumb to think otherwise.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

LUCKY



My phone vibrates in my pocket, but I ignore it and continue removing the cylinder head bolts from the engine I'm working on. It's probably Tinleigh telling me Myla picked her up. I'm still not sure it's a good idea for her to leave the compound, but I know she's been bored. It does make me feel better knowing Tigger will be close by.

"Lucky!" someone shouts, drawing my attention away from what I'm doing. I frown when I spot the red-headed prospect who's supposed to be with my woman jogging toward me. "She's gone."

"Who's gone?" I ask, pulling a rag out of my back pocket and wiping my hands.

He rubs the back of his neck, keeping his eyes trained on the ground. "Tinleigh. She told me she and Myla were leaving around ten. I knocked on the door at ten 'til, and there was no answer. Your door was unlocked, so I went inside, and she ain't there."

"Are you fucking kidding me right now?" I roar, pushing past him to look for myself. There's a good chance she's out front waiting or in the clubhouse. I don't know, but she wouldn't have left without him.

"Wait," he calls after me. "There's one more thing."

I freeze. "What?"

"A van's missing."

"Missing?" A rock settles in my stomach.

“I asked around and texted everyone who could’ve taken it. None of the brothers have it.”

Then I remember the text from minutes ago. Pulling out my cell, I see it’s from Tinleigh, and I know without reading it that I’m not going to like what it says.

Please keep Myla safe. We both know she’s the only one deserving of your protection. Don’t look for me. I don’t want to be found. You’ll find your van at the Quick Stop on University Way

What the fuck? This makes no sense. Everything was fine this morning. Had this happened two weeks ago, I’d have believed every word, but not now. There’s no way.

My phone lights up with an incoming call from Riot. I send it straight to voicemail. The only thing I need to deal with right now is finding my woman and figuring out what’s really going on. Neal must’ve gotten to her. That’s the only explanation.

“Did she text you?” Tigger asks.

“Yeah.” I hand him the phone so he can read it, but before he can, another call from Riot comes in. “What do you want? I got shit going on.”

“And you’re about to have more. Your girl looked extra fuckin’ shady this morning, so I decided to keep an eye on her. She took the keys to a van and drove out to University Way, where she ditched the van and got in a cab. I followed her, and now I’m sitting across the street from the Thirst Trap. She just walked in.”

“I fuckin’ knew it.” I jog out of the Garage and over to the parking lot at the compound where my bike’s parked.

“Whatever you’re thinkin’ of doing right now, don’t. This isn’t something you can walk into half-cocked.”

“I’m thinking I need to get over there, kill the motherfucker, and bring Tinleigh home.”

“For all you know, she’s here because she wants to be.”

I shake my head, even though he can't see it. "You're wrong."

"Am I?"

I pace around my bike, wondering if he's right. Then I recall her almost telling me she loved me this morning. She wasn't ready for the words to come out, so I played it off, but I knew she meant it.

"Yeah, you fuckin' are," I say.

He blows out a breath. "Okay. Wait there and let me see what I find out."

"You can't go in there alone."

"Not gonna. Just calm your fuckin' horses and give me a minute."

"Fine. Call me back." I end the call and head back to the Garage to talk to Cy. If there's one thing Riot is right about, it's that I need a plan, and I need my brothers to back me up. I just hope Tinleigh can hold on that long.



"I couldn't get close enough to see if she was okay," Riot says, drumming his fingers on the table. He was able to slip through their back door and get a visual but had to bounce when Neal's lackeys almost caught him.

It's been an hour since all hell broke loose and Cy called Church. My brothers are gathered around the table, seated, but not me. I can't stop fucking moving. My body's itching to do something, but until we come up with a plan, all I can do is pace.

"But you saw her walk in?" I ask.

"Yeah. A few minutes after that, a blacked-out Cadillac Escalade pulled in. Neal came out to meet him. Didn't

recognize him, but he looked important.” He smirks. “You must’ve done some damage because Neal’s face was still a mess.”

Later, when he’s dead and gone and Tinleigh is back with me, that’ll bring me some satisfaction, but right now, little else matters besides getting to that moment.

“Before you fuck him up even more, we need to think this through,” Cy says.

Satyr clears his throat. “Yeah, I hate to be the one to say it, but this doesn’t change the fact that Neal’s in bed with some powerful people who could shut everything we’re working toward down with one phone call.”

My initial inclination is to dive over the table and deck him for thinking anything matters more than Tinleigh’s life, but he’s right. I can’t ask my brothers to give up their livelihoods because I went and fell for the wrong girl.

“What if no one knew it was us who took him out?” Golden asks.

Cy shakes his head. “It’s too risky. Someone will see something.”

“What about Myla?” Rigger asks out of the blue.

“Shit. She was supposed to be here at ten. Did anyone see her?” I scan the room, only seeing blank expressions. “I’m sending Tig to her apartment to see if she’s there.”

“It changes things if he took her. She has the club’s protection,” Rigger says.

“Myla does, but because I haven’t formally claimed Tinleigh, she doesn’t?” I glare at my best friend, who’s quickly becoming an enemy.

“The club has rules.” He at least has the decency to look apologetic.

“I’m claiming her, all right? Did y’all hear that? She’s mine, so now you can start acting like my brothers and help me get her back!” I shout.

I get the rules, I do. We don't want to be constantly running around taking people out for some bitch one of the members had a one-night stand with, but they know what she means to me. The only reason I hadn't made it official was because I wanted to wait until all this smoke had cleared and knew she was in this with me.

But I'm not waiting anymore, and not just because she's been taken. She's mine and nothing and no one will ever change that.

All eyes shoot to the door when a knock sounds. No one would dare interrupt Church unless it was life or death. Or if they do, they risk an ass-kicking so bad they'll never forget the rules again.

Since I'm already on my feet, I open the door where Tigger stands, eyes wide, frantic energy coming off him. "You gotta get out here. Right now."

"What is it?" I ask. The hairs on my arms stand on end as I follow him outside.

"I was leaving to go to Myla's like you asked, and she was just... there." He goes into an all-out sprint toward the gate. Adrenaline pumps through my veins as I quickly catch up, hearing the sound of boots pounding behind me as my brothers give chase.

The gate is open, and I spot Sugar just outside it. She's hunched over on the ground, her back to me. My eyes narrow, catching on a pair of legs lying at awkward angles to the side of her, and I recognize the leather sandals as a pair Tinleigh wears.

Bile rises up my throat, and I have to fight to swallow it down and keep moving. I'm too late. I knew I should've left the second I knew she was missing. This is all my fault. I lost her and have no one to blame but myself.

"Get her inside," Sugar snaps at Tig. The kid scrambles, looking unsure as he reaches down.

"I'll do it," I say and push him out of the way.

"Lucky. Jesus. I'm so sorry," Sugar cries.

“Aw, fuck.” Looking down, anguish overtakes me. Her face is so swollen that I hardly recognize her, but the worst part, the part that has me bent over and spilling the contents of my stomach onto the asphalt, is that she’s naked other than her shoes. Whoever brought her here must’ve just shoved her out onto the road while they were still moving because every inch of her is scraped up and bloody.

“She’s still breathing. We got her, brother.” Cy clamps a hand on my shoulder and squeezes.

I stand upright, pulling myself together for her. She needs me. Breaking through the crowd, I see that someone has covered her in a T-shirt. Glancing around, a bare-chested Golden is pulling his cut back over his shoulders.

Mustang and Dutch position themselves at her shoulders and legs, ready to pick her up, but I stop them. “Let me.”

They take a step back, and I crouch, slipping my arms under her back and knees, removing her from Sugar’s lap. She’s limp as I walk as fast as my legs will move and head into the clubhouse. Bones is already getting set up, draping sheets over two tables that have been pushed together.

I set her down on the table gently, backing away as Bones takes over. He pulls her eyelids open, flashing a light into each one before placing two fingers on her wrist and taking her pulse.

“Is she okay? Should we call an ambulance?” I ask.

“Her pulse is steady, and her pupils are reactive. I think she’s just knocked out cold. Let me take a closer look before we get them involved,” he says.

“Come on. Let him work while we figure this out.” Rigger jerks his head in the direction of the room Church is in.

“I don’t want to leave her, not until I know she’ll be okay.” I grab a couple packets of gauze from the stack Bones has out and open them before wiping the puke off my mouth.

“There’s nothing you can do right now, son. Your time is better spent plotting how we’ll get that motherfucker back,” Cy says.

How quick my brothers' attitudes changed when seeing firsthand just how sadistic this bastard is. I hate that it had to come to this, but glad they're finally on my side.

"Okay." I approach the table and bend down, lowering my voice. "I love you too, Hellcat."

As I'm standing upright, something catches my attention. A streak of purple shows through the blonde hair that's mostly stained red from blood. Purple, not pink. God should strike me down dead for the brief moment of relief I feel before the grief sets in for what my friend went through at Neal's hands.

"It's not Tinleigh," I say.

"What?" Rigger's face screws up. "Bro, it's her."

"No. It's not. It's Myla." I hold up the strand of purple. "Tinleigh's streaks are pink."

"Fuck!" Rigger roars.

He was willing to go to war on my behalf, but it's personal now that he knows Neal fucked with one of his girls from the Honey Pot. Rigger personally assures each of the ranch employees that they have the club's full protection. Neal just unleashed a whole new level of violence on himself.

"He's dead," Rigger says.

"Agreed," the men around me say in unison.

"She's coming to," Bones says, gently patting her hand. "Myla? You're safe. You're at the Sons' clubhouse."

Her eyes open to slits, too swollen to open fully. She glances from side to side, sucking in a shuddering breath and trying to scramble off the table. I rush over, holding her in place the best I can without hurting her.

"Darlin', it's okay. I got you. You're okay now."

"Lucky?" she croaks.

"Yeah, it's me. You're safe."

Fat tears roll down her cheeks. "Tinleigh. She traded herself for me."

I move to her side, taking her hand in mine. “Don’t worry about that right now. This is Bones, our doc, and he’s gonna fix you up, okay?”

Her eyes close. “No, you have to save her.”

“We will. We’re coming up with a plan.”

“You don’t understand.” Her voice cracks. “He sold her. She’s gone.”

Who knew it’d only take five words to break me? I’ve been through a lot of shit with this club, seen things that’ve burned holes in my brain and done things that firmly solidified my place next to the Reaper. Yet all it took was five words to destroy any humanity I had left, and I don’t know if I’ll ever get it back.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

TINLEIGH



I curl into a ball, anxiety clawing at my chest as shock sets in. This isn't the way I thought things would go. I knew Neal was mad—his anger was apparent all over Myla's battered face, but this?

I'm unsure if this is better or worse. At least with Neal, I knew what to expect during his days of violence until he felt vindicated. Then, I'd either go back to the Thirst Trap or possibly be moved to his escorting business, but I'd suffer willingly for Myla to be free.

That's not what happened, though. Not only was Neal waiting for me when I walked into the building, but there was another man I'd never met. He was in a tailored suit, with his black hair styled and his shoes polished to perfection, but it was the smug smile and the evil glint in his eyes that told me the true story of who he was.

I tried to rush to Myla's side, but one of Neal's men stopped me, pinning my hands behind my back and holding me in front of the two men. When the unknown man gave Neal a nod, a rope was tied around my wrists, a gag shoved into my mouth, and I was blindfolded. Despite knowing it would get me nowhere, I kicked and screamed around the material. I knew it was a wasted effort, but I needed to know Myla was okay and would be released.

Now I'll never know because shortly after, I was shoved into the back of a vehicle heading to who knows where.

Now, a hysterical sob is on the edge of erupting, but I hold it back. There's no point in allowing it out. If anything, it'll only give my captors satisfaction. Instead, I lie here, not making a sound.

I know men like the one Neal handed me over to; I've danced for plenty of them. They're the ones who slap my ass or yank my hair, both of us knowing the bouncers wouldn't save me because of how fat their wallets are. If I didn't eventually show fear, their rough handling would only get worse until I did.

I don't know how long I lay there, listening to the hum of the engine and the occasional phone call the man makes, speaking a foreign language I don't recognize. After what feels like hours, the vehicle slows and maneuvers down roads with less traffic until the only engine I hear is our own, which means wherever we're going is isolated.

Eventually, it comes to a stop, and I hear car doors opening and closing. My heart races and my breaths pick up, the gag feeling more like a noose, hindering me from getting enough air. How long will it be before he grows tired and kills me? What will I have to endure until that happens?

An image of Lucky pops into my head, and I hold onto it. Anyone else might look at his unkempt hair and beard, worn and stained jeans, plain T-shirts, and scuffed-up boots and think he's nothing special, but they'd be wrong, because I've never met anyone sexier, funnier, or kinder. I wish I was with him now, lying in bed after a night of fucking. My favorite moments were when he was soft and sated, a rope of licorice bobbing in his mouth as we talked about everything under the sun.

I'm torn from my musings as the door next to me is opened, and I'm yanked out of the vehicle. With my other senses muted, my ears perk up, listening for any distinguishing sounds, but there's nothing. Wherever we are, there is no one else around.

“Okay, Pet. I'm going to remove your blindfold and gag, but if you so much as utter a single word, they'll go back on.

Nod if you understand,” a man’s voice says.

I nod, knowing if there is a way out, I’ll only find it by gathering information. Without my vision, that’ll be impossible. The blindfold is removed first, and I blink rapidly at the drastic change from dark to light. Then, the gag is untied and pulled from between my teeth.

As I’m shoved forward by someone standing behind me, I take in the modern mansion before me. It’s a classic desert style, boxy and beige, with enormous black framed windows. The property is landscaped with palm trees and lush plants, but it’s rocky, mountainous, and dry beyond the tall metal fence, making me think we’re possibly on the outskirts of Vegas.

I’m stopped in front of the entrance to the home, and the man turns to face me. He’s tall with dark features and dead eyes.

“This is your home for the time being.” He runs a finger down my cheek, pushing my hair away from my eyes and tucking it behind my ear. “Aren’t you a lucky girl?”

I don’t respond, trying to follow his earlier orders. Apparently, that’s the wrong thing to do because he backhands me, snapping my head to the side, a radiating sting spreading through my face.

“I expect a response when I ask you a question.” His expression remains impassive, not even showing a hint of anger, despite the violence. “So, I’ll ask again. Aren’t you a lucky girl for being allowed into such a beautiful home?”

I cast my gaze at the ground. “Yes.”

He tsks. “I told you not to speak.”

There’s no time to brace for impact as he backhands the other cheek. There was no winning in that situation; it was all about his need to assert his dominance.

“Don’t worry, you’ll catch onto the rules quickly enough,” he says as a guard appears and opens the door. Dead Eyes moves past the threshold before stopping. “Or you won’t, which might be more fun for me. Take her to her room.”

He disappears into the home, and the guard shoves me forward, up a set of stairs, and down a long hallway. I can't help but notice none of the doors have an outside lock but the one I'm led to, which doesn't surprise me.

My hands are untied, and I'm pushed through the doorway. I turn to face him, rubbing at my sore wrists. He's tall, muscled, and straight-faced, as if imprisoning women is nothing out of the ordinary for him. It was probably part of his job description.

The door is slammed shut, the clink of the lock latching into place following. You'd never know this is a multi-million-dollar home judging by the room I turn to inspect.

There's no flooring, only exposed rough subfloor that pricks the bottoms of my bare feet. The single window is barred, and I can tell by the tint that I can see out into the backyard and the barren desert beyond, but no one can see inside. The room is all but empty except for the thin mattress in the corner with a plain white blanket and pillow tossed on top. Moving closer, I notice the mattress is filthy and stained with something dark.

Who was here before me, and where are they now? Did they die on this mattress? Will I suffer the same fate?

Wrapping my arms around myself, I approach the only other door in the room and test the handle. I'm surprised when it turns, and I'm able to push it open. Inside is a stripped-bare bathroom: a simple sink on a small floating vanity, a toilet with a roll of toilet paper sitting on top of the tank, a walk-in shower with the glass removed from the metal frame, and a single, threadbare towel folded on the tile floor. There's no mirror or towel rack, nothing that can be used as a weapon. They've thought of everything, probably from years of experience.

The sob I've been holding back releases into the empty space, echoing around me. I slap a hand over my mouth, trying to hold it in, but there's no stopping it now. Thinking that this is where I'll spend my last days isn't what has me curling onto the filthy mattress, knees tucked to my chest and my face

buried in my hands as I cry. No, it's knowing Lucky, Myla, and all the Sons I consider friends will never know what happened to me. I'll be reduced to a sad story they'll think of sometimes.

And that's if Myla made it out alive. I'm choosing to believe she did because the alternative is too much to bear. Neal is a sadistic asshole, but at least he's an honest one. He doesn't say or do things he won't follow through with, so when he said "me for her," I'm almost certain he meant it. I let out a watery huff. What a stand-up guy.

I stay curled up until the sun lowers in the sky, and the room grows darker by the second. It's nearly pitch black when the lock disengages, and I sit up and scoot into the corner. A figure steps into the room, and the light flicks on, revealing a woman dressed in a black pantsuit, much like the one the man who brought me here was wearing. Her hair is pulled back in a severe bun, and she doesn't have a stitch of makeup on.

"Get up," she says, pulling a suitcase into the room and lowering it to the ground. She crouches to unzip and open it before standing and closing the door. I remain where I'm at, too scared to move. When she turns to face me, she shakes her head, her blank expression shifting to annoyance. "It's been a long day, and I'm tired, so please don't make me hurt you. Just do as I say, and this will be quick and painless."

I slowly get to my feet next to the mattress, waiting for further instructions.

"Could he ask for a smart one now and then? Pretty only goes so far," she mumbles, walking over to me and gripping my arm. "Take your clothes off."

I look down at my body, not wanting to get rid of my last possessions. But I've also been through enough pain today, and this woman looks like she'd be good at inflicting it. She's tall and sturdy, the opposite of me. While she digs through the suitcase, I remove my shirt and jeans with trembling hands, leaving them in a pile next to me. My sandals were taken from me at the Thirst Trap, so I'm left in my underwear.

She glances up at me. “Bra and undies too. Hurry up, we’re already running late.”

Unhooking my bra, I add it to the pile and pull down my panties. My teeth chatter, either from the air conditioning blasting into the room or from nerves—probably both—as I cover my breasts with an arm and cross my legs, doing my best to keep an ounce of dignity.

I should’ve known that would also be taken away.

“Put this on.” She hands me something red and made out of a stiff material and covered in what looks like latex. It’s sticky and shiny.

I hold it up, trying to figure out which is the top and which is the bottom. On one end, there’s a three-inch-wide band of material with an O ring in the center. Judging by the buckle, this should go around my neck. Hanging from either side of the O ring are one-inch straps meant to run from my neck down to my sides, where they connect to a much wider expanse of material and a belt across the middle. I’m guessing this goes around my torso, which means my breasts will be completely exposed.

Even figuring that much out, I can’t buckle myself in. “How?”

She growls, standing. Taking the smaller end, she secures it around my neck so the O ring is at the base of my throat before moving to tie me into the corset part.

“Now this.” She reaches for another confusing item made from the same material. It looks like nothing but a bunch of straps, buckles, and more O rings, but apparently, I’m to wear it.

Holding it out, she lowers it for me to step into. She positions two straps just under my ass that wrap around each thigh, two more that crisscross over my butt cheeks, and secures it with the buckle around my waist. It covers nothing.

“Now we’re getting somewhere,” she says, a hint of satisfaction in her tone. “Just a couple finishing touches, and you’ll be ready.”

“Ready for what?” I ask.

She pins me with a look. “That’s a surprise.”

“You don’t have to do this,” I whisper. “I know people who could protect us. You just have to—”

“Let me stop you right there because you’re wasting both of our time. You mean nothing to me, and I won’t rescue you. You should accept that now because the longer you hold onto a piece of hope, the longer it will take him to break you. My advice is not to fight it. This will all be over much quicker for you.” She bends over, once again reaching into the suitcase and producing two patent leather cuffs. After clipping them to the O rings on the outside of my thighs, she reaches for my hand covering my breasts.

I know she’s right, and I should just let it happen, but I can’t. I won’t. I have to try. Twisting my body out of her hold, I make a move for the door. It’s not locked, and if I can just get out, I can run. There have to be neighbors somewhere close by, even if I couldn’t see them, or maybe a passing car. Something.

“You stupid cunt,” she grits out and stops me by gripping a fistful of hair and yanking me back. I stumble over the suitcase and land on my ass. “What did I just say?”

My lip wobbles as she hefts me to my feet with little effort. She easily tugs my arm to my side and secures my wrist in the cuff before moving to the other side, doing the same, rendering me helpless.

“It’s always the same with you girls. I can practically write your story for you. You fight, he wins. You fight some more, and he wins again. The whole goddamn time, he’s smiling because this is *his* game you’re playing, and that man doesn’t lose.”

The last two items she pulls from her suitcase are impossibly worse than all the rest combined. She turns me around and places another red item on me. It’s a mask that closely resembles a muzzle, also in red to match my outfit. Once it’s secured with a buckle on the back of my head, she

attaches a leash to the collar, keeping hold of the other end as though I'm a goddamned dog.

She blows out a breath. "There. All done."

I suck in my lips and close my eyes, trying not to lose my shit because I know it'll only get worse from here.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

LUCKY



My brothers try to reason with me and get me to take a seat and come up with a plan, but I'm not wasting any more time on idle chit-chat. *I* am the goddamn plan. My fist meeting Neal's face until he tells me where Tinleigh is the only tactic I need.

"Jesus fucking Christ, brother. At least wait for us," Dutch says, trying to keep up with my fast pace.

I don't even hear him as I walk out the front door, heading to my bike. There's nothing but darkness all around me with a singular focus they can't stop me from following. They can come or not; it doesn't make a difference. The result will be the same.

Climbing on my bike, I bring it to life and peel out of the parking lot, sending a spray of gravel behind me. My mind is clear as I weave through traffic, daring a cop to pull me over right now. It's almost laughable. I know this bike better than I know myself, and there's no possible situation we couldn't find ourselves out of.

I glance at my side view, noticing at least four of my brothers behind me. I guess I was wrong. I could lose a cop, but there's no losing them, and I'd do best to remember it. My problems are never my own. The patch I proudly wear day in and day out means I'm never alone in my victories or my failures.

The thirty-minute ride takes us seventeen, and this time, we don't bother parking at the adult store. We pull right up to

the front entrance. After a quick check of my magazine, I slam the butt against my palm and pull the slide, loading a round into the chamber of my Glock.

Dutch, Satyr, and Rigger flank me, but I know I saw four bikes, so I glance over my shoulder, surprised to see Judge with a Remington Tac 14 in hand. I can't remember a time he's ever come on an ambush with us. He's usually the one who puts us back together after we unleash our most animalistic tendencies. But I know why he's here. He's spent a lot of time with my girl, talking about deep shit like God and purpose. Sometimes they disagree, but they hold a deep mutual respect for each other.

