



My
SURVIVOR

MAYHEM  **MAKERS**

IRON FIENDS MC BOOK TWO

WALL STREET JOURNAL & USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Wall Street Journal & USA Today Bestselling Author

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Oral Communications
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About the Author

Coming Soon

Excerpt from *Wilder Presley Says He Loves Me*

Excerpt from *Drop a Gear and Disappear*

Chapter One

Cue Ball

“How?”

“Who?”

“What?”

“Holy fuck!” Smoke spat. “There used to be a fucking door here.”

“Hell, the whole back half of the building is gone,” I sighed.

Dice, Fade, Smoke, and I were gathered at the back of the gym, watching the smoldering smoke while the firefighters stayed at bay to make sure the fire didn’t reignite.

Fade ran his fingers through his hair. “This is fucking insane.”

“Brother, this is beyond insane.” He nodded toward the right. “There is a fucking dumbbell through that car’s windshield.”

“Yeah, that’s not supposed to be there,” I laughed.

Dice snickered and bumped me with his shoulder. “Pretty sure the weight bench isn’t supposed to be across the street either.”

“Cue,” Yarder called.

“Any chance you think I can ignore him and he won’t get pissed off?” I drawled.

Yarder raised his voice, “All of you idiots.”

“I’m gonna say no,” Fade laughed.

We ambled over to Yarder and Compass, who was at the side of the gym, away from the firefighters.

“What’s up?” Smoke asked.

“Olive is on the way to the hospital. I need Cue to go there to keep an eye on her and the rest of you to head out to Faye,” Yarder instructed.

“Why do I need to keep an eye on her?” I asked. I didn’t even know the chick or what she looked like.

“Because that is what I fucking asked you to do. We don’t know why the hell the gym was blown up, and until we figure it out, Faye and Olive are our

responsibility. They work for the club, so they are the responsibility of the club,” Yarder growled. “I don’t need you questioning me.”

“You think they might be the reason why this happened?” Fade asked. “You guys were the ones who found these two.”

I cringed and ran my fingers through my hair. To say we were all a little bitter about Yarder and Compass making moves and decisions without the club was an understatement.

Compass flattened his lips and glared at Fade. “We checked both of them out.”

I nodded toward the building. “Just a coincidence, the gym gets blown up after you hire those two, then.”

“Why do we need to head out to Faye?” Dice asked.

“Olive was going to clean the gym and then go pick up Faye. Her car broke down about an hour away,” Yarder explained.

“So we’re a taxi service now, too,” Smoke snickered.

“Why the hell are guys fighting me so much on this? We’re more than likely the reason why the gym blew up, and we need to protect everyone connected to us because that is what we fucking do.” Yarder nodded to me. “Find Olive Benson and stick by her.”

“What do you want us to do once we help Faye?” Smoke asked.

Yarder shrugged. “You guys can figure out between the three of you which one is going to be her shadow.”

“Not it!” Dice and Smoke called in unison.

“God dammit,” Fade grumbled. “This is some bullshit. Why can’t we just put both of the girls up in a hotel and just make them stay there until we know what the hell is going on?” he suggested.

“Have you ever met a woman before?” Dice laughed. “Ain’t no way in hell either of them would be okay with just sitting in a hotel room for days.”

“Not without demanding to know why,” Smoke snickered.

Yarder nodded to me. “Stay with Olive no matter what.” He turned to Smoke, Dice, and Fade. “You three help Faye, and then Fade sticks to her like glue. We’ll try to figure out what the hell is going on.”

“Too bad the show isn’t shooting yet. This shit would make some great TV.” Smoke nodded to Yarder. “You should give the production crew a call.”

Yarder shook his head. “I am thankful as fuck the show isn’t shooting yet. There wouldn’t be a way for us to figure out what was going on without

a camera in our faces. We've got three and a half weeks until the crew shows up. We figure this out before then, and this will just be a story we can tell when they're interviewing us."

"Three weeks to figure out why the gym blew up. I think we can do that," Compass replied. "Besides, I'm sure the cops will be trying to figure it out, too."

"That a good or bad thing?" I asked.

The Iron Fiends were pretty much on the up and up. We didn't deal in drugs or pussy. We were just a local motorcycle club that ran a local garage, and we loved to ride.