He returns my nod with a firm set of his jaw, positioning his Tac across his body, ready for action.

The club's not open, but I don't wait for an invitation. I aim my gun in front of me and shoot out the glass. It explodes, and I step through the newly open space.

Two men sit at the bar to the right, and their eyes go wide. They jump to their feet, both reaching for their sidearms.

"Hands up, motherfuckers," I say.

Realizing they're no match for the four guns already aimed at their heads, they hold their hands in position. Satyr pulls up a stool beside them, setting his laptop on the bar to hack into their security cameras, while Dutch tucks his weapon into his pants before divesting them of theirs.

"I'll just hold onto these," he says nonchalantly.

"Boss man here?" I ask, and instead of answering, they look over at each other. "Eyes over here and answer the damn question."

They still don't answer, but the one on the right gives me a subtle chin lift to where I know the asshole's office is located.

"Thanks. My buddy, Dutch, will keep you company while we go have a chat with him." I walk around them, shaking my head as Dutch's voice fills the room.

“You guys have a deck of cards or a board game handy? This might take a minute.” He slaps a hand on the bar. “Please tell me you have Monopoly. It’s my favorite.”

“Goofy motherfucker,” Rigger says from behind me.

I glance over my shoulder. “You guys ready?”

With a jerk of his arm, Judge cocks his rifle. “Let’s get your girl back.”

I motion for Judge to take one side of the door and Rigger to join me on mine.

I’m not surprised when I find the door to Neal’s office locked. He no doubt heard our entrance and is hiding like the pussy he is. Rigger moves to kick it in, but I hold him back. It’s a good thing, too, because Neal opens fire through the door, bursts of light appearing in the dark hallway from the holes he created where Rigger would’ve been standing.

“Shit,” Rigger says.

Once the shooting stops, I’m quick to jump in front of the door, rear back, and send the heel of my foot into it. It swings open, bouncing off the wall and sending it forward again. I jump to the side and push it in with a hand as more bullets spray through the open doorway, hitting the wall on the other side.

“You’re outnumbered,” I call out. “Might as well give up now.”

“I called the cops. They’ll be here any minute.” Neal’s voice is shaky, making me smile.

“How stupid do you think we are?” Judge asks.

There’s not a chance in hell he wants the authorities snooping around his club, not when his primary source of income is not only morally bankrupt but illegal as fuck.

I peer around the corner, seeing the top of Neal’s head just above his desk. Aiming carefully, I shoot, hitting my mark.

“Shit,” he cries out. “You shot me.”

With a jerk of my chin, we file into the room, guns aimed.

“It’s a graze, you dumb fuck. But if you don’t drop your weapon and take a seat, I’ll do more than shoot you,” I say.

We fan out, Rigger and Judge moving to either side of the desk while I position myself right in front. There’s a *thunk* of something heavy hitting the carpet before two hands lift into the air. He slowly rises and takes a seat in his office chair. The steady stream of blood flowing from where I grazed his scalp pleases me, but I want more than his blood. I want to watch his head explode and chunks of brain matter hit the walls.

Judge crouches at his side, grabbing his discarded weapon and tossing it onto the sofa on the other side of the room.

“Where is she?” I ask calmly, even though that’s the very last emotion I feel.

“Who?” Taking aim, I fire again. This time, I hit his left ear, blowing out the cartilage. He cries out, briefly covering the wound before wincing and pulling his blood-soaked hand away. “Fuck you!”

“Where is she?” This time, there’s a little more edge to my tone. I’m losing patience, but I know I need to keep control to get the answers I need.

“We took her back to you. Dropped her off in front of the club.”

Judge slams the butt of his Tac into Neal’s forehead—not hard enough to knock him out, but definitely hard enough to make him see stars.

“He asked you a goddamn question,” he spits out.

Neal’s head circles around in a daze, his eyes blinking rapidly as he looks at Judge. “This kind of violence isn’t very godly.”

“Obviously, you’ve never read the Bible.”

“Last chance, asshole. Where the fuck is Tinleigh?”

“I don’t know.” He sucks in a sharp breath when I take aim. “It’s the truth. I don’t fuckin’ know. My clients don’t exactly give me their personal information before a transaction.”

I see fucking red. In his fucked-up head, that's all she is: a transaction. A commodity to buy, sell, or trade as he sees fit. Her value has nothing to do with the body she's in or the beauty she holds. And Neal must be the biggest idiot in the world because he doesn't see it.

"What's the code?" Rigger asks, jerking his gun toward the safe built into the bookcase behind Neal's desk.

"I'm not giving you that."

Aiming again, I blow a hole through his shoulder. Neal screams and falls back into the chair, gripping his wound.

"Code?" Rigger repeats.

Neal gives it to him through choked sobs, caving like the weak man he is. This is what happens when you don't have something to believe in. If the roles were reversed, I know without a doubt that my brothers would die protecting our club's secrets. Whether they suffered hours, days, or years of torture, they wouldn't break.

Neal doesn't have that, though. All he has is an empire that'll die along with him, making his life the most important thing he possesses. It's pathetic.

Rigger pops open the safe to find it full of files, cash, and false identities. It must be his backup plan in case he needs to bail, shit that should be stored somewhere hard to find, but this dumb fuck keeps it in the first place anyone would look. How the hell has he survived this long?

"Give me a name," I say.

The whole front of Neal's shirt is saturated in blood now, and all his fight is gone. He's accepted his fate and knows I hold the power over how long this will go on.

"Jeremy Defort."

I shoot Rigger a look. He takes my meaning and digs through the files until he locates the one we need. Shifting my gaze to Judge, he rests his Tac on his shoulder before taking the folder and running it out to Satyr, returning seconds later.

“What did you expect me to do?” Neal mumbles the question.

“What’s that?”

“What did you expect me to do?” he repeats louder. “You took her from me and then threatened me. You know the score. If I allowed shit like that to happen, I’d be laughed out of the business. There are eyes everywhere. Someone is always watching for the smallest sign of weakness to step in and take what you have. So what did you expect me to do?”

“I see your point,” I say, walking over to him and taking a seat on the edge of his desk.

He perks up, hope in his eyes. “I had to do it. Trust me, I didn’t want to. Tinleigh is something special. No matter what I did to her, she wouldn’t break. Do you know how rare that is? Once word got out—shit, man. There was a bidding war over her. If I didn’t have to make an example out of her, I would’ve kept her forever.”

The demons inside me claw up my body, fighting and scratching to be let out. I’m losing the hold on my control, and the only thing stopping me from letting it all out is knowing Tinleigh’s life depends on me. I couldn’t live with myself knowing she was out there suffering because I lost control.

“You’re saying it’s my fault you sold her because I beat the shit out of you?”

“I’m saying she’s gone. You might as well accept it and move on. Killing me isn’t going to change anything.”

“But it’ll make me feel so fuckin’ good.”

He huffs. “You think this ends with me? You’re not fuckin’ listening. The second I’m gone, someone else will pop up in my place, taking over right where I left off. Might as well keep me around knowing I owe you one.”

“The only thing I want from you is my goddamn woman back,” I roar.

He glances over at me, smiling. “How does it feel to be a failure?”

Before I can rein it in, the demons take over. I tuck my gun in my pants and pull my knife from the holster on my belt. Moving behind him, I grip his blood-soaked hair, yank his head back and, in one fluid movement, slice across his throat from ear to ear. He chokes and sputters as blood pours from his wound and eventually spills from his mouth and nose. I keep his head tipped back so the flow of blood isn't staunches, and Neal's wide eyes lock on me as he grips his throat, trying to keep himself from dying. It's a wasted effort.

"Fuck you!" I roar, sending my frustration, disappointment, anger, and failure out into the world.

This is the end for him, but it's not the end for Tinleigh. I will find her. I will rescue her, and goddamn it, she will be okay.

"I got it." Rigger places a hand on my shoulder, and I glare over at him, still lost to the madness. "Get it together, brother. I've been right where you're at and know how it feels, but losing your shit right now won't get Tinleigh back."

I release my hold on Neal's hair, sending him forward where his head bounces off the desk, and he slumps to the side. Blood quickly pools on his desk, dripping off the edge, and his monitor and keyboard are sprayed in red. This massacre should make me feel better, even if only a little, but it doesn't.

My shoulders fall, knowing Rigger's right. "Yeah, okay. Sorry."

"It's all good." He holds up a folder. "There's not much in here, but maybe Satyr can make sense of something I don't see."

"What do we do about this?" Judge asks.

"Call Vance," I say.

"You want to call the Sheriff?" Rigger's tone implies I'm stupid.

Picking up a few of the files, I flip through them, seeing bank account numbers, wire transfers, names, and other

information. “Might make his department look good if they take down a human trafficking ring.”

“Good enough to excuse this?” Judge motions to what’s left of Neal.

“Won’t know unless we ask.”

Rigger shakes his head. “All right. I’ll make the call, but I’m throwing you under the bus if he doesn’t go for it.”

I shrug, not worried about it. Vance is a frequent customer at the ranch. We keep his old balls empty and kick him some cash now and then, and in exchange, he looks the other way when we need him to. Right now, we definitely need him to.

Twenty minutes later, Sheriff Melville is standing in Neal’s office, red-faced and pacing. “This is not part of our arrangement. You’ve gone too far this time.”

“I’m handing you the opportunity to bring down an entire trafficking ring, maybe bring hundreds of women and children home to their families, and you’re bitching about the death of some piece of shit no one will miss?” I ask.

“What am I supposed to do with a dead body and no suspect? Hell, Reno isn’t even my jurisdiction.”

“Call the police chief and tell him you were stopping by to ask Neal some questions about a different investigation and found him like this.”

He shakes his head. “No, no way. Someone has to take the fall. Otherwise, I’m taking you all in.”

“So what you’re saying is that your wife and kids are cool with you coming in and getting your dick wet once a week by our talented ladies?” I slap him on the back. “Well, shit. You’re a lucky man.”

“Don’t you threaten me, son. I’ve done more than enough for you to keep my name clean,” he sneers.

Dutch walks into the office, shoving the two goons he’s been babysitting in front of him. “Hey, Lucky? Hand your knife over to this gentleman.”

Confused, I take the blood-crusting blade in my leather-gloved hand and hand it over, handle first. The guy must be as baffled as I am because he takes it.

“Now, hand this one your gun.” I clear the chamber and pop the magazine out because I’m not an idiot and pass it over.

“There. Suspect one and suspect two. You’re welcome.” Dutch slaps the two on the back and walks out.

Vance sighs, pulling his gun from his holster. “Put your weapons down and get on your knees.”

“Wait. What?” Loser One says.

“Now,” Vance says, reaching for the radio on his shoulder and calling it in.

Loser Two tosses the gun on the ground and lowers to his knees, hands raised. His eyes are narrow on me. “I’ll kill you for this.”

Rigger, Judge, and I walk past as Vance cuffs them.

“Doubt that,” Judge says. “You’re going down for murder. I’d choose better friends on the inside. Seems like you’re not a good judge of character.”

After collecting Dutch—who had been busy clearing their cameras of our visit—we walk out and hop on our bikes.

“Good thinking in there. Hopefully, this means you’re starting to use the brains in that big head of yours,” Rigger says to Dutch.

“Nah. It was a momentary stroke of genius. I’ll be back to my idiotic ways by the time we get back to the clubhouse.”

“Good because I kinda like giving you shit.”

Normally, I’d join in on the banter, but our win means fuck all right now. We’re still looking for a needle in a haystack, and considering the amount of money and resources the man who took Tinleigh probably has, our chances of finding her are slim.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

TINLEIGH



The woman who dressed me leads me down the hallway, passing guards and staff members. My face flames red in embarrassment even though no one so much as looks my way. I'm used to being nearly nude in front of people, but that's at a strip club. Being exposed and carted around like this is terrifying and humiliating.

I attempt to map out the house as we go, but it's hard when everything looks the same. The floors are white marble with gold veining, and the walls are stark white with gold molding. We descend two flights of stairs before things change.

At the bottom of the stairs, she pulls me through a red door. The room is dim, lit only by sconces spaced out along a far wall and candles flickering from the top of substantial furniture placed throughout. The cold tile I had been walking on is gone, and its place is what feels like foam covered by a rubber mat that my feet sink into as she leads me further into the room.

My eyes jump around, not knowing what to look at first but knowing none of it is good. My chest feels heavy as I take it all in. A large wooden X with cuffs attached to each point is behind me. A king-sized bed wrapped in black silk sheets is straight ahead, and my steps falter when I notice that instead of a bed frame, there's a cage under the mattress. Large bureaus with cabinets wide open display all manner of whips and chains on either side of me. Finally, there's a padded bench and an oddly-shaped chair in the far corners.

My head whips around, sensing someone behind me, and I swallow hard when I see four women kneeling in a line. They're dressed similarly to me—meaning they're virtually naked—with their leashes attached to hooks on the wall. Their eyes are cast down, and they're holding perfectly still.

“Tonight you'll watch, so you know what Sir expects from you. I suggest paying close attention.” She gives my leash a tug, moving away from the women and to the bed. My feet feel weighted down, and I stumble, nearly falling into her back. “Fucking hell. Is walking too much of a chore for you? At this rate, you won't last a week.”

She opens the latch on the cage and gestures for me to get in.

I shake my head. “No. I want to go home. Please. I have people who love me. They'll be looking for me.”

Sighing, she rubs at the spot between her eyes. “Just once, I'd like a different reaction from one of you, but no, it's all the same.” She points to one of the women behind us at the end. “She's been here for a year.” Her finger moves down the line. “Six months, five months, and three weeks. They all said the same thing as you, and no one has broken the door down to rescue them. You're no different, so just get in. You should be grateful; tonight's the easiest night you'll have here.”

When I don't move, she drops the leash long enough to walk over to the bureau and grab a stick with two prongs on the end. Then she picks up the leash and gives it a tug, forcing me to take a step forward. Before I realize what she's holding, she presses it to my hip and delivers a painful jolt of electricity.

“I don't want to hurt you, but I will. Now get in.”

Looking down, I see two red spots marring my skin. I don't have a choice. One way or another, she'll force me into that cage. So, I walk over and lower to my knees. With my hands still chained to my thighs, there's no way for me to crawl in.

“Shit. I forgot. Hold on.” She bends over and unhooks my wrists. “There.”

With trepidation, I crawl into the small space. Once inside, she closes the latch. The cage isn't tall enough for me to sit upright, so I remain on my hands and knees as I watch her walk out of the room. When I hear the door shut, I turn to the other women. If I have any chance of escaping, I need their help.

“Are you guys okay?” I whisper. They don't respond. “Quick, unhook yourselves and get me out. We can make it out of here.” They're stock-still as if they didn't even hear me. “Fine. I'll do it myself.”

Reaching through the bars, I fiddle with the latch, unsure of how it opens. Before I can figure it out, the door to the room opens. As if the atmosphere knows bad things are about to happen, the temperature drops to a chilling level, sending shivers down my spine.

“Oh, good. My new pet is here.” Like a lion walking into his den, Dead Eyes stalks through the room. His suit coat and tie are gone, but he still has his black tailored pants and white button-down on, the shirt open, revealing a bare chest covered in dark tattoos.

He walks over to the kneeling women and, one by one, lifts their chins and looks down at them almost lovingly. Now that I can see their faces, I can tell they're younger than me. Eighteen or nineteen, if I had to guess. What puzzles me the most is the dreamy way they return his gaze.

Do they want to be here? Is this some Stockholm shit, or what?

The second he releases each of their chins, they go back to staring at the ground, spines straight and hands on their knees, like puppets who only come alive for their puppeteer. That can't be me. I won't let it. I have to get out of here.

With a soft smile and all the confidence in the world, he walks over to where I'm caged and opens the door. “Come on out, Pet.”

Instead, I crawl backward until I'm pressed against the bars. I want no part in whatever *Fifty Shades of Fucked Up* he has going on in here.

I'm not naive to kink. I had friends from the Thirst Trap who were in Dom/sub relationships, and some of it sounded hot, like something I'd want to explore with Lucky. The one thing they always talked about, though, was trust, and I don't trust this man as far as I can throw him.

"Aw, are you scared? Don't be. Tonight, you watch. I just want you to have the best seat in the house." He closes the cage door until it's almost latched, then stops. "Keep in mind that if you don't come out, I'll assume you like it in there and leave you until tomorrow."

Thinking about being locked in here all night with nothing but the hard plastic to lie on sounds miserable. Even the stained mattress upstairs would be better. Much better, actually, because then I'd at least be alone and not in this asshole's presence.

Slowly, I crawl to the door and wait for him to open it.

"That's a good girl." The door swings open, and he holds out a hand for me. I stare at it as though it's a viper waiting to attack. "It's just a hand. Come."

I try to get a read on him, but he's making it hard. His demeanor and tone are gentle and kind now, but I know it's an act. At any moment, he'll flip a switch, and the real him will come out. He can't be trusted, no matter what he says or does. After all, the asshole paid money for and stole me away from the life I was just starting to enjoy.

Not wanting to piss him off, I place my hand in his. His fingers are ice cold, startling me. I jerk away, but only for a second. Bracing myself, I allow him to help me out of the cage. He drops my hand and lifts the leash, wrapping the metal around his fist until there's tension between us.

"You're just as lovely as I thought you'd be." He takes me in from head to toe, his gaze stopping at my breasts. Not wanting to give him the satisfaction of my humiliation, I stand

tall. I can do this. I spent the better part of two years nearly nude with people watching me, fantasizing about me, touching me. This is no different.

At least, that's what I tell myself.

"Mmm, but you'll be a hard nut to crack, won't you?" He loosens the chain and circles me to inspect all angles as if I'm a used vehicle and he's checking under the hood. "I see the way you look at me. You don't trust me, and that's fair. The way I acquired you is unconventional, but I guarantee you're better off with me than you would be with Neal." Completing his circle, he stands before me again. "I've seen some of the girls he's taken a special interest in like he did with you. They were... worse for wear."

"I left him weeks ago. You didn't take me from him. You took me from my family and my friends." My voice cracks. "From my boyfriend."

"Boyfriend? Oh, you mean the biker?"

How much information did Neal give this guy? And how did Neal even know where I was? Did he recognize Lucky when he paid him a visit? There are so many questions and no one to get answers from.

"Yes. You took me from him, and I want to go back."

"That can't happen. Surely you know that."

"Please," I whisper, not trusting my voice.

"Please, Sir," he corrects. "From now on, you'll address me as Sir."

He wraps the chain around his fist once again, pinching the leather handle between his thumb and first finger. I jump when he slaps it down on my nipple, that's erect due to the chill in the air. A sharp sting travels through my breast.

"This conversation is boring me, and besides, it's pointless. You're my pet now, and I don't let my pets go. Not until I'm done with them, at least, and you and I haven't even begun." He pulls me over to the side of the bed. "Climb on up, Pet. I'm

ready to get started, and I think my other pets are getting jealous.”

Since there’s a fucking cage under the bed, the mattress sits too high for me to simply climb on. I place my hands on the silk sheets and attempt to hoist myself up, but it’s no use. I’m too short.

Sir chuckles and approaches me, placing his hands on my ribcage, his thumbs dangerously close to my breasts. “Allow me.”

He hoists me up as though I weigh nothing. I scurry away until my back meets the black leather headboard, not wanting his touch anywhere on me. Even though I’m here against my will, it still feels traitorous, like I’m cheating on Lucky. At some point, my body became his. The rest of me, too. I have twenty-four hours to figure out how to escape before I’m back in this room where this Sir won’t allow me just to watch from the sidelines.

“You don’t seem to remember me, but I’ve seen you before. Actually, you danced for me in one of those filthy rooms.” He undoes the buttons of his sleeves as I wrack my brain, trying to remember. “I find clubs like that disgusting, but Neal insisted he had a special girl I’d like.”

“When?”

“About a month ago.” He slips his shirt off, revealing even more of his tattooed skin. Unlike Lucky, his chiseled muscles do nothing for me. Lucky uses his strength to protect and care for me. This man... well, I don’t know what he does with his, but I think he’s about to show me. “It wounds me that you don’t remember, especially when I remember it so well. It was the night I purchased you.”

“What?” I croak out.

His shirt drops to the floor before he hops onto the bed, lowering to all fours, crawling toward me, and looking every bit the predator he is. “You were wearing red, and after you danced for me, I decided it’d be the only color I ever wanted to see you in again.”

I blink, thinking back to the days before Lucky took me away. Red never was my color, but Neal gave me a red set I only wore once to keep him happy. Neal told me about an important client of his and insisted I make his private dance special. If I didn't, it'd be the final straw, and my position at the club would be taken away.

I'd been pressing my luck with him and knew he was serious. But I've danced for so many men and never really saw their faces. I didn't want to. It made it easier somehow to think of them as money, not people, so it shouldn't surprise me that I don't remember Sir.

"I grabbed your ass, and you smacked my hand away." He crawls up my outstretched legs. "You and I both knew I could've done anything to you in that room, and no one would've saved you. I'm too important to Neal. You could've screamed bloody murder, and still, no one would've stopped me. But each time I reached out, you slapped me."

There's awe in his tone, as though it's a novelty that a woman wouldn't want his touch. And maybe it's true. If there's one thing I know, it's that everyone has a price. *Everyone.*

He continues to move up my body until his muscled arms are on either side of my hips. I cower in response, slouching down on the bed, not wanting to be this close to him. Not knowing who he is, what this room is about, or what he's planning on doing with me terrifies me to my bones.

"I'd been looking for a challenge for so long, and you gave me one that night, practically dared me to buy you, body and soul. So, I did." He plants his fists on the sides of my head that's ended up on the pillow, and his knees press against my hips, cradling me and looking at me like I'm his shiny new toy.

When he smirks, the memory of him comes back in flashes. The man whose smarmy grin put me on edge. Even knowing I was supposed to impress him, I couldn't let him touch me. Instinctually, I knew he meant me harm.

His black hair falls forward, hanging over his eyes. “Then I got word you ran away. I could’ve come for you that first day—you weren’t hard to find—but I wanted to wait until you felt safe and secure. It made ripping you from that life so much sweeter.”

The hint of mint on his breath invades my nostrils, and I shove at his chest, needing him off me. I can’t breathe, can’t think, can’t process what he’s telling me. The whole time I was living with Lucky, falling in love, thinking I had the rest of my life ahead of me, and it was all pretend. My life had already been purchased by another man.

He grabs my wrists and pins them above my head, halting my attack. “I wasn’t happy about sharing you with that biker. It was obvious he was fond of you, and I knew you’d eventually succumb. It made me sick to think about you smiling for him, living with him, fucking him,” he grits out like the last part is painful. “But look who’s on top of you now.”

“Let me go,” I say, desperately trying to get away.