Yarder shrugged. "Neither from where I'm standing. If we were dealing in dirty shit, I would be worried, but we're clean."

I guess that was one good thing in all of this.

There was obviously someone pissed off at us or the new girls, but it wasn't looking like we would get busted for past shit.

"You want me to bring Faye back to the clubhouse?" Fade asked.

"Yeah, same with Olive?"

Yarder shrugged. "Doesn't matter. If they want to, sure. But they might put up a fuss about leaving their places. Just do whatever you can to keep them happy but also safe. I'll let you know if it becomes a need to have them at the clubhouse."

I nodded and headed over to my bike.

Tonight was not at all what I had planned to be doing, but that was life.

One minute you're trying to get used to the idea of being on a reality show, and the next minute you're watching a gym burn down while being tasked with keeping an eye on some chick you didn't know.

Fucking crazy.

*

Chapter Two

Olive

“I need to go home.”

Nurse Gene shook his head and fiddled with the machine connected to me. “That isn’t going to happen yet. We need to run a few more tests to make sure you’re okay.”

“I just have a headache, and my leg is sore,” I insisted. “I’ll take a few Tylenol, and I’ll be fine.” I had a few scrapes and bruises, too, but I wasn’t at all concerned about those. I was just thankful I was still breathing.

When that bomb exploded, I was sure I was a goner. I had been knocked a good twenty feet back and had landed hard on my butt. I must have smacked my head at some point to explain my throbbing head. “I need to call my mom. She has my son,” I explained. “Someone needs to tell her what is going on.”

“We were able to pull up your emergency contact. We let who you have on file know.”

I tipped my head to the side. *Who I had on file?* It had been years since I had been in the hospital myself.

Not since Rocky was born.

Oh no.

“Uh, are you able to tell me who it is you called?” When I had given birth, my mom and I weren’t speaking.

“I’ll have to take a look when I get back to the nurse’s station.” Gene finished doing whatever the hell it was he was doing and logged out of the computer. “Next up is a CAT Scan to check out your head. They should be in here soon.”

The only thing I was worried about was who they had called to tell them I had been in an accident.

“Can you let me know right away who you called?”

Gene nodded. “I’ll check once I peek in on my two other patients.”

Not the answer I was wanting, but I wasn’t that heartless to demand he not care about his other patients and just tell me who the heck was listed as my emergency contact. I was ninety-nine percent sure of who that person was, but I was praying to god that I was wrong. “Uh, great.”

I laid my head back on the pillow and stared up at the ceiling.

How in the heck did this happen?

I was just trying to do my job, and suddenly I was thrown into the air while the gym exploded.

Fun times.

A knock sounded on the door, and I held my breath. I didn't know who was knocking, but it could be the one person I never wanted to see again on the other side.

"Uh, come in?" I called.

I kept my eyes closed and said a quick prayer that it was anyone but Rocky's dad.

"Olive?"

My prayers were answered when the low timber that sounded was not Rocky's dad.

My eyes snapped open, and I was shocked to see a member of the Iron Fiends at the foot of my bed. I had only been working at the gym for a short time and had met two of the members when Faye and I had interviewed for the job.

This guy was not someone I had met before.

My eyes darted to the patch on his chest.

Cue Ball.

Interesting name.

"Uh, hi?" I croaked. I cleared my throat and smiled. "Hi."

"I'm Cue," he offered. "I'm here to keep an eye on you."

"An eye on me?" I asked. "Uh, did I do something?" The Iron Fiends were known around town, but not because they were trouble. They did lots of things for the town, and they were the only car repair shop.

He shook his head. "No, doll."

"I didn't blow up the gym," I blurted. "I told Yarder that when they were carting me off to the ambulance."

Cue Ball chuckled. "Yeah, we know that. I'm just here to make sure nothing else happens to you."

I tipped my head to the side. "Is that really a concern?" Sure, I had just been blown up, but I was hopeful I was going to be safe while in the hospital.

I took in the man standing in front of me. His chin and cheeks were covered with a dark beard and mustache. He looked a bit wild but also well-

kempt at the same time. His dark chocolate brown eyes bore into me, and it felt like he could read my every thought.

He wore a black leather vest with his club patches and a dark gray t-shirt underneath. His legs were encased in light-wash jeans, and even though I couldn't see his feet, I assumed he was sporting black motorcycle boots.