“Never. I’ll never let you go.” He releases me, tossing his hair back as he climbs off the bed. “Not until I’m done with you.”

I want to ask him to clarify because how long will it be until he’s done with me? And what will happen when that time comes? Will he send me home? Kill me? I can’t bring myself to ask because I’m not sure I want to know.

Walking over to the other young women, he selects one and takes her leash. She crawls on hands and knees, a foot behind him, over to the giant wooden X.

“Stand, Pet.”

She stands in front of the X, feet hip-width apart, hands clasped behind her back, gaze lowered. It’s not a casual position, leaving me to believe it’s a position she’s been taught.

“I heard you were disobedient today. You talked back when you were told your shower time was over. Is that true?”

he asks calmly, undoing the clasps behind her neck and at her back. He continues on to the ones at her hips, and the strappy outfit falls to the ground.

“Yes, Sir. I’m sorry, Sir.” Her small voice nearly breaks my heart.

“You will be.” He smirks and meticulously secures her wrists and ankles in the cuffs attached to the wooden structure. Walking over to the cabinet of torture devices, he reaches for a whip that’s split at the end, looking like a snake’s tongue. “Twenty-five should do it.”

The whip whirs through the air until it lands on one of her small breasts. I suck in a sharp breath, but she barely reacts.

“One. Thank you, Sir.”

He repositions himself and whips her again, this time across her other breast. Angry red lines appear almost immediately, but all she does is count and thank him. I draw my knees to my chest, not wanting to watch but unable to look away.

By the time she’s counted to twenty-five, her breasts, stomach, and pelvis are covered in marks. He puts the whip back and brings out something I don’t recognize. Being so tall and broad, I can’t tell what he’s doing with it as he stands in front of her. That is, until he steps to the side to release her wrists and ankles. The woman has two metal claws holding the sides of her mouth open, secured by a leather strap around her head.

What the hell? It occurs to me what it’s for, and I cover my horrified gasp with my hand. I’m proven right when she drops to her knees the second she’s released and goes right for his belt, eager to pull him out.

He slaps her across the face so hard it echoes in the room. “Nuh-uh. You didn’t ask for Sir’s cock.”

“I’m sorry, Sir. May I please take your cock out?” The words are garbled and nearly unintelligible.

“You may.”

With deft fingers, she unbuttons his pants and pushes them over his hips. His cock juts straight out, dangling in front of the woman who seems to be salivating for it.

“Will you please fuck my face, Sir?”

This is the most insane and disturbing thing I’ve ever seen. Maybe in another world, it’d be hot, but knowing these women have been bought and paid for, ripped from their lives, and so brainwashed that they think they want this just makes it sad. It could be an act, but I’ve never seen acting this good.

“I’d enjoy that very much, Pet, but could you move so your back is to our guest? I think I’d like to watch her expression as you pleasure me.”

“Yes, Sir.”

For the next four hours, I watch as Sir uses and abuses the four women, all while they beg for more. The whole time, he makes sure I’m watching, getting off on making me uncomfortable. If he thought his performance would intrigue me, he was wrong because each minute that ticks by only gives me more reasons to get the hell out of here.

By the time a guard delivers me back to the empty room with bars, I feel broken inside. I’m staring at a future I don’t want, all while grieving the loss of one I thought I might have had.

The only conclusion I come to is that I’d rather die than become one of the women he’s tricked into thinking they want to be here.

After being allowed a shower and a simple dinner of baked chicken and vegetables, I collapse into my bed. I lie on the gross, smelly mattress, eyes closed and picturing Lucky. Is he looking for me? Is he taking care of Myla? Is he thinking of me right now? Tears spill down my cheeks, and I fall asleep crying, wishing I was still with him, safely tucked away in his big arms.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

LUCKY



“What?” I say into my phone.

“Heard what happened with your girl,” the voice on the other end says.

“Who the fuck is this?”

“It’s Loki, asshole.”

“Are you calling to send your condolences? Because I got shit to do.” The last strand of patience I possessed evaporated hours ago.

“Only reason I’m not driving over there and beating your ass for being such a dick right now is because I know how you feel. But one more insult, fucker, and I won’t be giving you the intel I have.”

“You know something?” I perk up, gaining Rigger’s attention next to me at the bar. We’ve been sitting here for hours, watching Satyr type away on his laptop and work through whatever was in the file.

“Not me. Karina.”

“What does she know?”

“You can ask her yourself.”

There’s some shuffling on the other end of the line, and then Karina is on the phone. “I can’t say for sure it’s the guy you’re looking for, but a little over a month ago, Neal arranged for Tingleigh to give a private dance.”

“Didn’t she do that every night?”

“Yeah, but this was different. Neal’s always used the club to scout prospective buyers. I’ve seen it before where one of us would dance for a special client, and soon after, that girl would disappear. I got the feeling that’s what he was doing with her.”

If I could kill Neal a million times over, it would never calm the rage burning inside me. As it stands, this might be who I am now: angry, short-tempered, and irrational.

“Do you know who he was?” I ask.

“No, but I can tell you what he looks like. If you can get ahold of the security tapes at the club, maybe you can figure it out from there?”

“Yeah, okay.”

“He was tall, broad, good-looking, and had dark features. Black hair with a little scruff. Working in that profession for so long, I can tell a lot by how a person dresses, and this guy has money. His suit was designer, and it was tailored, not off the rack, you know?”

It’s not enough to narrow things down, but it’s something. “Yeah. Thanks, Karina.”

“No, thank you. Now that Neal is... gone, I don’t have to leave Reno and keep looking over my shoulder.” She snuffles. “You don’t know how much that means to me.”

“I didn’t do it for you.” It’s an asshole thing to say, but it’s the truth.

“Doesn’t matter why. You did it, so thank you.”

“Glad you’re safe,” I say, still not accepting her praise. “What’ll you do now?”

“Not sure. Maybe I’ll apply at the Honey Pot.”

“Have Loki shoot me a text if you do. I’ll make sure your application gets bumped to the top of the stack.”

“I will. Good luck finding Tinleigh.”

I end the call and set the phone on the bar, turning to Rigger. “Think Melville could get us the security feed?”

“No need. I can hack into their system,” Satyr calls out.

“Goddamn. Keep impressing me like this, and I might kiss you,” I say, feeling the first boost of hope in fuck knows how long.

“Keep your lips to yourself.” Satyr glares at me, and then refocuses.

I go back to doing fuck all, swearing to start paying attention when Satyr’s spouting off his computer bullshit so I can help next time. I’ve always felt confident in my position in the club as the muscle, the guy with the intimidating size who stopped men in their tracks. Lot of good that does right now.

“Okay.” Satyr pulls over a second laptop and mashes some keys before handing it to me. “I loaded the security feed all the way from six weeks ago to the day we picked up Tinleigh. You two can sift through it while I chase around this bank transaction.”

I set the laptop in front of us and hit play. It’s nearly midnight, but there’ll be no sleep until Tinleigh’s back home.

“Here, thought you guys could use a pick-me-up.” Sugar sets fresh cups of coffee in front of us.

“Thanks,” Rigger says, taking a sip.

“Are you any closer to finding her?” she asks.

Peering over at my second mom, I notice the dark circles under her eyes and her worried expression. She rarely shows her face without makeup, but she doesn’t have a stitch on right now, and her usual tight jeans and revealing top have been switched out for a robe and pajama pants. It isn’t just me who’s affected by this mess; Sugar was starting to think of Tinleigh as a daughter.

“We’re working on some leads,” I say.

She wrings her hands together. “Good.”

“How’s Myla?”

“She’s okay. Sleeping. The pain meds Bones has her on wipe her out.” She shakes her head. “Poor thing. Every time

she wakes up, she asks about Tinleigh.”

According to Bones, Myla’s walking away with a shit ton of bruises, a few cuts that needed stitches, a sprained wrist and ankle, a broken nose, and a cracked rib, neither of which needed a hospital. Since she showed no signs of internal bleeding, we can keep her here with us where we can protect her and keep any well-intentioned nurses from bringing law enforcement in to poke around.

She has a long recovery ahead of her since her body went through some serious trauma, but she’ll be okay. It relieves a massive weight from my shoulders.

“Thanks for keeping an eye on her. It takes some of the stress off knowing you have her back.”

“It’s nothing. Glad I could help. Actually, I better go wake her up. Bones said not to let her sleep too many hours in a row due to the concussion.”

“Appreciate you, Sugar,” I say, mustering up some kindness.

“Anything for you, boys, you know that.” She points to the stainless-steel carafe behind the bar. “There’s more coffee in there.”

After she heads out the back door, Rigger and I get back to work.

“Is it hard seeing her like this?” Rigger gestures to the computer screen that shows Tinleigh grinding on a random man’s lap.

I hit fast-forward on a dude who doesn’t match Karina’s description. “No, that ain’t her. That’s Stormy.”

“Yeah,” he draws out. “But it also ain’t.”

“What’s it like knowing your dad fucked your girl?” I return.

“Hey! Fuck you, asshole!”

I blow out a breath. “Sorry. That was below the belt.”

“Yeah, it was.”

“When I first met Tinleigh, it was obvious she wore a mask most of the time. This right here is all an act. Her expressions, how she moves and is dressed, none of it’s the real her. So no, it doesn’t bother me to see her like this because I know I’m the one who gets the genuine one. I get Tinleigh. These assholes got Stormy, if that makes sense.”

“Yeah, it does.” He clamps a hand on my shoulder. “I’m happy for you, brother.”

“Yeah, well, none of it will mean shit if I can’t get her back.”

“There’s no way someone paid a shit ton of money just to take her off to the desert and kill her. Whoever has her is keeping her alive, which means we have time.”

His words are meant to reassure me, but they only remind me of all the things she could be going through right now. She’s the strongest woman I know, but she’s been through too much already. At some point, she’ll break. I just hope to whatever god is out there that I get to her before that happens.

“Hey.” A bleary-eyed Navy appears, draping an arm around Rigger.

“You’re supposed to be in bed. You have a morning shift tomorrow.” Rigger draws her in for a kiss.

“Today, technically. But I can’t sleep. I just keep thinking I should be doing something to help.” She notices the computer screen showing Tinleigh topless. “Is that—?”

“Tinleigh smothering a man with her boobs?” I sigh. “Yeah.”

“Why are you two watching this?”

Rigger explains while I fast-forward again. We hit the end of the feed, and I load the next video.

“Tinleigh’s really sexy,” Navy muses, pulling up a stool to join us.

“Agreed.” I speed through a few dances given by other women until something catches my eye, and I hit play. There’s a man in a booth, the same booth I was in when I first met her.

He matches the description Karina gave me perfectly. I wait to see who his dancer is when Tinleigh walks in wearing red lingerie. “I think that’s him.”

We watch as she begins her dance just feet away from him. Her normal, confident expression falters as she takes him in, and I hit pause and point. “See that?”

“She’s uneasy,” Navy muses, her head cocked to the side.

“Exactly.”

“Can you find out who he is?” she asks.

“Gonna try.” I turn the laptop to face Satyr. “Him.”

“You think he’s our guy?”

Something in my gut tells me he is, but what if I’m wrong? Satyr could waste hours trying to find someone who doesn’t even matter. I hit play, wanting to see more of their interaction. She moves closer to him, shaking her glorious ass, and he reaches out to touch. She slaps his hand away. It’s not playful, though. She’s dead serious about not wanting him to touch her, and deep down, I know. That’s him.

“I know it,” I say.

“Okay. I’ll call Melville. He might be able to run him through facial rec. Maybe catch him on a traffic cam and give us a plate number.” He picks up his cell, noting the time. “Might need to wait ’til morning, brother. If I drag him out of bed for this, he’ll be pissed.”

“I don’t give a shit. This is pressing.”

“It doesn’t mean I’ll quit digging. The name Neal gave us was fake, but I might be able to chase this financial trail right to him. Pissing off the sheriff won’t do us any favors.”

“Do you understand that he could be cutting her fingers off one by one right now? He could be beating the living shit out of her. Or worse, he could be”—my voice cracks, and I clear my throat—“he could be doing worse to her right now. We don’t fucking know.”

Satyr shakes his head and looks to the sky as if asking to be saved. When he shifts his gaze back to me, he's resigned. "You're right. I'll make the call."

I don't exactly need his approval about calling Vance. I could've rang the sheriff myself, but I need my brothers on my side. This is too big for just me to deal with.

He picks up his smokes and phone, then steps outside, leaving me alone with Rigger and Navy.

"You two should get some sleep. This might take a minute."

"No way." Navy rests her hand on mine, making Rigger growl, which in turn earns him an elbow to the chest from his woman. "We're here for you. And Tinleigh. I know how scared and alone she must feel. After what I went through..." Her voice pitches high.

"Navy, you don't have to—"

Composing herself, she continues. "No, I'm fine. What happened to me was different, but if anyone knows trauma, it's me. And knowing what it did to this grumpy bastard and how much he appreciated your support, we want to stay and help any way we can."

"He wasn't that much of a help," Rigger mutters.

Navy wraps her arms around his neck. "We'll get her back, and then Char and me won't be the only ones around to keep you guys in check."

"Hope so." I turn back to the laptop. Goddamn, I miss her. It's beyond me how someone can come into your life and change it forever in a matter of minutes, but she did.

In all my years of Sunday school, I never put much stock into God or any of that shit. While my parents and sisters were singing hymns, I was doodling skulls and plotting my revenge on all the preppy assholes who thought they were better than me because I had long hair and wore Metallica T-shirts. I've just always been drawn to the darker side.

That part of me only grew stronger when I patched in and was exposed to the dark underbelly of the world. So if there is a god or goddess out there somewhere, they've got a sick fuckin' sense of humor.

That said, as I stare at an image of the woman I've quickly found I can't live without, I find myself praying to all things holy that she's okay and that she'll be back in my arms soon where I'll never let her go again.

Fuck marriage. That can be dissolved. I want an unhealthy level of permanence for her in my life. I'm talking surgical attachment at the hip level of commitment.

Nearly an hour goes by before Satyr walks back in, blowing the last drag of his smoke through his nostrils. "Got him."

My brain goes through whiplash as I shift from despair to hope. "Really?"

He nods. "Facial rec was a bust, but that didn't surprise me because I doubt a fella like that drives himself anywhere. He's the type to tuck himself behind blacked-out windows. But remember that SUV we saw circling the ranch?"

"Yeah?"

"I'd already sent our security feed to Vance and was waiting for a callback. Since he had his people looking into this, he had them run that through, too. They were able to catch the same vehicle on the traffic cams and run the plates. Seemed like a dead end because it was registered to some dummy corporation, but I remembered seeing that same corp digging through financials." He taps the side of his head.

"Can we get to the part where I get a name and location?" I ask, ready for his explanation to give me something.

"Almost there." He plants his ass on a stool. "The corp told me we were on the right track, so we followed the car around on the cams, waiting for it to stop somewhere. From our feed, we know that every night around the same time, it drove into town, circled the ranch, and then left—until last night. Before it made its rounds, it stopped for gas. Melville called over to

the twenty-four-hour mart and got them to release the credit card receipt. It was tied to some nobody, but that nobody is employed by Jeremiah Beaufort. He comes from old, old money. His family has their hands in oil, banking, and a bunch of other shit.”

“Jeremiah Beaufort,” I repeat the name, something triggering in my memory. “Neal gave us the name Jeremy Defort. Does that sound similar to anyone else?”

“The fuckwad didn’t even try to hide his identity,” Satyr says.

“You get an address?”

“Doing that now.” He powers up his laptop and goes into full-on hacker mode.

Adrenaline pumps through my veins, perking me up more than the ten cups of coffee I’ve had throughout the night. We’re close; I can feel it.

“There are hundreds of properties from all over the world tied to the Beaufort family,” Satyr says.

My stomach sinks. It’s not out of the realm of possibility that he left the country, and I don’t even have a fucking passport.

“What properties does *he* specifically own?” Rigger asks.

Satyr’s fingers fly over the keyboard. “Three. In Switzerland, New York, and Vegas.”

“Pull up the one in Vegas,” I suggest on a whim.

He pulls up a map and shifts the laptop so we can see. It’s a goddamn mansion just outside the city, surrounded by desert with no nearby neighbors. Perfect for hiding your dirty secrets.

“That’s it,” I say.

“What makes you think that?” Satyr asks.

“Worth checking out. Just look at it. If you’re the kind of asshole who gets off on buying women, would you take her to New York? No, you’d take her somewhere hard to escape and

out in the middle of nowhere but still close to the city.” I grab my phone off the bar. “I’ll call Cy and bring him up to speed.”

“I’ll call Raunchy,” Rigger says. “I’m sure our Vegas brothers will back us up.”

“Good call.”

Being part of a national club definitely comes in handy when trouble finds you away from home. Raunchy is the Prez of the Vegas chapter, and being so close, we’ve helped each other out numerous times.

After waking Cy up and suffering through a few vividly descriptive death threats, I get the go-ahead to call Riot. As Road Captain, he’s in charge of rounding the troops, while I’m in charge of making sure we have the firearms necessary for the mission ahead.

Within an hour, the clubhouse is buzzing with activity. Sugar, Char, and Navy are kind enough to whip up a quick breakfast while my brothers and I prepare for the eight-hour ride. The energy around me is intense and serious. We don’t know what we’re walking into and only have a general idea of the security this Jeremiah asshole has, thanks to Google Maps.

By the time we pull out of the parking lot with Cy leading the charge and Tigger trailing behind in the van, the sun is just coming up, and the world is quiet except for the loud rumble of ten bikes.

Hang on, Hellcat. I’m coming for you.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

TINLEIGH



The door opening startles me awake. I sit upright, pushing into the corner to make myself small. A male guard walks in dressed in an all-black suit and a scowl on his ugly face.

“Your presence is requested in the dining room for breakfast,” he says, standing with his hands clasped in front of him.

“I’d rather not, but thank you.” Yesterday, I was scared and unsure of how things would be, but today, I’m angry and ready to make it everyone’s problem.

He’s just as annoyed with my defiance as the woman from last night, huffing and rolling his eyes dramatically. “Do you honestly think that was a request?”

“Can’t blame a girl for trying,” I mutter, climbing off the mattress and remembering I wasn’t given clothes last night, so I’m completely naked under this blanket. “I need something to wear.”

“Your natural state is also *requested*.”

“You can fuck right off with that one. I want some damn clothes.”

More eye rolling and huffing. “You’re going down to breakfast just as you are. *How* you get down there is up to you.”

My shoulders sag, and a whole new level of hatred for Sir is unlocked. He’s trying to break me down, assert his

dominance, and humiliate me. He's winning on all fronts as I stand, letting the thin blanket—that did little to keep me warm last night—fall, and the guard unabashedly takes in my every curve as if he's entitled to the view.

“Want me to turn around so you can see it all?” The words drip with venom, and I don't wait for him to answer. With my hands on my hips, I spin in a slow circle. “I can lie down and spread my legs if you want to see that too, you pervert.”

Not caring for my insult, he grabs my upper arm and shoves me into the bathroom. “Get yourself together. You have two minutes.”

I was generously given a travel-size toothbrush and toothpaste last night, so I pull double duty and pee while cleaning my teeth. The second my two minutes are up, the door opens without a knock.

“Let's go.”

“Good thing you gave me two minutes,” I say, and he gives me a questioning look. “It's the minimum amount of time the ADA recommends you brush, and my oral hygiene is very important to me.”

He doesn't find me funny and grips my upper arm more roughly, taking me out of my room and down the hall. I try to swallow down my embarrassment at the two housecleaners who do their best to avoid looking at me as we walk past them at the bottom of the stairs.

My skin erupts in gooseflesh as the chilled air hits me everywhere. I don't know why Sir chooses to keep this house like an ice box, but it's an asshole move if he's going to require me to traipse around sans clothes all the time.

I do my best to add to the map in my head, connecting hallways and different rooms. When I figure out how to escape, I'll need to know the best way out of the house.

We've walked the entire length of the house when we finally end up in the dining room, which is the most ostentatious room I've been in yet. There's seating for at least twenty people at the antique-looking carved wood table, and a

set of tall French doors leads out to the garden, allowing natural light to fill the space. The adjacent walls and ceiling are painted cream and decorated with gold molding and filigree. It's pretentious and busy.

Above the table is a gold chandelier with sparkling crystal that hangs from each swooping arm, topped with faux, flickering candles. The place settings, including the utensils, are gold, and bouquets of fresh flowers in crystal vases line the center of the table.

Sitting at the head of said table is Sir, looking annoyingly handsome in another bespoke suit. This one is a deep navy with a plain white button-down and a gold tie. His black hair is gelled into place, and his tan complexion is nearly glowing.

Compared to him, I must look like a street rat. For my shower last night, I was only given a bar of soap and was told to wash everything from head to toe. My hair was a ratted mess after, but I wasn't given a brush. I did my best to finger-comb it, but then I had to sleep with wet hair.

Hearing our arrival, he stands, and his eyes narrow at where the guard is holding me in place. Quickly, his hand falls to the side. Sir frowns and closes in on me until he's inches away. He lifts my arm, inspecting it from all angles.

"Did I give you permission to touch what's mine?" he asks, unnervingly calm.

"No, sir."

"Then why"—his voice grows louder with each word—"the hell did you do it?"

"I'm sorry, sir. She was arguing and being difficult. I didn't think she'd come on her own."

It feels nice to listen to the pervert get reamed, even though I hate the person doing the yelling. But before I can deliver a snide smile to the guard, a loud bang echoes through the room, exploding in my ears. My right side—the side the guard was on—is sprayed with something warm.

I double over, clamping my hands over my ears, and scream. A flailing arm hits my back, and I'm nearly knocked

down by two hundred pounds of dead weight. And I mean, literally dead weight because Sir yanks me out of the way, and I notice a gun in his hand.

“Y-you sh-shot h-him?” I stutter, my entire body trembling. Sir pulls me into his side, not caring that we’re both now covered in red.

Even knowing I won’t like what I see on the ground next to me, my eyes betray me, and I glance down to see the guard crumpled in a heap, the back of his head blown open wide. A sharp pain shoots through my chest and my knees buckle, but I don’t fall, thanks to Sir’s tight hold around my waist.

“He knew the rules, and he broke them. He also knew the consequences. Should a grown man not be held accountable for his actions?” He tucks the gun back into his shoulder holster.

My ears are still ringing, but his lips are so close, I hear every word. I understood that Sir was a bad man last night. I knew he was insane and sadistic, but he just killed a man in his dining room, in the middle of the day, with people milling about everywhere. This man is deadly, and I’m now afraid of him for a whole new reason.

A woman dressed in black pants and a short-sleeved black shirt appears in the doorway. She tsks and mutters something under her breath as she lifts the guard’s feet and drags him out of the room, leaving a trail of blood as she goes. Seconds later, she returns with a mop and bucket, still muttering.

Another woman, dressed similarly, walks in with a washcloth on her hand. She’s nonplussed by my nudity as Sir steps back and allows her to wipe me down. This is surreal. Am I having a nightmare? There’s no way this is real life.

“Pinch me,” I say to her.

For the first time since she began washing me, she meets my gaze. “I’m sorry?”

“Pinch me, please.”

Uncomfortable, she glances at Sir, who shakes his head. “She thinks she’s dreaming.”

“Oh.” She folds the dirty part of the cloth over and wipes down my face, and then, without another word, she walks out. I guess Sir doesn’t get the same treatment.

“Now that that’s over, let’s enjoy our breakfast.” He motions for me to sit.

My stomach rejects that idea, bile shooting up my throat. How can he think about food when there’s blood and brains in the grout? That same blood is drying on his face as we speak, and he wants breakfast? Then there’s the fact that I am still fucking naked.

When I make no move to do as he asks, his arm falls. “I assumed you were more experienced with the way things work in my world. Neal didn’t seem like the type to hide the darker side of the business, but judging by your shocked expression, I can see I was wrong.”

“You’re asking if he ever shot anyone while I was standing naked just inches away?”

“Well, maybe not this exact scenario, but yeah.”

“Are you fucking insane or just delusional?” I explode, noting his confusion. “No, seriously, which one?”

“I don’t like your tone, Pet.” His eyes narrow, growing darker by the second.

“Join the fucking club because I don’t like *a lot* of things right now, and all of them have to do with you,” I say. Like I said, today I’m pissed.

His hands tuck into his front pockets, and he lets out an audible sigh. “This is unfortunate. I had high hopes of us enjoying a lovely breakfast and getting to know one another better, but that’s obviously not going to happen.”

“Damn straight, so why don’t you just find another guard to take me back up to my room?”

He clicks in tongue, shifting his weight from foot to foot and tapping his lower lip with a finger as he contemplates for a long minute. I don’t know if this is an act or if he’s just an

overly dramatic person. My guess is the latter since he hasn't broken character once since I met him.

"I have a better idea, one that will get us back on track." His long strides take him back to his high-back leather chair at the head of the table, where he sits. "Come, come, Pet."

Logically, I know I just dodged a bullet by screaming at an insane murderer, so how I react now will probably determine my own fate. With that in mind, I cautiously approach him.

"That's a good pet. Closer, still." He pats his thigh. Narrowing my eyes, I turn to sit but am stopped when he grabs my wrist and gives it a yank, forcing me to bend forward. He tugs harder, and before I realize what's happening, my torso is resting on his legs and my ass is in the air. "I think ten will even the score."

I struggle to move, knowing that his intention is to spank me like I'm a goddamn child. This isn't even in the same realm as when Lucky did it. That was playful, sexy, and meant to keep me in the moment. What Sir is doing is just another attempt to humiliate me into submission.

He grips both of my wrists in one of his strong hands and yanks me forward while he pins my legs between his, clamping me into position. "When will you learn that I always win?"

"I'll remind you of that when I'm putting a bullet in your brain," I grit out, blood rushing to my head.

He laughs loudly. "Many who were much smarter and stronger than you have already tried. Yet I'm still here."

I grunt, still struggling but not getting anywhere. "You don't know who I am."

"Maybe not, but I know your type. Settle down now, or I'll make it twenty." He opens a drawer under the tabletop. I don't have to wonder why for long because he lowers the object for me to see. "I find this one gives a little more impact for my especially naughty pets."

The long and narrow black leather paddle is studded with little metal spikes. I immediately stop trying to get away. Ten

swats with this will leave me bleeding and unable to sit for days. Twenty would be absolutely unbearable.

“See? It’s already having more of an impact than my words or threats.” He scratches the paddle up and down my left ass cheek. Even with the gentle touch, the spikes sting. “After each swat, I want you to count and thank me. Do you understand?”

I swallow the lump in my throat. “Yes.”

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, Sir.”

I brace myself, squeezing my eyes shut as I hear the whir of the paddle moving through the air before it strikes me. Pricks of shooting pain sear their way through my ass and up my back like little bee stings. There’s no hope in remaining silent, so I don’t even try to hold back my pained sob.

“This is the last time I’ll remind you to count,” he warns.

“One. Thank you, Sir,” I cry out.

Again, my only warning is the sound of the paddle breaking through the air before it lands on the other cheek. After the immediate sting comes a rush of warmth, like a sunburn, only worse, and all I can do is take it.

“Two. Thank you, Sir.”

He lands eight more blows, never in the same spot, covering every inch of space and ensuring I won’t forget his lesson any time soon. I’m in full-on hysterical sobs by the time he’s done and tucking the paddle back into the drawer.

“Hush, Pet. It’s all over.” He maneuvers me until I’m sitting in his lap. I’m beside myself, unable to fight back or care that he’s now trying to soothe me. “And the best part is now that you’ve taken your punishment, your transgressions will never be mentioned again. Completely forgotten in my eyes.”

I want to scream and yell and remind him that I’m not a willing partner in his twisted games, something he seems to have forgotten, but I can’t risk further torture. Now that I’ve

experienced a taste of what he's already planning to do tonight, I'll do whatever I can to make it as easy as possible on myself.

"Excuse me, Sir. Is now a good time for your breakfast?" a woman asks from behind me.

"Excellent time. Thank you." He meets my gaze. "Would you like to remain on my lap or sit next to me?"

Without answering, I get up and move to my own chair. He really is delusional if he thinks there's any part of me that wants his touch. When my ass meets the leather, I wince.

Plates are set in front of us containing fluffy scrambled eggs, a bowl of fruit, and two sausage links. I eye the gold utensils, wondering how I could hide the knife. Unless I could somehow stick it inside me without him noticing, there's no way. Maybe that's why he's keeping me naked.

"This looks delicious. Can you bring my guest a cup of coffee and a glass of juice, please?"

"Of course." The woman walks out, returning at record speed with both beverages.

"There," Sir says, placing his napkin over his lap and looking at me expectantly. I follow his lead and drape the gold-trimmed white napkin over my thighs. "Please, eat up."

I pick up my fork and stab a piece of egg. I hate that it's the best scrambled eggs I've ever had, airy and seasoned just right. Not even my upset stomach can reject such a delicious morsel. It pisses me off.

"Tell me about yourself." Sir takes a stab at a hunk of cantaloupe and places it in his mouth.

"What do you want to know?"

"Where are you from?"

"Utah."

"Ah, the Beehive State. I've spent my fair share of time in Park City. Where did you live?"

"Small town down south."

“The desert, I presume?”

“Yeah.”

He sets his fork down. “Conversations are meant to go both ways.”

“Sorry, Sir. Where are you from?”

Satisfied, he picks his fork back up. “I was born in New York, but I wouldn’t consider it my home. After age five, I was sent to different boarding schools all over the world.”

“Do you have siblings?”

“A sister and two brothers.”

“Are you close?” I’m not sure how this information will benefit me, but the more I know, the better.

“Not particularly.”

“That’s sad. I have a twin, and she’s my best friend.”

“I know. I met your twin,” he says, taking a sip of his coffee. “She’s not as special as you are.”

The way he says it as if it’s a fact grates on my nerves. “Then you didn’t spend enough time with her.”

“I beg to differ. I’m an excellent judge of character. Your sister has your beauty but not your fire. She’s a pushover and probably won’t amount to much.”

I stab the sausage with so much force it clinks against the plate. Lifting it to my mouth, I glare at him and bite off the tip. “She’s kind and caring, and she’d do anything for anyone. That makes her the best kind of person, in my opinion.”

“How far has that gotten her?”

“Further than me. She has her own apartment, she’s good at what she does and makes a good living, and she’s not trapped in a house being beaten and kept against her will.”

He chuckles. “Well, good for her, but should you give me and this place a chance, I think you’ll find it’s not as bad as you think.”

“How’s that?”

“Are you finished?” he asks, and I nod, setting my napkin on my plate. “Then let’s take a walk.”

We both stand, and he leads me out the French doors. It’s fall, so the morning air is crisp and cool, but the sun is warm. It reminds me of home, which makes me think I was right in assuming we’re somewhere near Las Vegas.

“Can I have clothes first?”

“No. Your natural form is too incredible to cover.” He leers at me, making me regret eating. I’m not above throwing up all over his expensive, blood-stained leather shoes. “Plus, it would be tragic to cover my marks on your delicious ass.”

I bite down on my tongue, stopping myself from lashing out at him. He’s the most infuriating person I’ve ever met.

We step out into the garden. It doesn’t belong with the landscape just beyond the fence line. In here, it’s lush, green, and sprinkled with vibrant flowers. Out there is brown, dead, and dry.

“This way.” He motions down a path and waits for me to pass. There’s no doubt in my mind he wants to walk behind me to admire his handiwork. I’m tempted to cover myself with my hands, but I can’t take any more violence right now.

I stop when we come across a naked woman wearing a leather belt that’s stocked with gardening tools. She’s bent over a patch of roses, snipping away at the newly budding flowers.

“There you are, Pet.” Sir moves past me and approaches the woman, who sinks to her knees and assumes the same pose as the women from last night. Wait, this can’t be. He allows his pets to roam the house and gives them tools they could use to murder him?

“Up, up,” he says, helping her to stand. He dips down to plant a kiss on her lips that she greedily accepts, not bothered at all that he’s a bloody mess.

I recognize her, and in the light of day, I’m able to take in more details. She’s a tall, white woman with black hair and a

thin frame. Her breasts are small, and her hips are narrow. She's my complete opposite.

"Thank you, Sir," she says.

"You're welcome. Please, don't let us interrupt you."

She returns to pruning, and Sir motions for me to continue. Following the path, we stop in front of a pool that looks as though it's part of the landscaping. Large red rocks line the far side, the perfect drop for the waterfall that spills over the edge and creates a grotto underneath. My eyes catch on another woman swimming laps. She's also naked, minus the green swim cap on her head.

When she notices us, she swims to the ladder and climbs out. Once on solid land, she sinks to her knees. Just like the last woman, Sir approaches her, helps her stand, and kisses her sweetly. She's a Black woman with medium-sized breasts and more curves than the last, but not quite as much of an ass as me.

"Thank you, Sir," she says with a soft smile.

"You're welcome. Please, don't let us stop you from enjoying your day." He watches as she dives off the edge, barely making a splash, before turning back to me. "As you can see, no one is in distress here. My pets are well taken care of and happy. You could be, too."

"Did they come here the same way I did?"

"They did."

"And what do you do when you're done with them?"

He boops my nose like I'm a child. "That's none of your concern."

"It is if you expect me to stay here."

"I don't expect anything of you. You will stay here because you belong to me. I'm only trying to make you see that it doesn't have to be a bad thing. My pets are spoiled and allowed to pursue their talents and interests without the pesky worry of bills or careers. You're free to do and be whatever and whoever you want."

This fool genuinely believes he's doing a good thing. He should be locked up in an institution and never allowed to see the light of day again. Glancing down at the silhouette of the woman swimming underwater, I can't deny that they seem happy and more relaxed than I've ever been, but this isn't real life. This is a fantasy created by a sick, spoiled man.

"There were four last night. Where are the other two?" I ask.

"I believe one of my pets is sleeping in." He leans in as though he's sharing a secret. "You might've seen I was rather hard on her last night. She's only been here three weeks and is still adjusting."

I think back to the one he paid extra attention to. He'd taken a thin, hard stick that made a *thwack* as it struck her breasts, stomach, buttocks, back, and legs. It left her with thin red marks that looked especially painful. Then he fitted her asshole with a contraption to stretch her wide before bending her over a bench and paddling her.

She was the finale of the night as Sir pounded into her ass until he erupted in an orgasm worthy of his over-the-top personality and came inside her. He then held a cup under her to capture his seed as she pushed it from her body before holding it to each woman's lips for a sip.

I wanted to barf.

"And the other?"

His expression falters, and he chooses his words carefully. "She wasn't as special as you, so I sent her to pursue other ventures."

"Is that code for you killed her the way you killed that man?"

"I told you. It's none of your business." He nods to a guard who's standing off to the side. "Take my pet back to her room. I've given her a lot to think about."

"Just tell me," I say. "Is she dead? Did you sell her off to someone else?"

“Go to your room.”

“Not until you tell me.” I need to know what’ll happen to me if I survive this funhouse. Assuming there is no escape and I’m forced to play with flowers during the day and suffer his abuse at night, I have to know what’ll happen next.

“You want me to say that she’s rotting in the middle of the desert being picked over by wild animals? Fine. She is, but it doesn’t matter because she was nothing before me, and now she’s nothing after me. I was the only happiness she’ll ever have. Just like I’ll be the only happiness you’ll ever have. *If* you let me be.” He waves a hand through the air. “Or not. Then you can go back to being nothing.”

“You’re wrong,” I say in a low voice. “I was happy. Lucky made me happy.”

I glance up at the guard who leads me back to my shitty room with my shitty bed. Curling up in the blanket, I feel hopeless and sad.

I wish I had known that the last day I was with Lucky would be my last. I wouldn’t have corrected myself when I almost told him I loved him.

Now, he’ll never know.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

LUCKY



It's evening by the time we close in on Jeremiah's property. We could've been here a couple hours ago, but this kind of thing is best done in the dark, so we hid out at our Vegas brothers' clubhouse to pass the time.

We stop five miles out at a rundown storage facility whose owner is a friend of the Vegas chapter. Dutch jumps off his bike and kicks the guy a grand to rent a large unit for a few hours to park our bikes in. Jeremiah and his men would hear us coming a mile away if we pulled up there on our bikes, and this needed to be a sneak attack if we had any hope of saving her.

We fill half the unit with our bikes before Tigger backs the van in next to us. Rigger tugs on the rope hanging from the pull-down door and closes us in away prying eyes. There isn't much this far from the lights of Vegas, but we can't be too careful.

"Here are your weapons, boys," I say, opening the back of the van.

I stored everything from Glocks to long guns in hidden compartments on either side of the back of the van. Pulling out a small toolbox, I remove a couple stun grenades, offering those up as well. My brothers choose their weapons, making sure they have enough ammo.

"I can disable the cameras, but they'll notice right away and be on alert, so I'll wait to do that until you get close," Satyr says, sitting down on the concrete floor and powering up

his laptop. “Anyone want to take another look at the layout before you leave?”

“Raunchy and the Vegas crew are here.” Cy holds up his phone just as we hear the rumbling of more bikes. They left their clubhouse a few minutes after us so we didn’t grab the attention of any local law enforcement. We also left our cuts at their place so the most description anyone would have is a bunch of bikers. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of motorcycle clubs in the area, so that description is basically useless.

Raunchy takes a deep inhale. “Smells like a good day for trouble.”

“You ready, brother?” Shotgun asks Cy.

“Satyr, bring your laptop over,” Cy says.

Satyr walks over to the front of the van, showing them a picture of Jeremiah and the layout of the house, filling them in on what little we know about their security.

“Do you know where she is?” Disciple asks.

“No, so we’ll either be doin’ a full sweep or, better yet, find Jeremiah and cut his fingers off until he cracks.” Riot sheathes his fixed blade at his hip, sounding almost excited about the prospect of cutting through bone.

I know he’s pissed we’re sticking our necks out for Tinleigh, but once the decision was made, he tucked it away and stepped up to be here, the same way we all would for him.

“Sounds like a party.” Eazy claps his leather-gloved hands together.

“Pull on out, and we’ll get the rest of the bikes in here,” I say to Tigger.

Once the Vegas crews’ bikes are hidden, Mustang closes the roll-up door, shutting our bikes and Satyr inside. He’ll stay back to protect our shit and fix any tech problems we might run into.

“Let’s go,” I say, climbing into the back of the van. My brothers pile in after me until there’s not an inch of free space.

“You better not fart, Sweets,” Raunchy says once Tigger pulls out onto the road.

“Too late. You know I get stress gas.”

Everyone bursts out in laughter and horrified gasps as the smell of ass fills the van.

“Goddamn it,” Golden says. “Unroll the fuckin’ windows.”

Tigger and Cy, the only two not back here, quickly press the buttons to let in some fresh air.

“Sorry,” Sweets says through a bubble of laughter.

The lighthearted joking is exactly what I needed right now. Every muscle in my body has been tense to the point of pain since yesterday, and the distraction of having them here, knowing I’ll at least have more information by the time this is done, is helping to relax me.

Ten minutes later, we pull up to an iron gate that’s manned by one guard, and everyone goes silent.

“Hey, do you know where Sapphire Court is?” Tigger yells out to the guard.

“Not here. Turn around and go back out the way you came,” the man in the small booth says.

“Aw, come on, bro. I’m supposed to install some solar panels. Can you look at this map and show me where I’m at?” Tigger is young and, with his red hair and freckles, looks innocent and harmless as fuck.

The guy curses but walks over, taking Tigger’s phone. “You’re not even—”

“Hand over your gun and my phone.”

His eyes widen when he looks up from the phone to see the barrel of a gun pointed at his head. “I can’t do that.”

“Why not?”

“I’m dead either way.” With the speed of a professional, he reaches for his holster, but Tigger’s bullet reaches him right

between the eyes first.

“So far, this is going swimmingly,” Raunchy says, making everyone chuckle.

“Now, how do we get through the gate?” Rigger asks.

“You got a drill?” Eazy asks.

“Yeah. Right here.” I reach into the toolbox and pull out a small cordless drill.

“Allow me.” Eazy crackles his knuckles, takes the drill, and climbs over everyone to get to the back door of the van. He pops it open and walks over to an electrical box. Opening the door, he drills a hole into something and pulls a latch open. Then he walks over to the sliding gate and gives it a push, opening it right up.

“That’s why we call him Eazy. He makes everything look easy,” Disciple says.

“Let’s go.” Eazy hops back in the van but doesn’t bother closing the door. It’ll save us precious seconds when we get up the driveway and rush the house.

I shoot Satyr a quick message, giving him the go-ahead to shut down the cameras. He replies with a thumbs up, and I store my phone away before reaching for my Glock.

The mansion is more absurd in person than on the computer screen. Jeremiah must be trying to make up for something in his life because this place screams insecurity. The stucco boxy mansion is massive, and the landscapers didn’t lean into the desert vibe at all. In fact, they went tropical, which makes the whole property look out of place and gaudy.

We file out, pairing off and going every which way to find the guards before they find us. Rigger and I take the front entrance, Riot and Dutch following since there’s a higher probability of running into problems from that door.

The guard standing just inside the front door is quick to raise his hands in the air and surrender, as are two of the domestic staff buffing the white tile floors. We pat them down,

strip the guard of his weapons and radio, and make sure the other two aren't armed.

The inside of this place assaults all my senses. The douche made this place as miserable as possible with a sterile bleach scent, stark white walls and tile with gold detailing, and an extremely cold temperature.

Dutch and Riot walk the three outside, where they'll sit on the front steps with zip ties around their wrists and ankles. Meanwhile, Rigger and I slowly work our way through the house, clearing rooms as we go. Footsteps pounding on the tile put us on alert, so we dive into rooms on either side of the hallway and wait until they get closer.

I peer around the doorway out with my gun aimed forward, spotting two guards. They're ready for me and fire first. I duck back in, narrowly avoiding my head being blown off. Sweat beads on my forehead as Rigger holds up three fingers. He counts down, and at one, we both lean out of our doorways and fire. Rigger hits the guy on the left in the shoulder, and I nail the one on the right in the leg. We aren't going for kill shots; we need their intel.

My guy drops to the ground, screaming, and his gun goes skidding across the floor. Rigger's guy returns fire with his left hand, but he obviously hasn't done training with that hand, so his shots are all over the place. Rigger fires again, sending a bullet into the other shoulder. His gun falls to the ground with a *clink* before he goes down completely.

We collect the guns, tucking them away before pulling out a couple more pairs of zip-tie cuffs and getting the two injured men secured.

"Where's Jeremiah?" I ask.

"We don't keep track of his every move," Rigger's guy says through gritted teeth. Both his wounds are through and throughs, so he'll live. "You have to call an ambulance; he's bleeding out."

I note the pool of blood under my guy's leg. Kneeling in front of him, I undo his belt and pull it free from his pant

loops. “This should stop the bleeding long enough for us to get out of here, but only if you tell us where your boss is.”

His nostrils flare as he debates. Jeremiah must run a tight ship if he isn’t immediately choosing his life over giving his boss up.

I note the gold band on his finger. “Your wife okay with you dying?”

“I’m dead either way,” he says, his chest heaving.

“That’s the second time I’ve heard that tonight.” I press the tip of my gun into the bullet wound on his thigh, making him cry out. “At least with my option, you have a chance. You can pack your wife up, kids if you got ’em, and run. Or you can bleed out right here and now. Up to you.”

“He’s downstairs,” Rigger’s guy spits out.

Even though he’s not the one who spilled the intel, I still slip the belt above the wound and cinch it tight. These guys don’t deserve to go down for doing their job.

“Thank you,” he says.

I nod. “I’m looking for my girl. She’s short, has blond hair with pink streaks, runs her mouth a lot. You seen her?”

He glances at Rigger’s guy, then back at me. “She come in yesterday?”

Hope blooms in my chest. “Yeah. Where she at?”

“Downstairs with him,” he says, but there’s something in his expression that makes me uneasy.

“What aren’t you telling me?”

“There are three more girls down there,” Rigger’s guy says.

“What’s he doing with them?”

My guy winces. “I’ll tell you, but you have to promise not to shoot me again.”

I tuck my gun away. “What?”

“He’s into some pretty kinky shit. Like S and M, chains and whips, that kind of thing. Your girl just got here, so she’s okay, but the other three? They’ve been here so long they think they’re in love with the guy. It’s wild.”

“Is he armed?” Rigger asks.

“He’s always armed, and there’s a guard outside the door,” Rigger’s guy says.

“Thanks.” I stand, pulling my gun back out.

“What about my leg?”

“I’ll make sure you get out of here before we leave,” I say, already walking back from where we came. There was a staircase going down from the foyer, so I’m assuming that’s where we need to go.

“I can take the guard outside the door. You go in and get your girl.” Rigger takes the lead, but when we reach the foyer, Riot and Dutch are standing near the stairs with a female guard who’s already cuffed.

“She told us your girl’s down there.” Dutch points. “Thought we’d wait for you to go down.”

There’s a commotion coming from the front door, and we turn to see Cy with Raunchy’s arm over his shoulders, helping him walk.

“What the fuck happened?” Rigger asks.

“Just a graze,” Raunchy says, lifting his pant leg to show us the good bit of skin and flesh missing from his outer calf. “Don’t worry. I got the asshole back by shooting him in the ass when he tried to run away. This fucker must be confident his money will keep him safe because these guards ain’t worth shit.”

“Shit. We better end this now.” I walk over to the staircase with Rigger close behind. We creep slowly down, listening for anything that could tell us what to expect, but it’s silent. Surely, Jeremiah knows his house is being overrun. The gunshots echoed loudly throughout the whole house.