He was not at all hard to look at.

"Until we figure out what happened tonight, I need to keep an eye on you," he explained.

"Am I in danger?" Holy crap. I hadn't really had time to think about what happened to me or why it happened to me.

Cue Ball shrugged. "Again, doll, I don't know, but I'm here to keep you safe in case you are in trouble."

"Rocky," I whispered.

He tipped his head to the side. "Who?"

"My son. Rocky is my son. If I'm in danger, then he might be in danger, too. I need to get to him."

Cue Ball held up his hands. "Just slow down, doll. We don't think you were the target of the bomb."

"Then why are you here telling me that you are going to keep me safe?" I demanded. This was all crazy. I just cleaned the gym; that was it.

"Because we are trying to cover all of our bases. You work for the club, so that means we take care of you, too."

My mind raced, trying to figure out what this all meant. "I have to talk to my mom. She's watching Rocky for me." I glanced at the clock. "And I bet she is wondering where the heck I am because I should have picked him up over half an hour ago."

"Give me your mom's number, and I'll let her know what is going on." He pulled out his phone and looked at me expectantly.

I rattled off the number, and he punched it into his phone. He hit another button, and it started ringing through the speaker. "You do the talking, doll. I doubt your mom wants to hear from some guy she doesn't know that you are in the hospital."

If only the hospital had thought the same thing. I still didn't know who the heck they had called.

"Hello?" my mom called.

"Mom," I shouted.

Cue Ball moved closer and held the phone out to me.

“Olive?” mom gasped. “Where are you? I’ve been calling and calling you.”

“I’m okay, Mom, but there was an accident. I’m in the hospital.”

“Oh my god!” she hollered. “What happened? Where are you?”

I glanced at Cue Ball. “Uh, well, I was sort of blown up.”

“Blown up?” Mom cried.

“But I’m okay!” I added quickly. “They’re just going to run a few tests to make sure I’m okay, and then I’ll be home.”

“I’m coming there. What hospital are you in?” she demanded.

“Mom, you can’t wake up Rocky in the middle of the night. I promise I am okay.”

“You’re all alone there, Olive. Someone needs to be there with you,” she pleaded.

“Uh, well, I’m not alone.”

“Is Faye with you?” she asked. “Oh my god, did she get blown up with you, too?”

“No, no. She wasn’t there.”

“Then who is there with you?” she demanded. “I don’t want you to be lying in the hospital by yourself.”

My eyes connected with Cue Ball’s. I had just met this man five minutes ago, but he was here for me. “Cue is here with me. He’s one of the guys who owns the gym.”

“I’ll be with Olive, Mrs. Benson,” Cue Ball called. “I can vouch for the fact that she will be okay. She’s just a little banged up.”

“How did this happen?” Mom demanded. “Was it a gas line or something? Why on earth did the gym blow up?”

“Uh, we don’t know yet, ma’am. Once we know why, we’ll let you know.” Cue Ball cleared his throat. “It might have been a freak accident.”

I knew that was a lie.

When I opened the back door, it triggered the bomb.

I just didn’t know why.

Cue Ball and the Iron Fiends might know, though.

“I’m calling in for work, and I’m coming there, Olive. This doesn’t feel right,” Mom insisted.

“You’re not going to wake up Rocky, Mom. I promise I am okay, and I

will be home before you need to go to work.” I understood that Mom was worried, but waking up Rocky in the middle of the night to drag him to the hospital was not going to help.

A knock sounded on the door.

“That’s probably the doctor, Mom. I’ll call you back in a little bit to let you know what is going on.”

Cue Ball ended the call and shoved the phone into his pocket. He stepped to the side of my bed, and the door pushed open.

Shit.

Shit, shit, shit.

“Shit.” I tried not to cuss because Rocky was like a sponge, absorbing everything around him. His estranged father, who signed away his rights to him when he was only six days old, walking through the door, was a good reason to cuss.

“Olive,” he called softly.

I had not seen this man for close to ten years, and the sound of him saying my name threw me back to a naïve seventeen-year-old.

I hated this man. When I had been at my most weak and vulnerable, he had tossed me aside and wanted nothing to do with Rocky and me. When Rocky was six days old, his father, Tag Martin, died in my world.

Now a dead man was standing in my hospital room.

“I don’t need you here, Tag,” I whispered.