There's a hallway to the left and one to the right, and right in front of us is a red door. Instinctually, I know she's in there the same way I always know when Tinleigh is close by. My body heats, and I feel an awareness, a physical reaction I haven't experienced with anyone else.

"Let me this time." Rigger stops me just before I kick in the door.

Adrenaline has my heart pounding as he rears back and sends his foot into the door. The wooden frame splits, and the door flies open. I walk through first but instantly freeze when I see what's before me.

The deep red room lit only by a few candles and lights on the wall or the crazy implements and furniture I know well from hours of watching porn and a little personal experience, isn't what makes me stop short. None of that is a blip on my radar. It's the nearly naked woman with crazy eyes holding a gun to Tinleigh's head at the far end of the room that has my asshole clenching.

Our eyes meet as I assess Tinleigh from head to toe. She might as well be naked since all she has on are crotchless red leather panties and a matching corset that frames the underside of her breasts and the center of her chest but provides no cover. Her hands are trembling at her sides, and her eyes are impossibly wide.

My focus snaps to the corner of the room when a man says, "Nice of you to join us."

I hadn't noticed him before now, my attention laser-focused on Tinleigh, but the motherfucker has all of my attention now. Sitting on a chair fit for a king with two more naked women on his lap is Jeremiah, looking completely unbothered.

Shit.

CHAPTER THIRTY

TINLEIGH



Sir was just getting started, first allowing the white woman from earlier to stand and participate, when we heard gunshots from upstairs. He left us and ran to the door, a female guard telling him to stay inside the room while she checked it out.

She never returned, but the gunfire picked up again. Sir tried to use a two-way radio that was sitting on a charger near the entrance to the room, but no one responded. I had a feeling it was the Sons, more specifically Lucky, coming to rescue me.

When there continued to be no communication from his men, Sir moved on to another plan.

“Take this, Pet.” Sir hands a gun to the woman he intended to play with. “It’s up to you to protect our family. Can you do that for me?”

She gazes up at him with pure admiration and accepts the weapon. “I’m honored to have earned your trust, Sir.”

“You have.” He walks over and unhooks the leash connected to my collar before pulling me over to her. “They’re coming for her, so the only way to protect us is to threaten to take away the very thing they came for.”

Positioning me in front of her, he lifts the hand holding the gun and presses the barrel to my temple. The cold steel strikes a whole new level of fear in me. I had already been petrified to face Sir tonight, but now, I can barely even breathe.

“There you go. Just like that. If they look like they’ll shoot, I want you to kill her.”

“But she’s your pet. I can’t hurt what’s yours,” she replies.

“You can if it means saving my life, can’t you?”

She widens her stance and grips my hip. “Of course, Sir.”

“What a good pet you are.”

I hear him unhook the other two women. I’m not sure what he does next, but I know he moves to the corner of the room because that’s where his voice comes from next. “This should be fun.”

Now, the very man I’ve been longing to see is standing in front of me, his own gun aimed at the woman behind me. I look him up and down, making sure he’s unharmed from all the shots I heard.

Unkempt beard and untrimmed mustache. *Check.*

Hair slicked back into a man-bun. *Check.*

Plain white tee stretched across overly large muscles. *Check.*

Grease-stained jeans with holes in the knees that hug his tapered hips and tree-trunk thighs. *Check.*

He’s just how I left him, and I breathe a sigh of relief.

“No one has to get hurt. Just give me Tinleigh, and we’ll be on our way.” With those words, Lucky makes his first mistake. You can’t rationalize with an irrational man.

“You think I’ll just hand over one of my pets?” Sir asks, sounding amused.

“Pets? Shit, man, you’ve lost your damn mind,” Rigger chimes in.

Lucky shoots him a glare over his shoulder before refocusing on Sir. “There’s no getting out of this. Your men are all in our custody. You have no way out.”

“That’s not the way I see it because, as you may have noticed, I possess Tinleigh. She’s my ticket out. And since I’m fairly certain you’ll do whatever it takes to keep her alive, I’m secure in my ability to leave and keep myself alive.”

Lucky's dark eyes dart to me before returning to Sir. It was the briefest glance, but I saw what he's trying to hide. He's scared. The man who's stupidly confident to the point that it's a miracle he's still alive is scared, and knowing that has my lower lip quivering.

"I don't know. I'm pretty sure my bullet could hit the bitch with the gun and his could nail you between the eyes before you even have a chance to react," Rigger says.

"If you truly believe that, you would've done it already."

I see the wheels in Lucky's head spinning as he tries to work this out. If we're going to get out of this, it'll be because he talks our way out. Lucky's nothing if not a bullshitter, but I might be able to help.

"This is my boyfriend," I say to the gun-wielding woman. "He loves me."

Lucky's eyes soften just a fraction. I'm putting words into his mouth, but I read somewhere that in situations like these, it's best to humanize yourself.

"Sir loves *me*," she bites out.

"With all I am," Sir says.

I roll my eyes. "This isn't love. Locking you up in this house, not allowing you to see your friends or family, forcing you to be in this room every night isn't love."

"Sir is my family. He took me from off the streets. He brought me to this house where I'm fed, given a beautiful home to live in, and have free time to do whatever I want."

I vaguely see her point. If Sir had taken me before I met Lucky, I can see how easy it'd be to fall in line here and genuinely believe I'm better off. There's no question this place is superior to being under Neal's thumb.

"A gilded cage is still a cage," I say.

"I'm happy, and I'd rather die than go back to my life before him." The steel drives harder into my temple.

“You have other options. It’s not this or living on the streets.”

“For me, it is.”

“I used to think that too. Men have taken advantage of me my whole life. I assumed that was just the way it was because I never knew anything different.” I lock gazes with Lucky, talking to him now. “Then I met that big lug over there, and he gave me my life back. While he made it crystal clear he wanted me, what he wanted more was for me to be happy, and he would’ve made that happen even if I hadn’t chosen him. That’s what someone does when they truly, honestly love you.” I smile softly as a tear streaks down my cheek. “I’m pissed it took a man to help me realize that. I should’ve figured it out on my own.”

“Don’t listen to her nonsense.” Sir’s voice nears, telling me he’s on the move. “This man works at a brothel, and when he’s not selling women’s bodies, he’s working on cars. He lives in a disgustingly small cabin that barely has running water. This perfect picture she’s painting is a lie.”

If Lucky’s surprised he knows all that, he doesn’t show it.

“Context matters, asshole. I’m a part-owner of the brothel and the women who work there choose to be there. They’re paid well, giving them the opportunity to travel, own their own homes and cars, and go to school if they want. The point is, it’s their choice. I work on cars because I love it, not because I have to. And I live in that cabin because it’s where my brothers live, and family is important, even if that family doesn’t share your blood.”

Sir’s responding chuckle is condescending. “Yet none of that could ever measure up to this.”

The sound of chains clinking together fills the room, leaving me to believe Sir is doing something with the other two pets.

“Pet, eat her ass while she sucks my cock,” he says.

Rigger and Lucky’s mouths gape while I purse my lips and close my eyes. Sir’s blatant audacity pisses me the hell off.

This whole situation is just another dramatic display of a spoiled child.

Real men don't need power and control because loyalty and family will win every time.

The woman behind me pivots us just enough so I can witness what's happening next to me. Sir has his own gun pointed at Lucky while one of his pets is on her knees in front of him, clawing at his belt. The other is on the ground with her face buried between the ass cheeks of the first.

Sir's cock is hard when she releases him from his underwear, and she greedily sucks him down, making obscene slurping noises and moaning loudly. I don't know why, but it embarrasses me that Lucky's witnessing this. He must be thinking the worst, judging by my lack of clothes and Sir's display.

When I glance at him through my periphery, though, he's not watching the performance at all. He's focused on something directly behind me. I look over my shoulder and furrow my brow, seeing nothing. Then it hits me. He noticed my wounded butt.

"I'm fine," I say.

"The hell you are." His nostrils flare as he jerks his head over to Sir. "You think this impresses me?"

"I do," Sir says. "And had you not interrupted, it would've been my newest pet on her knees begging to suck me dry."

If I don't end this soon, someone will make a mistake. If Lucky or even Rigger gets hurt because of me, I couldn't live with myself. It's my fault we're in this mess, and it should be me who gets us out.

Taking a calming breath, I form a plan. I have to move fast and be precise, or this will blow up in my face. Clenching my hands into fists and straightening them out again, I work out the shakes that just started. This isn't the time for nerves to get the better of me.

Three, two, one. Here goes everything.

In one fluid motion, I throw my elbow back into the woman's gut. When she doubles over, I swing my right arm over her outstretched one holding the gun. Pinching her arm between mine and my body, I wrap my hands around hers, my right finger covering her own and pressing the trigger.

There's no time to aim, and even if I did, I've never fired a gun before, so it would probably be a wasted effort anyway. Time slows as my eyes squeeze shut, the kickback from the gun sending me off balance and knocking me and the woman over.

Everything moves quickly after that. Screams sound as I struggle to gain control of the gun from the woman who's doing everything in her power to keep it from me. I don't have time to worry about whether my bullet did its job because she swings her arm forward, hitting me in the head from behind with the butt of the gun. I'm dazed for a split second before I pin her arm to the ground and twist my body to face her. Straddling her hips, I slam her hand to the ground over and over until she releases the gun, but it's not over, because she's strong and ready to fight.

"Freeze," a deep voice commands from behind me. In my focus on the woman, it doesn't register who it belongs to.

Her eyes go wide, and her body goes limp. I climb off her, every part of me shaking uncontrollably. An arm slips around my waist, and I cry out, fighting to get away.

"Shh, Tinleigh. It's me. You're okay." Lucky turns me in his arms, and I take a deep inhale of his unmistakable scent. No matter if he's been at the Garage that day or not, he always smells of motor oil and spice. It's something I've associated with safety, and my knees buckle.

He catches me, lifting me in his arms. I break apart at the seams, clinging to him with everything I have in me as I sob into his neck. I hear his thick swallow as he presses his cheek to mine, his wiry beard scratching my skin.

"You did it. You got him," he whispers in my ear. "And I got you."

“I did?” I croak, lifting my head.

He turns us to face the grizzly scene. Sir is on his back, his deflated cock resting on his hip. A bullet wound is a few inches above his belly button with a steady stream of blood oozing out, and two of his pets are bent over him and frantic, pleading for help. The other is being held at gunpoint by Dutch, who must’ve come in after he heard the gunshot. Riot’s here now, too. He steps over Sir and the women, picking up the two discarded guns.

I take one final look at the bastard who deserves far more than a bullet but I accept it’s all the closure I’ll get. Contemplating what I could’ve done differently so he’d be alive to suffer the way I want him to would only be giving him more of my time, and I’ll be damned if I give him any more of myself.

Tensing, I gasp. “Myla?”

“She’s okay. Hurt, but okay. Bones and Sugar are taking good care of her,” Lucky assures me, and I relax back into him.

“What do I do with them?” Rigger asks.

“Give them the opportunity to come with us. If they refuse, leave ’em.” Lucky shifts me in his arms, getting a better hold. “I’m getting her out of here.”

“You sure?” he asks.

He looks at me, and I nod. “At least give them the choice.”

“All right.” Rigger scratches the back of his neck. “We’ll be up in a minute.”

We make it to the stairs before Lucky stops. “Oh, don’t forget to cut the cuffs off the guys upstairs.”

“Yeah, yeah.” He waves us off. “I got this. Go take care of your girl.”

Once upstairs, Lucky turns in circles, looking for something. “There have to be some clothes somewhere.”

“I don’t know where.”

“Here, brother.” A man I don’t recognize places a white linen tablecloth over me.

“Thanks.”

We move outside into the chilly night air, and I feel awkward, unsure of what to say or do. He just witnessed my biggest shame, and I’m not sure he’ll ever look at me the same.

“Let’s get you into the van,” he says, walking up to the same van I stole two days ago. Has it only been two days? It feels like a lifetime. “Can you get up there on your own?”

I nod, and he sets me down, seeming to avoid looking at me. I was right; nothing will be the same after this. Pulling at the cloth, I wrap it tightly around my body as I awkwardly place a foot on the rear bumper. But before I can push up and get in, I’m stopped by a hand around my arm.

“Wait,” he says. Without saying another word, he begins working on the collar around my throat. The leather loosens, and he removes it and the leash from me. I look over my shoulder in time to see him chuck it away with determined force.

“This too, please,” I whisper, lowering the fabric covering my back. The corset is so tight it’s hard to get a full breath, and the boning keeping my breasts in place is digging painfully into my skin.

With deft fingers, he releases the hook and eye closures one by one until he reaches the end, then that’s pulled off me and tossed aside as well.

“These too?” he asks, tracing along the top of the uncomfortable leather crotchless panties.

“Mm-hmm.” I don’t trust myself to say anything without falling apart again.

My face burns with shame. I bite into my bottom lip hard enough to draw blood when his rough hands reach under the linen and settle on my hips. He crouches, and one hand tugs down the panties while the other lightly skims over the top of my bottom, where the wounds from the paddle begin.

“He did that?”

“Yeah,” I whisper.

He stands, and I step up onto the rear bumper, but strong arms wrap around my middle and stop me from moving forward. His lips press into the crook of my neck and stay there. I fold my arms on top of his, gripping his strong forearms.

His warm breaths heat my skin as he clings to me for dear life, needing this as much as I do. I turn my head and press a kiss to his forehead.

“I can’t let go,” he says, choking back emotion. “I was so fuckin’ worried I’d never get you back.”

“I don’t want you to let go.”

“Good.”

“Except you need to because we’re gonna have to take two trips to get everyone back,” Cy says, interrupting the moment. “We need to get a move on. A few of the guards need medical attention, and I’d rather be on our way by the time the ambulances show.”

“Yeah, okay.” Lucky presses a series of kisses up my neck and across my shoulder before releasing me. “I’m right behind you.”

I climb in, but before I can decide on where to sit, Lucky is pulling me onto his lap and caging me in with those strong arms. I watch as Cy helps a man with a blood-soaked pant leg get in after us. Once he’s seated, six more men follow. I recognize Golden and Mustang but not the other four.

“The one who got himself shot is Raunchy,” Lucky says into my ear as Tigger starts the van and Cy climbs into the passenger seat. “These other four are Sweets, Eazy, Disciple, and Shotgun. They’re part of the Vegas Sons.”

“Glad you made it out.” Raunchy flashes me a wink as the other four give me a chin lift.

“Thanks, and thanks for helping in there too.” Words aren’t nearly enough, but for now, it’s all I have.

“No thanks necessary. Your jolly giant has helped me out of a pickle a time or two,” he says. I thought I heard an Australian accent with his previous words, but now I’m certain.

“Only one of the girls will leave,” Cy says to no one in particular. “Dutch took her to find some clothes and will bring her back when Tigger makes another trip.”

I wonder which one it was. All three were so devoted. And I wonder what the other two will do. With Sir dead, there’s no reason to stay. It makes no sense. They were given the opportunity of a lifetime to come back with us. There’s no doubt in my mind that the club would’ve gotten them on their feet.

“Did you guys see the size of the pool in the backyard?” Mustang says, resting his head on the side of the van. “That should be the next addition to the compound. Imagine the pool parties we could have.”

“You’re just thinking about what Jenson would look like in a speedo,” Golden says.

“Hell yeah, I am.”

Lucky’s chest vibrates against my back, and I close my eyes and smile, soaking up the fact that I’m back where I belong.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

LUCKY



My mind can't even wrap itself around what just happened as I hold Tinleigh tight and wait for Tigger to return. It was fucking wild. I'm itching to talk about it and drill her with questions about what he did to her, but I know it's not the time.

"I think it's best you guys crash at our place tonight. It's been quite a night, and it's late," Raunchy says.

"Yeah, you're probably right," Cy agrees, pulling out his phone. "Better call Char."

He walks outside for privacy even though we all know Char will lose her shit on him. She put a ban on overnights for the old man a long time ago. I've been known to poke fun at him over it, but now that I have Tinleigh, I'm thinking about adopting that rule myself.

No, not thinking, implementing. There will be no more nights apart.

"Are you okay?" I ask.

"Yeah. Just tired and a little worried." She yawns.

"Why are you worried?"

"What will happen when the paramedics show up? Don't they have to report a gunshot wound? Then the cops will get called, and they'll find the body." She goes rigid in my arms.

"You don't have to worry about any of that. Satyr wiped all the cameras, and the guys are taking care of the rest."

“What do you mean? My fingerprints could be all over that place.”

I rub circles against her back, wishing I had some clothes to put on her. If there’s nothing at Raunchy’s clubhouse that she can have, I’ll make a run to the store.

“I’m telling you, you don’t need to worry. They’ll handle it.”

She jumps when a big boom goes off, and we see an explosion in the distance. My brothers take that as a sign to ready themselves and get the fuck out, so they hop on their bikes. Seconds later, the van comes barreling back down the road, tires screeching as it pulls into the storage facility.

Everything happens quickly after that. Once the back of the van is emptied of everyone except a woman now dressed in man’s clothing, I help Tinleigh in, promising I’ll be right behind her. She looks uneasy when I close the doors and pound on the back, telling Tigger to go. I hate separating from her so soon, but she’s in no position to ride on the back of my bike.

We peel out of the facility, Raunchy’s crew taking a different route than us. No laws are broken when we hit the city streets, and we don’t give the cops any reason to pull us over. Our guns are less than legal, but we didn’t have time to secure them, so we’re all still packing.

Thankfully, Vegas never sleeps, and a group of bikers isn’t all that uncommon. We pull into the Vegas clubhouse a half-hour later without incident, and other than Raunchy’s leg, I’d say we did a pretty damn good job. That bastard Jeremiah is dead, and his house is nothing but a five-alarm fire, destroying all evidence of us ever being there.

It takes about an hour for everyone to find somewhere to pass out for the night. Cy puts Dutch in charge of the woman who refuses to give her name, so we start calling her Pet since that’s all we’ve heard her addressed as. None of us trust her, and until we figure out what to do with her, he’ll be keeping an eye on her.

Thankfully, Raunchy gave Tinleigh and me a spare room with an attached bathroom so we could have some privacy. The rest of my brothers are occupying sofas and floors, except Riot, who's sleeping in the van. Anti-social motherfucker.

"This okay?" I ask when we walk into the bare-bones room. There's a mattress on the floor with folded linens on top and a nightstand with a lamp, but that's it.

She wraps her arms around her, still only covered by what I think is a tablecloth. Raunchy gathered up a pair of sweatpants and a sweatshirt, and one of the club whores had a pair of tennis shoes in her car that she donated to the cause, but she hasn't put them on yet.

Walking over to the mattress, I spread out the flat sheet before tossing a blanket on top. It'll do for tonight. Realizing she still hasn't answered, I glance over at her. "Tinny?"

She blinks rapidly, coming out of the trance she was in. "Yeah?"

"This okay? You need anything else? Maybe something to eat?"

"No. I'm not hungry."

"What's up?"

"The mattress on the ground. That's what I slept on last night. It had dark stains all over it, and I kept wondering what they were from and who slept there before me." She shakes her head. "I'm fine."

"I can get us a hotel for the night. We don't have to stay here," I say.

"No, really. It's fine."

I'm not so sure it is, but I take her word for it. I'm still wired up, so if it comes down to it, I can take us home tonight, though the dark circles under her eyes tell me she needs some sleep before she can ride.

"Is it okay if I take a shower?"

"Do whatever you need," I say.

I know it'll take time to get back to where we were. She's been through hell, and I can't expect everything to be normal, but there's a river between us right now and I fucking hate it.

"Ask," she says.

I plug a charger into the wall and connect it to my cell. "Ask what?"

She pins me with a look. "I know you want to, so just ask."

"I'm not asking shit." I walk over and cradle her face in my hands. "I'll wait until you're ready to tell me."

"What if I never want to tell you any of it?"

My heart sinks in my chest that she wouldn't trust me enough to help her through this. "Then I guess I'll never know."

"What if I want to tell you all of it right now?"

I brush a hand over her head, taming her wild hair. "Then I'm listening."

She chews on the inside of her cheek, her foot tapping a fast beat as she thinks about what she wants. On the inside, I'm pleading with her to let me in. It's the only way to bridge the gap between us, but on the outside, I wait patiently, taking her hands in mine.

Only one of the acrylic nails she still had from her dancing days remains. A couple weeks ago, I told her I'd take her to get them done or off or whatever, but she had no interest in it. Instead, when one came loose, she just plucked it off and moved on. She had three remaining the last time I saw her.

"Take a shower with me?" she asks.

"Yeah, I'd like that."

I follow her into the bathroom and close the door in case someone comes looking for me. She opens the shower and starts the water, holding her hand under the spray until she's satisfied with the temperature. Then she drops the linen and steps inside, leaving the door open for me.

Rage bubbles to the surface when I spot the wounds covering her backside. It doesn't take a genius to know how they got there. Instead of speculating on what else he did to her, I strip and join her.

She gives me room to step under the spray and get wet, but then I position her in front of it, not wanting her to get cold. She's quiet as I squirt shampoo into my palm and work it into her hair, giving her a scalp massage to try and relax her. I don't know what I'm doing since I've never washed anyone's hair but my own, but I think I do okay.

Turning, she rinses it out, the suds moving down her body. I can't help but have a physical reaction to her sexy-as-sin body, but we both ignore it. Finally, as I'm working conditioner through her hair, she breaks the silence.

For the next half hour, she tells me everything. We take turns under the water, her rinsing conditioner while I wash my hair, me rinsing my hair while she soaps up her body, and so on. We don't touch, which I'm thankful for, because when she gets to the part where he spanked her with a spiked paddle, she'd no doubt feel the fury burning in my blood.

"The thing that bothers me the most is that if I hadn't met you, I know I would've willingly stayed with him. I would've been better off there than with Neal, and that makes me sad." Her pained, red eyes look up and practically beg me to say something, anything to make her feel better, but what can I say?

"A lot of people have tried to convince you that you're nothing, because they knew if you figured out how special you were, you'd leave them, and that scared the shit out of them. That church asshole, your parents, Neal, fuckin' Jeremiah... They all saw that your potential was so much bigger than what they had to offer."

"Jeremiah?"

"He didn't tell you his name?"

"No, he made us call him Sir."

“Fuck that shit. I never want to hear that word come from your lips again.”

“I never want to say it again.” She stares off into the distance for a minute before coming back to me. “And what about you?”

“What about me?” I turn off the water that’s starting to run cold before reaching for a towel and wrapping it around her.

“You said all those people saw that my potential was more than they could offer me. What about you?”

I blow out a breath. “You’re so far out of my league, it ain’t even fuckin’ funny. The difference is I don’t want to hold you back. I just want to be by your side as you unleash your Hellcat ways on the world.”