“Is that why the hospital called me and told me you had been in an accident?” he asked.

I gritted my teeth and scowled. “I didn’t ask them to call you. You were still listed as my emergency contact from when Rocky was born.”

“That was ten years ago,” he pointed out. “You telling me in ten years you never thought about changing that?”

I sighed and looked off to the side.

Cue Ball moved toward Tag and held his hand out to him. “I’m Cue.”

Tag shook his hand. “I’m…” his words faltered, and he dropped his hand to his side.

He was a sperm donor. That was it.

“He was leaving,” I interrupted. “I’m sorry that you came all this way, Tag. I’ll make sure to have your name taken off my emergency contact list.”

“Uh, I moved back to town a few months ago,” he explained. “It only

took me a couple of minutes to get here. Are you okay?" he asked.

I had never heard those words from Tag before.

He was ten years too late.

"I'll be fine. Cue will make sure of that," I blurted. "He's been here the whole time."

Tag tipped his head to the side and looked Cue Ball up and down. "You're together?" he asked. His eyes lingered on the patch on Cue Ball's chest.

I didn't even have time to think about what to say or do next.

Cue Ball grabbed my hand and threaded his fingers through mine. He stood close to the side of the bed and nodded.

I know I had said that Cue Ball would make sure I was okay, but I was surprised Cue was going to take it this far.

I also didn't owe Tag an explanation about anything, though.

Tag looked around. "Is..."

He was looking for Rocky. The rat bastard was looking for *my* son. My blood boiled at the thought of Tag even being able to get a glimpse of Rocky. He didn't deserve to see Rocky, let alone be in the same room as him.

"He's home with Grandma right now," Cue Ball explained. "We just talked to her."

"Oh, uh, well, that's good." Tag ran his fingers through his hair. "I guess I'll just get going."

Thank god. "Yup, bye." I didn't owe Tag the decency to be nice to him.

"Uh, thanks for taking the time to check on Olive. I'll make sure everything gets changed with the hospital computers."

Tag nodded. "Uh, that would be good." He hesitantly turned and pulled open the door. "I'm glad you'll be okay, Olive." He disappeared out the door, and it closed softly behind him.

"You should give up the motorcycle gig and take up acting," I whispered.

"No shit, doll," Cue Ball chuckled. "I'm going to be a fucking natural on Tread."

"What?" I asked.

He shook his head and dropped my hand. "Nothing, doll."

"Uh, thank you for helping with Tag," I muttered.

"Your kid's dad?" he asked.

I scoffed. “Sperm donor is more like it. He saw Rocky two times and then signed his rights over.”

“Damn, doll. You sure you don’t want me to go track that guy down and punch his lights out?” he asked.

Ten years ago, I would have said yes, but these days Tag wasn’t worth my or Cue’s time. Not once did he try to contact me, and if it hadn’t been for the hospital calling him, I probably would have never seen him.

Though he did say he had moved back to town a few months ago.

How had I not known that? Mt. Pleasant wasn’t a super small town where we all knew each other, but it wasn’t a bustling metropolis either.

“No. If I never see him again, it will be too soon,” I sighed. I laid my head back on my pillow. “First, I get blown up, and then I have to see Tag? Lordy, give me some good pain meds and knock me out.”

“Knock, knock,” Nurse Gene called as he pushed open the door. “I know who we called.”

“I know, too,” I growled.

“Oh, hello,” Gene called. “Is this who we called? You don’t look so happy to see him.” He nodded to Cue Ball. “You much be Tag.”

I rolled my eyes. “Wrong, Gene.”

Cue Ball sat in the chair next to my bed. “You can call me Cue.”

“Like the ball or like a line?” Gene asked. He pushed a few buttons on the machine I was hooked up to, and the blood pressure cuff on my arm started to squeeze.

“Ball,” Cue Ball replied.

“Good at pool?” Gene asked.

“Decent,” Cue Ball shrugged.

I bet that was a lie.

“Mmhmm,” Gene hummed. “Sure.”

“Uh, do you know when I am going to be able to get out of here?” I asked. “I need to get home to my son before my mom has to go to work.”

“Shouldn’t be too long, sugar.” Gene sat at the computer and scanned his card.

The door swung open, and a woman walked in. “CAT scan?” she called.

“Speak of the devil,” Gene called.