“I am not out of your league.” She smiles a real smile for the first time tonight.

“I’m glad you think that because you’re stuck with me.” I wrap a towel around my waist, and we step out of the shower.

“I didn’t think I’d ever see you again.” Her voice breaks, and she rubs the heel of her palm over her chest.

“Gotta be honest, I was a little worried myself.” I lift her by the hips and set her on the vanity. “I don’t know if you’ve noticed this about me or not, but I’m a little bit stubborn.”

She gasps. “You are?”

“And I like getting my way.”

“You don’t say.”

My tone turns serious. “I’ll always find you and bring you back to me. Always. There are no lengths I wouldn’t go, no mountains I wouldn’t climb.”

A tear runs down her cheek. “Deep down, I knew that. I was just scared.”

“Me too.” Deciding we don’t need any more seriousness tonight, I say, “It won’t happen ever again, though, because you know how some conjoined twins can choose to be separated?”

Her brows knit together. “Yeah?”

“Well, we’re having the opposite done. I’m finding a doctor to surgically attach us together.”

She shoves my chest. “You’re an idiot.”

“And if I can’t find someone to do that, then I’m just never letting you out of my sight again.”

“You have to work.”

“You’re coming with. I’ll teach you all about carburetors and spark plugs. You’ll love it.”

She smiles. “What about the ranch?”

“Oh, you’re for sure coming with me to the Honey Pot. We have this galaxy room where I can plant an alien egg in your ass.”

A bubble of laughter escapes her, surprising us both. “What?”

“I’ll show you. It’ll be fun.”

“What about if I want to work?” she asks.

“I already told you you’ll work with me.”

There’s something she’s been thinking about that she hasn’t told me. This line of questioning isn’t coming from nowhere.

“I have no interest in carburetors and alien eggs.”

“I think you’re dismissing the alien stuff too soon, but what are you interested in?”

“I was thinking about getting a cosmetology license so I can be a hairstylist or maybe even a makeup artist.” She suddenly finds the wall behind me fascinating because she focuses her blue eyes over my shoulder. “But it’s a dumb idea, and I probably wouldn’t be any good at it anyway.”

“You should do it.”

Her eyes snap to mine. “You think?”

“Hell yeah. I’ll go to class with you and be your model.” I bat my lashes.

“You’re really rolling with this idea of never letting me out of your sight.”

I place my hands on her knees and give her some honesty. “I will. Just give me some time, okay? I wasn’t okay while you were gone, and I just need some time.”

“Okay. I can give you all the time you need.” She yawns, which makes me yawn.

“Let’s get some sleep.” I help her off the vanity, and she grabs another towel before following me into the bedroom. She takes her time towel-drying her hair and brushing through the tangles with her fingers while I pull mine up into a bun on the top of my head and secure it with an elastic.

Dropping my towel, I regret not wearing underwear for once and quickly get into bed. I feel entitled to her time, her thoughts and opinions, being part of her future, but I’ll never feel entitled to her body. Too many men in her life have stripped her of her bodily autonomy, but that’s not me. Never fucking me.

“There are some sweats over there. Not sure who they belonged to, but they’re clean,” I say.

“I’ll wear them tomorrow.” She picks up the black sweatpants and tan sweatshirt with the Sons of Erebus emblazoned on the back. “Guess I’m free-balling it tomorrow like my boyfriend.”

My brows lift. “You grow a pair I don’t know about? I’m pretty sure I’ve inspected the area closely enough that I’d notice.”

She laughs. “You definitely have.”

Her towel falls to the floor, and she settles under the covers next to me, but it’s not enough. I chop the blanket down between us as a barrier so she doesn’t think I’m wanting more than to be close and pull her into me. She lifts her head, and I snake my arm under it until I’m spooning her.

“Your boyfriend, huh?”

“It’s what you are, isn’t it?”

“Baby, I’ll be anything you allow me to be. Your boyfriend, your husband, your ol’ man.”

“Ew, that makes it sound like you want to be my dad.”

“Yeah, that didn’t come out how I meant it.” I chuckle.

“I know what you mean.”

“Good.” I kiss the top of her head. “Get some sleep. We have a long ride home tomorrow.”

“Home,” she says reverently.

“Our home.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

TINLEIGH



A hand wraps around my ankle, and I'm pulled from the mattress with a rough tug. The room is dark, so I can't see who the shadowy figure standing in front of me is. I scream, grasping for Lucky, but he's not there.

"Quiet, Pet. You wouldn't want me to have to slaughter everyone in this house, would you?"

It's him. But that's impossible. I shot him. I saw his lifeless body with my own eyes. The Sons blew his house up. There's no way.

"You thought you could kill me?" His humorless chuckle makes the hairs on my arms stand on end. "What did I tell you? You're my Pet, and no one can take you away from me."

He crouches and hoists me over his shoulder, and though I try to punch and kick, my limbs won't move. They just hang limply.

Did he drug me?

He walks us silently through the clubhouse. I open my mouth to scream, but my voice is gone. Is there a drug that would take away my every ability to get away but allow my mind to still function? When we step outside, I'm back in the room with the dirty mattress and barred windows. This can't be right. None of this is right.

Yet I feel his touch, and I hear his voice, so it must be real.

Tossing me on the bed, he glowers down at me. He's wearing the same unbuttoned white shirt and black slacks, and

his muscles glisten with perspiration after carrying me such a long distance.

“You want to know who was here before you and what happened on this mattress?” he asks.

I nod, even though I changed my mind. I don't want to know, not like this.

A small C-shaped stainless-steel table appears, and I blink my eyes, wondering how I missed it before now. Sitting on top is a leather case that Sir opens while humming a happy tune that makes my skin crawl. He pulls out a silver dildo with metal spikes running up and down its length, just like the paddle.

My lips mouth the word “no,” but still, no sound comes out. This can't be happening. It can't be. This must be a nightmare. That's all it is. I will myself to wake up, but I can't. If my arms weren't lying useless next to me, I could pinch myself. I try to focus on getting my hand to lift from the mattress, but it refuses.

“The pet who was here before you couldn't take this, but you're special.” He kneels in front of me, spreading my legs. Frosty air hits my sex that's clenching so tight, there's no way he'll get his pinkie inside me, let alone that thing.

“Relax,” he coos. “This'll feel so good.”

Tears spill from the corners of my eyes, soaking the mattress. I feel his icy fingers spread my outer lips apart, and then the tapered tip of the dildo grazes my sex. I try so hard to move, to fight back, but I'm frozen, helpless. He pushes the tip inside me far enough that the first set of spikes scrape into my sensitive flesh.

My mouth opens wide, and I scream with everything in me. This time, I hear my anguished cry. It's like no sound I've ever heard myself make, coming from somewhere so deep inside, it must've been trapped down there for years. Since I was a child, if I had to guess. It goes on and on until there's no air left in my lungs.

My limbs suddenly work, and I use them to kick and fight.

Suddenly, there's someone heavy on top of me, pinning my hands above my head and wrapping their feet under my legs to stop me from thrashing. They're immovable, though I don't stop trying.

"Tinleigh!" Lucky's voice is sharp, cutting through the haze. "It's a nightmare, baby. Just a nightmare. You're okay."

I blink my eyes open, trying to adjust as my chest heaves and my limbs go lax. It must be early morning because a hint of sunlight shines through the undressed window. Staring back at me with lips pressed tightly together and a wrinkled brow is Lucky. A knock sounds right before the door cracks open, drawing our attention away from each other.

"Everything okay?" Cy asks hesitantly. "We just heard a scream."

"It's fine." Lucky flops onto his back, fingers digging into his eyes.

"I'm sorry. I had a nightmare," I whisper.

"Figured."

"I didn't mean to wake everyone." My throat clogs.

"Don't worry about none of that, little lady. Just had to make sure."

"Thanks, Prez," Lucky mutters.

The door closes, and I die a little inside. It felt so real.

"Nearly gave me a fuckin' heart attack," Lucky says, clutching his chest.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize," he mutters. "Just scared the shit out of me. Fuckin' hell, if I never hear you make that sound again, it'll be too soon."

As traumatic as the nightmare was, something inside me feels different. Calmer, almost. That constant bouncy feeling in my stomach that always kept me on alert isn't quite as bouncy. It's strange because I don't ever remember a time

when it wasn't there. The accompanying pressure in my chest has eased up, too.

I might've woken up the whole house and scared Lucky shitless, but I feel incredible. *I'm free*. A giggle escapes. I slap a hand over my mouth, knowing how inappropriate it is to laugh when he's over there trying to regain control of his bowels, but I can't help it.

"Why are you laughing?" He peers under the covers. "Pretty sure I pissed myself."

"Poor baby." Moving closer, I throw my leg over his hips to straddle him. My bare sex meets the wiry hair on his pelvis. "How can I make it up to you?"

"Tinleigh," he says in a low, warning tone.

"Lucky," I mimic, moving lower until I feel his semi-hard cock. It doesn't matter what's going on around this man; he's at some degree of hardness twenty-four hours a day. It might be a medical condition.

He places his hands on my hips and draws his legs up a little, stopping me. "Not two seconds ago, you were trying to beat me to a pulp and screaming like the devil. I don't think this is a good idea."

"Lucky?"

"What?"

"I'm free," I say with the most genuine smile I've ever felt.

"I'm so fuckin' confused. You know I'm not a morning person. Help me catch up." His adorable, sleepy expression is trying so hard.

"I'm free," I repeat.

"Heard that. Still don't know what it means."

"Neal's dead, right?"

He looks at me as though I've lost my mind, and maybe I have. That's to be determined, but right now, I'm irrationally turned on and need my boyfriend to fuck me.

“Yeah.”

“I knew it. I could feel it.” I grind down on him unashamedly, coating him with my arousal. “And Jeremiah is dead.”

“Very.”

“And I haven’t seen or heard from my parents or the church leader asshole, as you called him, in years. They all could be dead too, for all I know.”

“Tinleigh, I’m having a hard time keeping up,” he says with an exasperated sigh.

I press my nose to his, grinning like a loon. “I’m free.”

Finally, it clicks, and he’s there, wrapping his arms around me and straightening his legs. My nipples drag down his chest as I move lower and lift my hips. Reaching between our bodies, I grip his rock-hard erection and position it at my entrance. There’s no time for foreplay. I need to feel him inside, need to be full of him.

When his piercing touches my clit, I freeze. Okay, maybe there’s time for a little tease. I move the tip of his dick in small circles against my clit, allowing the stainless-steel ball to drag along my bundle of nerves. It feels so good that I’m nearly panting after only a minute.

Lucky looks amused. He loves it when I use him for my pleasure. He told me once that if he could be reincarnated into anything, he’d pick to come back as my dildo. God, I love him.

Sitting up, I lift as high on my knees as I can so he can watch as I move him up and down my slit, coating him in my arousal before moving back to my clit. My nipples draw up tight, and he catches their reaction, reaching out to fondle me, pinching them and tugging.

I’m more than ready now, so I line him up with my entrance and sink down halfway, stopping to take a deep breath and relax before my body accepts the rest.

“Fuck me, you’re so goddamn tight,” he says, and I slap a hand over his mouth.

“Shh. People are sleeping.”

“I’m gonna make you scream for a whole new reason and wake them up again anyway.”

“You think?” I tease.

“I know. Now, fuck me, baby.”

I grind down on him, remembering just how good those little balls above his cock feel when they massage my clit. Reaching back to use his knees for purchase, I slide back and forth, unsure how this feels for him but also not caring right now. Selfishly, I want to make myself feel good.

“That’s it,” he breathes out. “Get yourself off on me. Shit, you should see how beautiful you look like this.”

His hands are everywhere, rubbing up my thighs and stomach, squeezing my breasts and pinching my nipples, gripping the base of my throat before dragging his fingers down the center of me, all before moving to my core and pressing a thumb against my clit each time I slide away from his base.

“I’m going to come.” My steady pace becomes choppy as I chase the orgasm down. I dig my fingers into his knees as pleasure takes over, starting with my pussy and spreading until my entire body is full of it, all the way down to my toes. My head goes light, and I spasm around him. I cry out, and he shoves a pillow against my face to muffle the sound.

Working myself down, I slow my movements until I’m just circling my clit against his piercing. My limbs feel weak, and my breasts feel heavy as I collapse onto his chest. He rolls us over, keeping us joined. I’m wiped out, but when his other piercing, the one inside me, bumps against my G-spot, my pussy takes interest.

He hooks an arm under my right thigh, throws my leg over his shoulder, and then lowers to his elbows, opening me even wider for him. The stretch and position allow him to drive deeper into me.

“Lucky,” I gasp.

“You made yourself come. Now it’s my turn.” He dips down to suck on a breast, taking long draws that stretch my nipple to the point of pain, but fuck me, it feels so good. He takes just the tip between his teeth and gazes up at me, looking like an animal, ready to tear me apart.

God, do I want that. I want it so much.

Releasing my nipple, he lifts to his knees, pushing my thigh into my chest. Pulling out almost completely, he slams back in, his balls slapping against my ass each time, turning me on even more. I’m so wet, it’s leaking down my crack.

“Look at this greedy pussy, taking me so well.” He slows, rocking his hips in a way that hits my G-spot each and every time until I’m fisting the sheets at my side and pinching my eyes closed, trying to stave off my second orgasm until he’s there too. I clench around him, knowing what that does to him. “Oh, fuck.”

“Come with me,” I say, squeezing my internal muscles again, except all it does is create a tidal wave of pleasure I can’t run from. “Shit.”

Both my knees are pushed up and out so he can watch as he pistons his hips, making my teeth knock together. I lose control of all my senses, and my spine arches, making my breasts jut out. They feel just as needy as my pussy, so I cup them and pinch my nipples.

“Jesus, Tinleigh. You’re gonna kill me.” His cock swells impossibly bigger, throbbing inside me seconds before he grunts and fills me with his hot cum.

His eyes close as he slides languidly in and out, his muscles twitching. There’s a pool of fluids under my ass that I don’t know how we’ll explain, but right now, I don’t even care.

“Don’t pull out,” I say, straightening my legs and tugging him down on top of me. “Please.”

“Fuckin’ gladly.” He rolls us to our sides, hiking my thigh on his hip to keep us joined. My head rests on his arm, and I

breathe him in, not wanting this moment to ever end.

My exhaustion hits me like a brick wall, and the rise and fall of his chest under my hand relaxes me even more. Just like that, I'm drifting off. He must fall asleep too because we're startled awake by a pounding on the door. It feels like minutes later, but since the room is now bathed in sun, that can't be true.

"Let's ride," someone shouts through the door.

"Shit." Lucky starts to roll onto his back until he realizes that his cock is still nestled inside me when it twitches. "Shit."

"What time is it?"

"Don't know. My phone's over there."

"Please tell me we have time for a shower."

His nose wrinkles as he pulls our sticky bits apart. "I'm thinking that's non-negotiable."

"I think you're right. Come on."

"You go ahead. I'll get in after you." When he notices my disappointment, he tacks on, "If I get in the shower with you, the same thing will happen that got us into this mess."

I grin and get out of bed. "Okay."

I'm almost to the bathroom when I hear him ask, "Does it hurt?"

He means my ass that he's no doubt looking at as I walk away. I realize that just because I had this life-altering epiphany last night, it doesn't mean he's over it yet. I don't know how it would make me feel if the roles were reversed, and I hope I never have to.

"No," I assure him, and it's true. The stinging from the initial puncture went away as soon as they scabbed over, not even two hours later. I can say a lot of shit about *Jeremiah*, but I can't deny he knew what he was doing. He used just enough force to puncture the skin but not enough to cause any major injury. Had he wanted to, he could've turned my ass into minced meat.

I'm not sure if that makes me feel better or not.

"But it did at the time?"

He's getting worked up again, and that won't do either of us any good. "Not really. He was more into impact than injury." When I see the look of confusion on his face, I expand. "He seemed to get off on scaring me, not hurting me."

"Doesn't make it any better."

"No, but thanks to you, we don't have to even think about him anymore."

"You saved yourself," he says.

"But if you hadn't shown up, I wouldn't have had the opportunity. It was a team effort." I walk back over and hold my hand up. His beard twitches where it's covering the corner of his mouth, and he slaps my hand. "Go us."

There's another pounding on the door. "Burning daylight here."

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

LUCKY



We return to the compound after the best ride of my life. My ass is sore, and my entire lower body is numb, but I had my girl pressed against my back for eight hours and was surrounded by my brothers after a successful rescue mission. Can't think of one thing better.

Well, maybe I can, but I need to regain feeling in my lower half for this day to end perfectly.

Tinleigh's barely off the bike before she's running inside. I don't take it personally. No one, not even me, can take the place of her twin, and it's been a rough few days for both of them.

"Look what the cat dragged in!" Bones bellows, stepping outside with Judge following behind. They wanted to come with us, but we needed Judge to make sure things were okay here, and Bones needed to keep a close eye on Myla.

"Things must've gone smoothly. I saw a flash of blonde and pink run by," Judge says.

"As good as we could've hoped. Tinleigh's safe, Jeremiah's with the Reaper, and we all made it home in one piece. Well, except for Raunchy. Bullet took a chunk out of his calf, but he'll live." I pull a rope of licorice out of my cut and take a big bite. I've been so stressed out that I couldn't even enjoy my favorite candy. "Things here okay? How's Myla?"

"She's—" His lips pull back as he searches for an answer. "Angry, I guess, but physically, she's healing."

I can't picture what an angry Myla looks like. An image of a kitten hissing comes to mind. Try as she might to sound tough, she's still a cute kitten.

"Tinleigh will get her through," I say.

Dutch walks over with Pet. I nearly forgot we were bringing home a stray.

"Who's this?" Judge asks. Pet just stares at the ground, her arms wrapped around herself.

"Jeremiah had three other women there," I say in a hushed tone. "Two decided to stay. This one made a smarter choice."

Judge mouths an "Oh."

"What's your name, darlin'?" Bones asks, getting the same non-reaction.

"She ain't talkin'," Dutch says. "Not yet, anyway."

"Why don't you take her over to Sugar's place?" Mustang suggests. "She might be more comfortable there."

"Smart." Dutch walks inside, his little duckling following close behind.

"Do we know what we're doing with her?" Judge asks.

"Nope." Cy's gruff voice sounds behind me, and I turn to see him walking funny.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" I chuckle.

"Watch your mouth, young man. In a few more years, you'll know what it feels like for an old man to take a long ride."

"A few years? More like twenty." I playfully punch him in the chest.

Char and Navy come barreling out of the clubhouse, and Char leaps into Cy's arms, nearly knocking him over in his weakened state.

"I missed you, baby." She grabs both sides of his head and plants kisses all over his face, leaving her mark in red lipstick. He grabs handfuls of her ass and carries her back inside, no

doubt taking her right to his cabin. He could be on his deathbed and still scrounge up the energy to fuck his much younger wife.

In a different greeting, Rigger catches his girl by throwing a shoulder into her gut, forcing an “Oof” out of her before tossing her over his shoulder. Without a word, they also disappear inside. I can’t even say shit because the entire house heard Tinleigh and my performance in the early hours of the morning, and I haven’t heard the end of it since.

“Where’d Riot disappear to?” Bones asks. “I saw him get off his bike.”

“Don’t know.” I look around. “Must’ve gone to his place to catch up on all the emo shit he missed while we were gone.”

“Is Tyson here?” Golden asks, walking over to join in the conversation.

“I think Chap took him to the park to burn off some energy, knowing you’d be tired.”

“Who told her to do that?”

Chap, or Chaplain if you’re calling her by her full name, has been around the club for years. When all the shit was going down with our traitorous ex-prez, we knew her as one of the good-time girls. During the week, she was in school to become a teacher, but on the weekends, she liked to party with us. Then she took a job as a nanny for a Royal Bastard named Coyote and his ol’ lady, and we didn’t see her much anymore.

That is until Golden registered Ty for kindergarten a few months ago, and lo and behold, Chaplain is Ty’s new teacher. It’s incestuous, really. School’s been in session for a month or so now, and somehow, she ended up babysitting the kid now and then, even though Golden’s a straight-up dick to her, which I don’t understand because he’s nice to everyone.

“Don’t bust her balls over it.” I smack him upside the head, even though he and I are pretty evenly matched in size. “It was a nice thing to do.”

“Whatever,” he says, and then he walks inside.

“I think he has a crush,” Bones whispers.

“On Chap? He treats her like garbage.”

“Our Golden boy is emotionally stunted. That’s what happens when a one-night stand drops your newborn on your doorstep and disappears.”

“I guess.” I shove the last of my Twizzler in my mouth. “Better go find my woman and check on her sister.”

“Good job bringing her home, brother,” Judge says. “I was missing our morning debates.”

“Continue to miss them, asshole. I’ll be taking her to work with me for a while.”

“Sure you will,” he calls after me, knowing Tinleigh would rather debate the second coming of Christ with him than get her hands dirty in an engine. Still, I have something he doesn’t that might sway her decision. I have piercings.

Tobi pops his head out of the front door. “I’m supposed to tell you that Tinleigh moved Myla into your place to make room at Sugar’s for someone named Pet?”

“Motherfucker.” I stomp through the clubhouse, out the back door, and to *our* home, meaning mine and Tinleigh’s, not a place for Myla to convalesce, especially considering there are no walls in our bedroom.

Walking inside, I know there’s no hope in talking Tinleigh out of this. My sofa has been pulled out into a bed, and my coffee table is now a medicine cabinet, with orange bottles lined up next to a notebook with what looks like a schedule on it.

“You look like shit,” I say, taking in my friend, who is still unrecognizable from all the swelling. If possible, she looks worse now that the bruising has set in.

“Thanks, asshole.” Her voice sounds like it’s gone through a meat grinder.

“How are you really?” I sit on the corner of the bed as Tinleigh mills about, moving things around.

“Fifteen stitches and a sprained wrist.” She holds up her bandaged arm. “Eight more on the left leg, ten on the right and a sprained ankle. Cracked rib and the plastic surgery gone wrong on my face. Four stitches here.” She points to her temple. “And a broken nose.”

“I killed him,” I say in response, wishing like hell he had nine lives like a cat to do it all over again.

“You should’ve saved him for me.” Her lower lip that’s all scabbed up juts out.

I see what Judge meant when he said she was angry. Myla’s not a violent person. One time, she made me open a window and shoo a fly out that was buzzing around my head during one of our morning chats because she didn’t want to kill it.

“Sorry about that, but I didn’t have time to wait around for you to heal up.”

“Whatever you did wasn’t enough. He deserved worse.”

“He did,” I agree, picking a loose thread on the blanket covering her legs. Her drastic shift to the dark side has me feeling uncomfortable. “But it’s irrelevant now because it’s done.”

“It’s not irrelevant,” she bites out. “The asshole who took Tinleigh grabbed me in front of my apartment. He took me to the Thirst Trap and handed me over to Neal, who proceeded to beat the living hell out of me.” She draws an invisible circle around her face with her good hand. “He did all this with his bare hands while one of his lackeys held me in place.”

“Myla, you’re injured. We don’t need to—”

“Yes, the fuck, we do.”

I jerk back as though she slapped me. I’m not sure I’ve ever heard her say “fuck” before, let alone use it in anger. Looking to Tinleigh for a little help, I realize I won’t find it because she’s ignoring the whole thing, busying herself in the kitchen.

“Then he took off my clothes, and like I was in a snuff film, he and his men took turns jerking off in front of me, spraying their nasty cum all over my naked and bleeding body.” Her voice grows louder and sounds pained. “Once their balls were empty, they loaded me into a van, drove me here and put my sister’s shoes on me, trying to throw you off long enough that the first guy could get out of town with Tinleigh before you realized it was me. Dumb fucks weren’t observant enough to realize we have different colored streaks in our hair.”

I didn’t need to know any of this. Matter of fact, I wish I didn’t because she’s right. Neal deserved so much worse. Now that I do know, I’m fucking glad those two men will go down for his murder, because I’m certain they played a part in what happened to her. I make a mental note to reach out to a few friends of the club on the inside. I’m sure I could deposit some cash in their commissary accounts in exchange for making their lives hell.

“I’m sorry. I knew you were alive and safe, but I couldn’t say the same for her.” I nod over at the chicken shit hiding from her sister’s wrath. “That took priority over everything else.”

Only at the mention of Tinleigh does she soften slightly. “Thank you for going after her. She told me what went down.”

“Turns out our girl is a badass.”

“That’s the other thing,” she starts, right back to being pissed off. “I told you to stay away from her. We were friends, Lucky. Good friends. And when a good friend tells you to back the hell off their sister, you fucking do it, but you went after her anyway. Then, instead of fessing up like a man, you hid it from me.”

I hold up both my hands in surrender. “She wanted to be the one to tell you. I can’t help it if she went and got herself kidnapped before that happened.”

The room falls silent, and I realize it might’ve been too soon for that joke. I would’ve thought the same thing had someone made it yesterday, but each time we stopped for gas

or to eat, Tinleigh worked hard at making me okay with what happened, because she's okay.

Tinleigh moves behind me and places her hands on my shoulders, resting her head on top of mine. "Myla, I'll try harder next time to give you the details of my love life before I get kidnapped."

I grab her arm and pull her onto my lap. "We already talked about this. It won't happen ever again because I'm not letting you outta my sight ever again."

"Gross. If this is what I have to look forward to, I'm moving in with someone else. Who has a free room?"

Tinleigh and I look at each other and together say, "Judge."

"That sounds like the start of a bad joke." She uses a mocking tone. "A prostitute moves in with the priest..."

Though she didn't say it to be funny, I find that shit hilarious as fuck, and so does Tinleigh because we both burst out laughing.

"On that note, I'll leave you to get settled. Cy should be done fucking Char by now, and we have Church." I stand, forcing Tinleigh to stand as well. After dropping a kiss on her lips, I turn to leave.

Somehow, in all my teenage fantasies, I never pictured living in a house with fine-as-hell twins. Even if I had, I wouldn't have thought this is how it would go.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

TINLEIGH



Four weeks later...

“You don’t need to leave,” I say, watching as Myla packs up the last of her things.

“Yeah, I do. If I have to listen to you and Lucky have sex one more time, I will lose my mind.”

“We try to be quiet.”

“If that’s quiet, then remind me to call before I come over next time. I wouldn’t want to walk in on your normal volume sex.” She stuffs her phone charger in a tote bag before plopping down next to me on the sofa that’s not pulled into a bed for the first time in a month.

I rest my head on her shoulder and take her hand in mine. A lot of healing has happened in her time living with Lucky and me—mostly physical, but some emotional, too. She’s still angry about what happened, but she’s coming around. Much to her dismay, Judge has played a role in that. The same way that he’s helped me, he’s helped her too, both with old wounds and new.

Bones has contributed, too, but his help comes in the form of a blunt to calm her anxiety and help with the lingering pain. In his own way, Lucky has even been part of her healing, mostly through back-and-forth banter. I love their friendship, and it means the world to me that my sister likes my boyfriend.

“I don’t like you going back to your apartment alone,” I say.

“There’s no reason not to. Neal’s dead, and from what Lucky’s heard, no one misses him. Some douchebag took over his business, and all’s right in the skin trade once again.”

“I know. And I also know he wouldn’t let you leave if he thought there was even a possibility someone wanted payback for Neal’s death. It’s just, I don’t know. The world doesn’t feel safe anymore. Why it took *Jeremiah* to make me feel that way, I’ll never know.”

“Right? Like you were okay with child molesters and violent rapists, but you drew the line at kinky wackadoodles.”

Is developing a dark sense of humor a healthy response to anger? I’ll have to ask Danielle at our appointment next week.

Navy gave me her therapist’s number after Rigger told her the details of my abduction, and Lucky hounded me until I finally called and set up an appointment. Joke’s on him, though, because I’m still not working, which means he has to foot the bill each week. I don’t think he cares. He just wants me to be happy.

Speaking of Danielle...

“I tucked Danielle’s card in your wallet. You should call her,” I say.

“I’m good, thanks.” She stands abruptly, leaving me to topple over.

“I also stuck your severance paycheck in there.”

“Tinny, I told you, I don’t need any of the club’s pity money.” She opens her purse.

“I swear to God, if you don’t take that money, I’ll make your life a living hell,” I say, using my big-sister voice. It doesn’t matter that I’m only older by a few minutes; I’ve always filled that role in her life.

“Fine.” She closes her bag. “Happy?”

“Elated.” I beam over at her.

Lucky has been trying to pass off that check for days now. After she decided she wouldn’t be able to return to the Honey

Pot, the club took up a collection to get her by until she figured out what she wanted. Turns out bikers are very generous. If she's careful about how she spends it, she could take a whole year off if she wants to. I'll let her figure that tidbit out later when she's back home, far away from me.

A knock has her setting her bag back down. "It's just Judge coming to carry my bags to my car."

"I think the man has a crush," I tease.

"Shh. He'll hear you. And he definitely doesn't. He's married to God."

I laugh. "He is not, and you know it."

Dang, it feels good to be in a place where I can just enjoy my sister's company. No more secrets, no more hiding, no more protecting her from things that bump in the night. After some time passes, I'm sure she'll return to her previous self. Maybe not exactly her previous self, but a version closer than she is right now.

"Hey, you ready?" he asks after Myla opens the door.

"Yeah. Thanks for helping. Bones doesn't want me lifting with this hand yet." She holds up her splinted wrist.

"Hey, Tinleigh. Sugar told me to bring you this package." He sets the cardboard box on the coffee table.

"Thanks."

Judge loads himself up with the insane amount shit Myla accumulated while she was here as I stand and give her a huge hug.

"Call me any time for anything at all."

"It's not like I'm moving across the country. Besides, I'll be back tonight for dinner. Sugar's making those little salmon tinfoil pocket things, and there's no way I'm missing out on that."

Once they're gone, I dive for the box Judge brought, knowing exactly what it is. This surprise took a lot of work to achieve. A couple weeks ago, I had to convince Myla to stay

late at the clubhouse to have a few drinks with the guys, then perform an elaborate hoax on Lucky, and steal his credit card to pay for it.

As I carefully open the box, I smile and think of everything I went through to get this. Once it's out of the box and in my hand, I squeal at how perfect it is. My original plan was to wait until tonight, but that flies out the window when I inspect it, and my panties grow damp.

I grab my phone and dash over to the ladder, climbing up and quickly ripping off my clothes, leaving them in a pile. With the brand new iPhone Lucky surprised me with a couple weeks ago, I take a series of pictures until I capture the perfect one and send it off with the message, "We're officially empty-nesters."

He replies within seconds, assuring me, in no uncertain terms, that he'll be home in five minutes and not to get started without him. I wait patiently for all of two minutes before my throbbing clit convinces me that attaching the pretty new nipple clips I also ordered with Lucky's stolen credit card isn't getting started without him.

I dig a small box out of my underwear and pull out the set. I went with a dainty style that looks like jewelry. Two small, white tweezer-looking things are connected by a gold chain that, when attached, hangs between my breasts. There's also a supplemental chain attachment that hangs down my stomach and clips onto my clit, but I'm a beginner at this, so I tuck that away for another time.

Plucking at one of my nipples, I get it nice and hard before capturing it between the rubber tips of the clips and moving the little tightener thing up until I feel the pinch. It doesn't hurt, and a zing of arousal shoots me as I move on to the next one. Once they're secure, I give the chain a tug, happy with my purchase as the sensation sends tingles straight to my pussy.

I can't say many good things about my little stint at Jeremiah's house of horrors, but it did open my eyes to a lot of things I had no clue existed. Some of them I would never

allow near my body, but some sparked an interest, and I knew with the right partner, they could be fun.

The studded paddle can fuck right off to hell forever, along with that mouth hook thing, but I want to explore these nipple clamps or the set of padded cuffs I also impulse-purchased.

Lucky has no idea about any of this, and I'm hoping he'll understand instead of calling Danielle and setting up an emergency appointment. That would really put a damper on my plans.

Hearing the tale-tell sound of the code being typed into the lock, I hurry and take my place on the bed. Lying on my back, I drop my knees to the side and pick up the surprise, pressing the on button and waiting.

"You better be naked," he calls out as he ascends the ladder. "Cy said I have twenty minutes. Any longer than that and he'll fire my ass. We both know he won't, but I'd rather not piss him off—" He doesn't make it to the landing before he's frozen in place.

"Are you going to let Lucky Jr. have all the fun, or are you going to join me?" I ask.

"When did you get a dildo?" He steps into the loft, his gaze fixed on the buzzing purple toy between my legs. I haven't pushed it inside me yet; I want him to see what I did first.

"You bought it for me."

"Did I buy those nipple clips, too?" He pulls his socks and shirt off, then undoes his belt and pants before pushing them to the ground.

"You did." I sigh as his cock springs free right before my eyes. Lucky Jr. is nice and all, but it just can't compare to the beauty of the real thing.

"I'm a smart man." He pumps his rigid length as he stalks toward me.

"You're also immortalized forever." I giggle as I hold the dildo up for him to see.

“I don’t get it.” He takes the vibrating toy from me and gets a closer look. His eyes go wide, and he laughs so hard his eyes water. “Is this my cock?”

“It is.” I roll to my side, joining him in his laughter.

“Well fuck me. I’m huge.”

“I did have to order an extra-large kit,” I say, mostly to stroke his ego but also because it’s true.

“Wait.” His brows draw together. “How?”

I bite my lower lip, waiting for him to remember. The look on his face the second it clicks made all of my effort worth it. I laugh harder than I have ever laughed before, so hard I can’t breathe, and I let out an unladylike snort, which only starts the fit over again.

Lucky is right there with me, trying to clarify through bouts of hysterics.

“You told me you read an article about how men can taste things through their dicks.” He collapses to his knees at the side of the bed. “You put a blindfold on me and got me hard, because you said I’d be able to taste things better.”

I can’t breathe. I survived years of trauma, only to be taken out by a case of the giggles. What a way to go, though.

“Then you stuck my dick into three things. What did you tell me they were?” he asks through gasping inhaled breaths.

“The first two were real.” I clutch my middle, all sexiness forgotten for the moment. “Jello and mashed potatoes.”

“You stuck my dick in mashed potatoes!” He falls to the carpet.

“It was the third one that I lied about and said was mashed-up banana. How did you even believe that?”

“I don’t fuckin’ know. I was just doing it so you’d let me fuck you without your sister here.”

“Oh, my God. This is so good. Way better than I thought.” I sigh, trying to regain some composure because the fact

remains that I want to get laid, and because of Cy, we have limited time.

“I can’t believe you.” He pushes back up to his knees, once again taking in the dildo. “It even has my piercings.”

“That’s why I couldn’t mix up the silicone and make the thing myself. I wanted it to be authentic, so you made the mold through my trickery.” I flash him a wink. “Then I sent it to some dick-duplicating artist in Pennsylvania. By the way, she told me congratulations when she saw what you were working with. I thought I should pass that compliment onto you.”

“Of course she did. Look at me. I’m magnificent.” He holds up the toy.

“Okay, okay. Let’s not get carried away.”

“Carried away?” he repeats as if I’ve offended him. “Let’s see if you think I’m getting carried away when I fuck you in the pussy”—he grips his still hard cock and then holds the dildo right above it—“and the ass at the same time. How many dudes can say that?”

“Not enough, honestly.”

“How do I turn this thing off? Lucky Jr. isn’t needed for what I have planned.”

“But I love him,” I pout, taking it and pressing the off button.

“You’ll love this more.” He reaches out, hooking his arms under my thighs as he drags me to the edge of the bed before diving headfirst between my legs.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

LUCKY



She lets out a moan of satisfaction when I drag my tongue up the length of her slit before moving it side to side and up and down until it's nestled between her outer lips. Using firm strokes, I lap up her juices, letting them coat my tastebuds. She's my favorite flavor, one I never tire of.

I spread her apart with my thumb and finger, wanting nothing standing in the way of me and that little bundle of nerves I know will make her scream. I suck on it, drawing it between my teeth at the same time that I slip two fingers on my other hand inside her.

She gasps, her hands moving to massage her tits, but still, I want more, and I know how to get it. I reluctantly pull away, reminding myself it's only for a minute.

"Sit on my face," I say, climbing onto the mattress and lying flat.

"What?"

"Sit on my fucking face. Right now."

"Are you—"

"Sit on my face," I repeat for the two hundredth fucking time.

"But I might—"

"Goddamn it, Tinleigh. Sit on my damn face. We don't have time to argue."

“Fine. I guess I just—” She throws a leg over my head, and I know this’ll be so fucking good. “And then I just—”

Tired of waiting for her to go all in, I grip her hips and pull her down. With her pussy pressed to my mouth, I eat her like she’s my last meal and gaze up at her beautiful body. My eyes catch on the clips pinching her reddening nipples, and fuck, I can’t wait to shove my cock inside her.

Her hands weave into my hair as she starts to see the advantages of this position. She controls where I lick, and it has the added benefit of the grinding motion she loves so much. Her arousal soaks my beard, and I guarantee it’ll tame it better than the oils she works through it every day.

I suck her clit, and she throws her head back, jutting her tits out. Unable to stop myself, I reach up and give the chain a little tug. Instant orgasm. She screams my name, smothering me with her cunt, and it’s every bit as awesome as I thought it’d be. Flattening my tongue, I lick her through every last wave of ecstasy painted all over her expression until she slows her movements and releases my hair.

“That was so good,” she breathes out, climbing off me.

“I don’t know why you don’t listen to my ideas more often.”

“What’s your next idea?”

I sit up, resting my back against the headboard. “Come here.”

She straddles my hips this time. I won’t be able to get very deep from this position, but having her tits bounce in my face and the easy access to release the clamps at the right moment will make it all worth it.

“God, you’re so wet,” I moan as she slips me inside her and lowers down.

She grips the headboard on either side of my head and leans in for a kiss. Some women are turned off by their own taste, but not Tinleigh. As she slowly fucks my length, adjusting to the stretch, her tongue dances with mine with our lips locked together. Eventually, she breaks free so she can

pick up her pace. Her dancer's thighs work as she bounces up and down, her natural tits swinging with the movement.

"Fuck, you're the sexiest thing I've ever seen." I cup her breasts, leaning in to bite and suck at the flesh around each pinched nipple, ending with sharp flicks of my tongue to each peak.

"You're gonna make me come again."

"Do it, baby. I want to feel you squeeze around me." Bending my legs, I drive my heels into the bed so I can thrust up when she moves down. We both like it hard, so I know the second we crash together, it'll throw her over the edge. Fuck, if I'm not right.

With two more thrusts, she's crying out and clamping down on me so hard, I see stars. I grip the chain and give it a rough tug. The clips break free, sending a rush of blood flow straight to her nipples. I squeeze her breasts roughly and massage them, knowing her overly sensitized nipples will scrape along my rough palm and make her feel good.

"Lucky," she screams, and a new rush of arousal coats my cock. Wanting to join her, I grip her hips and hold her in place, thrusting up in rapid-fire succession. Her cries of pleasure are choppy as I slam into her over and over until my balls draw up.

"Fuck," I roar, pushing my hips up and hers down until I'm as deep as I can possibly get. My cock pulses, shooting my cum into her warm cunt in long, satisfying spurts. I hold her there until I'm certain there's nothing left before lowering my ass to the mattress and keeping my softening cock inside her.

My need to keep her full of my cum stems from something deep inside, some baser instinct that has me convinced it's how I make her mine. Someday, she'll get that IUD removed, and all this practice will pay off. I'll keep her full of my cum day in and day out until I knock her up. My cock twitches, taking an interest in that idea.

“How does it only get better and better?” She drapes her body over me, and I rest a hand on her back with the last drop of energy I possess.

“How am I supposed to go back to work when you fucked me boneless?” I retort.

Her chest vibrates with laughter. “Not my problem. I can lounge around and nap for the rest of the day.”

She’s teasing, but I know it bothers her not to be working. She said she’d give me time, and she has. Every member of this club has asked around about a rumor that someone’s pissed that Neal was killed, but there’s no one, not even the distant relatives Satyr dug up. There are only two people with a vendetta against this club right now, and they’re both sitting behind bars on murder charges and have no friends.

I have no reason to think Tinleigh’s in danger, yet each time I think about her going out into the world, my chest tightens painfully. Still, she and I both know it’s time to ease up.

“Did you call around to some beauty schools?” I ask, already resigned to the fact that I’m not rushing back to work.

“Yeah. I’m interested in one or two. I just need to work for a little bit first.”

“Why?”

“Because when you go to school, they require you to pay for it.”

“I already told you I would.” If she knew how much money I had, we wouldn’t be having this conversation. I’ve saved nearly half of every paycheck I’ve earned at the Garage because the only thing I’m materialistic about is my bike. I’m also a part-owner of the Honey Pot, which is bringing in more cash than we know what to do with.

Maybe not that much, but it’s a lot. My bank account is fat, and paying for her schooling wouldn’t even scratch the surface.

“That’s not why I’m with you.”

“You think I don’t know that? When you agreed to be mine, the only thing you knew about me was that I was a biker and that I lived here. If you were looking for a sugar daddy, you wouldn’t have stuck around.”

“I’m still not looking for a sugar daddy or even a biker daddy.”

“Know that too.” I rub circles on her back. “But you let me buy you nipple clamps and an exact replica of my cock. How’s this not more important?”

She laughs. “There’s also a clit clamp attachment, and I impulse bought a pair of padded cuffs.”

I groan. “Don’t say things like that. Cy’ll have my balls between a pair of real clamps if I don’t get back to work.”

“Besides, you didn’t know you were buying those things. I stole your credit card.”

“Okay, well, then steal my bank card or my checkbook and pay for your hair school.” Lowly, I add, “Your name’s on the account anyway.”

She sits up, the movement making my cock still inside of her stir to life. “Say what now?”

“Don’t make it a big deal. If something ever happened to me, I wanted to make sure you’re taken care of. I’m having a will drafted, too, but it’s taking forever. Just putting your name on my account seemed like an easier fix.”

“You’re not making this better.”

“Then pretend you don’t know about it.” I ease her off me, knowing I still have to take a shower. I’d get so much shit if I showed back up to work smelling of sex. I throw my legs over the side of the ladder. “But also, there’s a bank card and checkbook with your name on them in the top kitchen drawer, so you don’t have to steal mine.”

I narrowly avoid the pillow she chucks at my head. “Get back here. You can’t leave in the middle of a fight.”

“Baby, you’re the only one fighting!” I shout as I walk through the living room and kitchen, grinning as another

pillow is tossed at me.

After the fastest shower of my life, I step onto the bathmat and startle when I see Tinleigh sitting on the vanity.

“I don’t have time for you to beautify me again. I was supposed to be back at work twenty minutes ago.”

“That’s not why I’m in here.” Her face has my least favorite expression—the one that tells me she’s nervous.

“What’s wrong?”

“Why haven’t you said it?”

I place my hands on her thighs. “Said what?”

“I was so convinced you would, but it’s been a month since the incident and you still haven’t. I already said it, and I won’t say it again until you do. I thought I could be patient, but every day that goes by and I don’t hear it makes me feel like maybe I was wrong.”

God, this woman is infuriating. I want to shake her and kiss her all at the same time.

“What haven’t I said?” I ask again, visions of Cy knocking me over the head with a mallet running through my mind.

“That you love me.”

I tilt my head and narrow my eyes on her because maybe that goose egg to her forehead a couple months ago did more damage than we thought.

“Never mind. I’m sorry I brought it up.” She shoves off the counter, narrowly missing my junk with her knees. “This isn’t me. I’m not this girl, and I refuse to become her.”

“Tinleigh,” I call out, but she doesn’t stop until she’s at the front door and pushing her feet into my ugly slippers. She looks ridiculous since my shoes are as long as her legs are, but it doesn’t stop her from walking out the door. “Goddamn it.”

Still in only a towel, I jog after her, nodding to Jensen, who’s bundled up on his porch with his computer on his lap. He bites back a smile, but I see it and flip him off.

“Tinleigh, wait.” Fall is in full swing now, and the air is so cold that my body sucks my balls into my stomach and my dick turtlenecks, trying to hide away from the chill. I finally catch up to her, gripping her by the arms and turning her to face me, but not before losing my towel twice, giving Jensen quite the show. Mustang’ll be pissed about that one. “Goddamn it. Hold on.” I hurriedly secure my towel again.

“What?” she pouts.

“How do you not know I love you?”

“How would I?” she asks incredulously.

“Back when we were in that basement, you told Pet I loved you. How could you know it then and not now?” It strikes me how stupid it is that Pet has been here at the clubhouse for a month and still won’t tell anyone her name. It’s hard to find resources for someone when they won’t cooperate.

“I was only telling her that so she wouldn’t shoot me.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, oh.” She throws her arms out to the side.

“Tinleigh, I love you. I’m sorry I haven’t said it enough—”

“At all,” she corrects.

I grin. “At all. I just thought you knew the same way I know you love me.”

“Yeah, you know because I said it.”

I twist my head to the side. “Did you though?”

“Yes.”

“Liar,” I accuse. “You said, ‘I love y-your ass in those jeans’.”

“But you knew what I meant.”

“And I thought you knew what I meant each time I brought home flowers, or when I allowed your sister to sleep ten feet from where we sleep every night for a month, or when I sit still while you play hairdresser with my beard each morning, or when I make sure there’s hot coffee for you in the morning,

or when I don't get pissed you stuck my dick in mashed potatoes, or how about when I put you in my will and give you access to my bank accounts?"

"I do stuff for you, too," she says.

"Fuck me." I run a hand down my beard. "I know you do, which is why I know you love me."

"I really do." She snuffles. "Say it again."

I weave my fingers into her hair and tip her head up, leaning over to press my forehead to hers. "I love you, Tinleigh. I don't know how I could've possibly made that clearer, but from the very moment I saw you on that stage and you pulled my licorice from my mouth with your teeth, I knew I was gonna love you. The next day, when I slammed you against the wall in my parents' bathroom, I was already falling, but it was when I lost you that I knew without a doubt that I was head over heels in love with you, and I always will be."

"Promise?"

"Forever, baby."

Claps sound from behind me, and I turn to see Jensen giving me a standing ovation. I take a dramatic bow that loosens the towel around my waist so that when I stand back up, it falls. Again.

I bend to grab it, but it's yanked off the ground. Next thing I know, my Hellcat is booking it down the path, towel flying through the air behind her.

"Now you're really gonna get it!" I shout and cup my junk as I give chase.

"Never a dull moment," Jensen mutters.

"Just so you know, it's cold out. Normally, I'm quite impressive," I say as I pass.

"I'll bet you are."

"No, seriously. Have Tinleigh show you the dildo she had made."

“I don’t know what that means, but I think I’m good not knowing.” He waves me off.

It’s crazy to think it’s been just over two months since Tingleigh stepped into my life, or rather, I stepped into her strip club. It feels like we’ve lived ten lifetimes since then, and not all of those lives have been good ones, but the best part about getting all the bad shit out of the way at the beginning of our relationship is that now we got nothing but good coming our way.

Not to say that there won’t be hard times, because I’m sure there will be, but we both fought hard to get where we’re at now, and our foundation is strong, which will make regular people’s hard times feel like a piece of cake. There’s not a doubt in my mind that we’ll make it.

I open the front door to the cabin, not spotting my Hellcat anywhere. “Where’d you go?”

Silence.

“I see how it is. You can dish it out, but you can’t take it.” I walk over to the ladder and climb halfway up before I hear buzzing. “Oh, hell no.”

I take the remaining ladder rungs two at a time until I’m on the landing and see Tingleigh on the bed, fucking herself with the purple replica of my dick. She’s on her knees, ass in the air, shoulders pressed to the mattress. One hand is on her tit while the other works that thing in and out of *my* goddamn pussy.

Her eyes open, and a sly smile creeps across her lips. “Care to join us?”

I stalk toward her, stroking my cock that, for the first time in my life, needs a little coaxing after nearly catching frostbite, but it’s coming around. “Just remember you asked for this.”

“Asked for what?”

I kneel on the bed behind her and smack her ass hard enough to make it bounce. “Lucky Jr. and I are about to butter both sides of your bread.”

EPILOGUE

LUCKY



“**W**hy won’t you tell me where you’re going?” Tinleigh sits up in our bed and adjusts the pillows behind her. “And why do you have to be gone until tomorrow?”

I slip my knife into the sheath at my hip while staring down at my woman. Just minutes ago, she was relaxed and sated after a round of naked gymnastics that resulted in her having three orgasms—one with my face between her legs, one while I played with her nipples and fucked her with Lucky Jr, and a third on my cock. The last one was my favorite, and not just because I came that time, too. I’m not selfish like that. It was because her wrists were bound to her ankles, which kept her thighs spread wide, and I was able to watch as her cunt creamed all over my dick.

Fucking thing of beauty right there.

Now she’s pulling the covers up over her tits and eyeing me suspiciously.

“Club business.”

“Liar. If it were club business, someone would be going with you.”

Well, shit. She’s picked up a lot about club life in the six months since moving in with me.

“You worried about me, Hellcat?” I lean over and cage her in with a hand on either side of her luscious hips, bringing us nearly nose to nose.

“I always worry about you.” Her gaze drops to my lips.

“I’ll be safe.” I give her a hard, smacking kiss before standing. Anything more than that, and I won’t be making it out of this room today. “Besides, you have orientation today, so you’ll be too busy to worry.”

“Not true. I’ll just be distracted and end up bleaching someone’s eyebrows off or something.”

“I think they keep the bleach locked up until at least your first day of class,” I say, hoping to divert the conversation.

“Lucky.”

“Tinleigh,” I reply in the same frustrated tone. “If there were any kind of threat, I’d be riding with a brother, but there’s not, so there’s no need to drag someone else along.”

“Promise?”

“Yeah, baby. I promise.”

“Okay,” she says, suddenly interested in a loose thread on the comforter.

My gut clenches, hating that I’m making her feel uneasy about this, especially since I’m lying through my teeth. This ride has nothing to do with the club, though they support my decision. Rigger even offered to come. No, this is something I need to do on my own, and telling her about it will only freak her out more than she already is.

I climb on top of her, yanking the pillows away so she’s flat on her back. She says the weight of my body calms her, so I hold my upper body on my elbows but allow my torso, hips, and legs to press her into the mattress.

I lean in until my lips nearly touch her ear and whisper, “Do you really think I’d let anything stop me from coming home to you?” I move lower, biting and sucking down her neck, leaving my marks along the way so each time she looks in a mirror between now and when I get home, she’ll remember who she belongs to.

She sighs, snaking her hands under the back of my shirt. “No.”

“Exactly.” I move across her chest, above her breasts.

“Maybe I’m just nervous about today and taking it out on you.”

“You shouldn’t be.” I continue up the other side of her neck. “You’ll do great.”

“I hope so.”

I kiss her lips before nipping at her bottom one. “I know so. Call me and tell me all about it when you’re done for the day.”

“Okay.”

I move to get up, but she holds me in place. “Baby, I gotta get on the road.”

She releases me with a huff, dramatically throwing her arms to the side. “Fine. Go.”

“You’re killin’ me, you know that?” I climb off and walk to the ladder, swinging my leg over the side.

“At least Lucky Jr. will never leave me.”

Descending the ladder, I call out, “He’ll be hard to use without batteries.”

She gasps. “You wouldn’t!”

“Oh, I would, and don’t bother trying to find more. There ain’t a battery left in this house.” I push my feet into my boots.

“The remotes?”

“Sorry. Looks like no TV for you either.” I slip my Carhartt coat on over my cut, grinning.

“You’re an asshole!”

I look up to the loft and see her standing stark naked behind the railing, arms folded and propping her beautiful breasts up. Fuck me. Maybe I don’t need to go anywhere after all.

Forcing myself to look away, I put one heavy boot in front of the other, no part of me wanting to leave, except for the constant itch in the back of my mind that I can’t scratch until

this is done. It's the one thing standing in the way of Tinleigh and me moving forward, and she doesn't even know it's there.

But I feel it, and until I resolve the issue, we're stuck.

"Love you, baby." I grab my balaclava and gloves before opening the door and taking one final glance up at my entire world.

She softens. "Love you too."



The second I walk into the sleazy motel room on the outskirts of town, I strip down and take the hottest shower known to man. I'm frozen to my bones and need to thaw before heading back out. The sun was out all day, but even my winter riding gear couldn't keep out the early spring chill.

Once I can feel my fingers and toes again, I dress in a new pair of black jeans, a gray tee, and a black ball cap, leaving my cut draped over the chair in the room. There aren't a lot of people around here who look like me, so the only way to conceal my identity is by wearing average clothes and hiding under a hat.

I take a ride share to a car rental lot and pick up the nondescript sedan I rented under a false identity. From there, it's a short drive to the light brick building that holds all the answers I need. Parking a few streets over, I quickly swap the plates with a set I stole off a similar car before leaving Reno.

After grabbing my backpack, I creep through the shadows until the building comes into view. Following the perimeter to the rear parking lot, I find the only vehicle parked there—a white minivan. *His* minivan. I know this because Satyr was all too happy to do some digging into him and the church building itself.

According to a Google calendar Satyr hacked, we found out *he* works late each Saturday, preparing for Sunday service.

Normally, I'd do some surveillance to make sure he's alone, but there's just no time. It has me feeling a little uneasy, but not enough to change my mind about what needs to be done.

Satyr's research told us that the only security the church has is an alarm system that's triggered when the building is broken into, so I don't have to worry about any cameras. It was good news, but it also meant if the door was locked, I'd waste time and increase my risk of being caught by disabling the alarm.

It's a nonissue, though, when I give the door a push and it opens easily. I'm not surprised. Even though this area has seen a dramatic population increase in the last few years, the locals still have a small-town mentality, especially when it comes to the church.

I memorized the layout of the building, so I move easily through the darkened halls that smell of citrus cleaner and dirty gym socks, and I grin when I don't burst into flames. Not that I wouldn't deserve it after all the shit I've done.

The building is silent until I round the last corner, and the sound of a choir singing hymns spills into the hallway. Maybe listening to this shit is comforting to its parishioners, but shit, it gives me the creeps.

Knowing this will undoubtedly shake this entire community to its core has adrenaline coursing through me, making me feel like I just shot-gunned twenty energy drinks. Or maybe that's excitement. Whatever it is, I'm hardcore buzzing.

I stop just beyond the fluorescent light that's flooding the hallway from the office to remove my hat. I pull my balaclava over my face with my leather-gloved hands and place the cap back on my head. Not that I think he'll be able to identify me from his place in hell but because I'm smart and don't take unnecessary risks, especially now that I have someone waiting for me at home.

Taking one final breath through the knit fabric covering my mouth and nose, I stroll through the office door like I belong here. Leaning against the doorjamb, I fold my arms

across my chest and wait for him to notice me from where he's sitting at his desk, focusing on his laptop.

He's an old bastard, with balding white hair that's neatly combed and a clean-shaven face. He has hanging jowls and is heavily wrinkled, with deep grooves on his forehead and around his eyes and mouth. His suit coat is about two sizes too big, making the shoulder pads sit awkwardly and the excess fabric hang loosely.

Five whole minutes pass before he quickly glances up and then back at his screen, not expecting to see anyone there. It takes a couple seconds for the sight of me to register, but the moment it does, his body freezes and his eyes widen as he slowly returns his gaze to me. For a moment, I debate removing my mask so he can see how much I'm relishing in his response.

"W-what do you want? W-who are you?" he asks, placing his hands on the arms of his office chair.

"Just consider me the devil who's come to absolve you of your sins."

"What are you talking about?"

"Don't play stupid. It's just you and me here." I push off the doorjamb and stalk over to him.

He turns in his chair, not taking his eyes off me. "If it's money you want, I think I have some cash in my wallet."

"I don't want your fuckin' money, asshole."

"This is a house of God," he says, seemingly more worried about my foul language than the masked stranger in his presence.

"Weird. I don't see him anywhere." I make a show of looking around and see him purse his lips in irritation.

"Just tell me what you want."

"I want you to confess your sins to me, and maybe if you're honest, I'll let you live." It's a lie, but if someone knows they're going to die, there's no motivation to open up.

I know what he's thinking as he stares me down. I've seen it a hundred times before. He's preparing to deny any wrongdoings, and if that doesn't work, he'll admit to mild lies to pacify me.

Not giving him the chance to prove me right, I lean over, placing my hands over his on the armrest and looking him dead in the eyes. "I'll do you a favor and clue you in a little. Tell me about Tinleigh."

I return to towering over him as a sheen of sweat blossoms on his brow, and his gaze bounces around to everything but me. He pries his hand from under mine and reaches to his neck, loosening his tie and unbuttoning the top button of his shirt. Even through the hanging skin on his throat, I see his Adam's apple bob up and down.

"S-she's the daughter of two of our members. I haven't seen her in years, but from what I remember, she was a deeply troubled girl."

Removing my backpack, I set it on his desk and unzip it, not showing any reaction. He takes my silence to mean he hasn't told me enough and keeps going as I pull out a rope and zip-tie cuffs.

His words come fast and furious. "Even from a young age, she was a pathological liar. Her parents did all they could to change her behavior, and when nothing worked, they brought her to me. I worked with her for almost a year and thought we were making progress until she came up with a truly disgusting lie about me. After that, it was no longer appropriate for me to intervene."

Even after he finishes, I remain quiet, unclipping my knife and setting that on the desk as well.

With comically wide eyes, he blubbers, "I don't know what she told you, but you can't trust anything she says. Like I said, she's troubled. She even influenced her twin sister to lie. If I could just talk to her—"

"Shut the fuck up, you lying piece of shit," I say lowly, and his mouth snaps closed.

White hot rage burns through me as I think about how Tinleigh must've felt when the people who were supposed to protect her betrayed her in the worst way. She was just a fucking kid, and they gaslit her and blamed her for everything. It's a goddamn miracle she survived.

"Beautiful family." I pick up a framed photo on his desk. Standing in front of a white temple are twenty or more adults and kids, including his wife. It's eerie how perfect they look, like a fucking Stepford family with robotic smiles and not a hair out of place.

It makes me think of the photo we took this last Christmas. It's a fucking chaotic scene with hardly anyone looking at the camera, my brothers in their cuts and bottles of beer in hand, the women pointing to the camera, failing to get us to pay attention, and Tyson front and center with his middle finger waving through the air.

Now that is a family portrait.

"Yes."

I set the picture down right in front of him. "If you want to see any of them again, you better start being honest."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Let's start with how many."

"How many what?" he asks, still not taking me seriously.

I sigh. "You live on Woodlands Drive. Your wife's name is Gloria, and your kids are Daniel, Michael, Josephine, Madelyn, and Trinity. I could tell you your grandkids' names, but they got just as creative as Tinleigh's parents, and I can't remember them all. However, give me a second, and I'll pull out my notes so I can prove to you I know more about you than you want a man like me to know."

"No." He shakes his head furiously. "I believe you."

"Then tell me how many girls you've molested," I demand.

His shoulders slump and his eyes dampen, turning red. "I don't know. I didn't keep track."

“That many, huh? And still, you sit in a position of power?”

“I know my sins, but that’s between me and my God.”

“Not anymore, it ain’t. It’s between you and me.” I pull out my phone and ring Satyr, positioning the asshole’s laptop in front of me.

“You got it?” Satyr asks.

“Yeah. Just tell me what to do.”

It only takes a minute for me to grant Satyr control of the device, and only five more for him to find the proof we need. Men like this asshole enjoy reliving their abuse almost as much as the experience itself, so it’s not surprising to find voice recordings of his sessions.

When Satyr hits play on one to make sure we’re right, the sound of this predator pours from the speakers. Tears stream down his reddened face as he listens to himself ask a girl if she’s had impure thoughts. She’s clearly uncomfortable and embarrassed as she admits to having a conversation with her friends about sex. When he demands she detail that conversation and tell him how it made her feel, Satyr stops the recording.

We don’t need to hear more to know it gets worse from here; I’m grateful I don’t have to be the one to listen to it.

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry,” he whimpers pathetically. Shame is written all over his features, but it’s not even close to the punishment he deserves. Even what I’m about to do to him isn’t enough. If I had it my way, I’d bring him to the kill room at the ranch and take my fucking time carving him up like a Thanksgiving turkey. Unfortunately, I have to be smart, so knowing he’s not around to hurt anyone else will have to do.

“I’ll download the files before I back out of the system and clear my trail. Just leave that up on the screen. Hopefully, someone thinks to look at the laptop, but if they don’t, I can send the files to the cops anonymously later on,” Satyr says.

“Yeah, okay. Thanks.” I end the call and reposition the laptop to where it was. “Let’s take a walk.”

“What are you going to do to me? You said—”

“I said whatever I had to in order to get the truth, and you’re a dumb fuck if you thought otherwise.” Gripping his upper arm, I pull him to standing. “Come on.”

Taking the rope and my knife, I shove him down the hall to the church gym. I flip the lights on before moving to the closest basketball hoop, leaving the prick standing by the door. He’s not going anywhere; we both know he wouldn’t make it far.

The basketball hoop itself isn’t strong enough to hold much weight, but the steel frame is, so I toss the end of the rope over one of the wall mounts and tie a noose the way Rigger taught me. This is his preferred method of killing, so I had him walk me through it.

“Please,” he begs, realizing what I’m doing. “You don’t have to do this. I’ll resign from my position. I’ll even admit to what I’ve done. Just don’t make me do this.”

“From what I understand, suicide is the same as murder in the eyes of your religion. I’ll bet your perfect family won’t like that their patriarch committed such an awful sin.” I glance around until I find a stack of chairs. Lifting one off the top, I bring it over, sizing the asshole up before adjusting the noose.

“God will know the truth. This sin is yours, and you’ll burn in the fiery depths of hell for it.” His tone turns angry as he comes to terms with his reality. He won’t make this easy on me, but he’s old and frail, and I’m... well, I’m me.

“My soul was promised to the Reaper long before this.” I shrug. “This is just vindication.”

“I’ve done nothing to you.”

I stalk over to him. “Like hell you didn’t. You fuck with my woman, you fuck with me. I might’ve not been around back then to deal with you, but I’m here now.”

“She’s not worth it. I should know since even at twelve years old, she was well on her way to being a slut.”

Gripping him by the arm of his suit coat, I drag him over to the setup. “You’re right about that. She’s a slut for me every night, spreading her legs and fucking me so good.”

“Stop. Stop talking like that. Not here.”

“You mean in God’s house? The same place you violated young girls with your little disease-infested dick?” I grab my knife and press the tip into the front of his pants, wishing I could mutilate the bastard. “There’s one question that’s been bugging me about the whole thing. How did you get syphilis anyway? Was it prostitutes? I can’t imagine there are very many of those around here, but Vegas is close enough.” I twist my blade, barely hanging onto my last thread of control. “That was it, huh?”

He says nothing, just holds his chin high as sweat drips down his blotchy face, but I see the truth and know I’m right.

“I get it. Raping the girls would be too obvious, so that was just foreplay.” My stomach turns as I say the words. He’s convinced he’s in the presence of evil right now because of me, but he’s wrong. It’s been inside of him the whole time; I’m just a manifestation of it. “Get up on the chair.”

“No. I can’t.”

“Get the fuck up on the chair, or I swear to god, I’ll work my way through your entire fucking family, killing them one by one.” I stare him down, not showing even a hint of a lie. “Starting with your wife. I’ll make her listen to every single one of those recordings, and by the time she’s done, I won’t even have to pull the trigger because she’ll want to kill herself.”

His nostrils flare as he climbs onto the chair, and I slip the noose around his neck. Stepping back to admire my handiwork, I understand why Rigger likes this so much. It’s about the method and preparation, the fear that builds within the victim as you go through the motions.

Until the front of his pants darkens as he pisses himself.
Motherfucker.

“Seriously?” I jump back when the force of the stream sends droplets flying into the air. “Do you have any last words?”

“Our heavenly Father, I thank thee for my many blessings.” His prayer gets louder and louder as he continues, but I block him out. It’s all bullshit he thinks will bring him redemption.

“Shut the fuck up for a second. I have some final words for you.” With my foot on the edge of the chair, I give it a tap. He nearly loses his balance but regains it at the last minute. “Having Tinleigh in my life is as close to heaven as I’ll ever get. I want you to die knowing that despite what you did to her, she’s a fucking angel. You didn’t ruin her.” I allow all my rage to bubble to the surface and shout. “You hear me? You didn’t fucking ruin her!”

My words echo with the clattering of the chair as I give it a shove, and it skids across the floor. The asshole’s legs flail as he pulls on the rope, trying to relieve the pressure of the noose around his throat. His face turns tomato red, and spittle flies from his mouth as he struggles to breathe.

It’s not fast like in the movies. It takes long minutes, and I burn every second into my memory so I can replay it later, when the hints of Tinleigh’s trauma show through in her eyes.

I realize he’s not the only one responsible for what she went through. That’s why I initially planned on visiting her parents while I was out here, but ultimately decided the blowback from what I have planned here will be enough. They’ll go to their graves with the whole damn city knowing they did nothing to protect their girls from a predator. I’ll make sure of it.

When the kicking stops, when his entire body goes lax and all that’s left is a swinging corpse, a sudden urge to get home hits me. I need to feel her in my arms, need to hold her and love her, prove to her that the worst is over.

Meticulously, I gather up my things and wipe down every surface I came into contact with, even though I had gloves on. Then, I walk out of the building and trek back to the rental. In

record time, I have the rental returned, the plates swapped, and I've checked out of the lousy motel room.

It'll take all night to get home, and I'll be frozen to my core, but I don't give a shit. The freezing pain is nothing compared to what Tinleigh's endured over the years. If she can make it through that, I can do this.

The sun is cresting in the sky when I finally pull into the Sons' parking lot. My teeth are chattering, my fists frozen around my handlebars, but nothing can stop me from being where I need to be.

The cabin is quiet and warm when I walk through the door and strip all my layers off. Naked as the day I was born, I climb the ladder and find my woman sound asleep. She didn't flip the windows to opaque before she fell asleep, so the sun is shining down on her peaceful form. It's not surprising; she loves that the stars are the last thing she sees before closing her eyes each night.

I climb into bed behind her, the urge to be skin-to-skin with her overwhelming me. The second my cold body cradles her warm one, she jumps and screams. I cover her mouth, holding her in place as I whisper into her ear, "Put the claws away. It's me, Hellcat."

She settles, and I pull my hand away. "You're fucking freezing."

"I know." I curl around her, slipping my hands under her tank top and cupping her breasts, inhaling her pine scent because she listened when I told her I like it when she smells like me. "I couldn't wait to get home to you."

"I'm glad. I missed you so much."

"Same, baby," I say, raining open-mouthed kisses over her neck and shoulder. "Need you."

"Yes," she breathes out.

With that one word, she helps me shove her sleep shorts down past her ass, and I take her in this position. Even though only a minute has passed since I got into bed with her, her cunt

is wet and needy for me, just like it always is and always will be.

The road name Lucky was given to me after I was pulled over carrying a shipment of spice and two illegal guns. I was young and stupid and thought my newly acquired colors meant I was untouchable. There was no reason for that cop not to search me. Matter of fact, he was radioing in backup to do just that when he got a call more pressing than a punk on a bike. He shouted for me to slow down as he jumped into his squad car and sped away.

Even knowing how fucking lucky I was that day, it doesn't even compare to this moment. I rock in and out of her slowly, the sound of her panting filling the air, and know I'm the luckiest man in the fucking world.

I dare anyone to convince me otherwise.

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Misty Walker writes everything from dark and delicious, to sweet and spicy. Most of her books are forbidden in some way and many are age-gap, because that's her jam.

She's lived quite the nomadic life, never staying in the same place for long until she met her husband. They've recently settled in Reno, NV with their two daughters, two dogs, and two hamsters, because everything's better in pairs.

Misty is fueled by coffee and the voices in her head screaming for their stories to be told. Which is why the coffee is necessary because there are only so many hours in a day and who needs sleep anyway?

If you'd like to keep up to date on all her future releases, please sign up for her newsletter on her website. You can also order a signed paperback of this book, or any of her releases, there.

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You can purchase signed paperbacks on my website: www.authormistywalker.com

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