“How many times have I told you not to call me by my real name in front of the patients?” the woman cackled. She smiled at me and winked.

“You can just call me D, honey. I’m gonna take you for a spin.”

“And how many times have I told not to scare the patients?” Gene asked D. “She’s got a big ol’ biker keeping watch over her.”

“I can take him,” D laughed. She fiddled with the IV on my arm and raised the side rail on my bed. “He may look tough, but I’m sure he’s a teddy bear inside.” She winked at me and removed the brakes on my bed.

I glanced at Cue Ball, who had a smirk lingering on his lips.

“We’ll be right back, okay, biker boy?” she asked.

Cue Ball held up his hands. “I should probably insist on coming along to make sure Olive is safe, but I’m pretty sure you could take a wild cougar down with one hand.”

“Damn straight,” D muttered. “Sit tight.”

D wheeled me out of my room and down the hallway.

“You good?” she asked.

I closed my eyes. “Sure.”

She tsked. “Child, with that man at your side, I know for a fact you are good.”

I didn’t argue and tell her I had just met Cue Ball tonight. I didn’t have the energy to tell her the truth. “Can I take a nap?” My headache was coming on strong, and I just wanted to sleep.

“As long as you’re not moving, I don’t care what you are doing.”

My exhausted body relaxed into the bed, and I let the darkness take me over again.

*

Chapter Three

Cue Ball

They just took her for a CAT scan.

I'm coming with Rocky.

I had just met Olive half an hour ago, but I knew without a doubt that was the last thing she wanted her mom to do. **No. She should be released soon. I will let you know when we are on the way.**

If she is not home by three, I am coming there. That was only a couple of hours from now, but I figured we should be on the way by then.

Also, I knew that was not a threat but a promise. **10-4.**

I shoved my phone in my pocket and kicked my feet out in front of me. I had talked with Gene, and he said that as long as the results from her tests came back okay, we should be out of here soon. I just hoped that was soon enough for Olive's mom.

I had texted Smoke asking if they had made it to Faye, but I hadn't heard back from him yet. My phone buzzed, and I fought back the urge to chuck it across the room when I saw Yarder's name.

"Yo," I called into the phone.

"Everything okay there?" Yarder called.

"Don't know much. She's banged up, and they are running a bunch of tests. You could have mentioned that she has a kid," I grunted.

"That a problem for you?" he asked.

"No, but her mother bugging the hell out of me about wanting to come to the hospital is driving me a little crazy." Chicks with kids were not a problem for me. It was all the unnecessary drama that sometimes came with them.

The most common drama typically came from the dad, but it seemed like Olive was long over her ex.

"You'll be fine. Unless she still lives with her mom, and then you might have a long couple of weeks in front of you."

"Couple of weeks?" I grunted. "You really think it is going to take that long to figure out what the hell happened?"

"I don't know, Cue. Right now, it's the middle of the night, and we haven't figured out anything from when I last saw you an hour ago."

I hadn't thought they would figure out who blew up the gym yet, but I

didn't think it was going to take weeks to figure it out. "If she lives with her mom, I'm bringing her and her kid to the clubhouse. It's enough you sticking me with babysitting duty. I'm not dealing with her mom on top of it."

Yarder chuckled. "Can't blame you, man. Just let me know what you're up to and if you need anything."

"I'm going to need a car, Yarder. I'm pretty sure putting Olive on the back of my bike isn't the best idea right now."

"Yeah, you're probably right. I'll have Throttle and Compass bring you a car. Keys will be under the floor mat."

"Thanks." I ended the call and tossed my phone on Olive's bed.

A couple of weeks?

Fucking hell.

*

Chapter Four

Olive

“Is something wrong?”

Cue Ball scanned the parking lot and ran his fingers through his hair.

“Uh, did you forget where you parked?” Gene snickered.

“I know where I parked my bike, but that’s gone,” Cue Ball grunted.

“What?” I gasped. “Someone stole your motorcycle?” Wouldn’t that just be the cherry on top of a craptastic night?

“That might be for the best since I wouldn’t recommend you roaring out of here on the back of a motorcycle. The doctor cleared you to leave, but you do still have a slight concussion,” Gene advised.

“Throttle took my bike and left a car for me. I just don’t know what car and where he parked it.” He pulled out his phone and sent off a message.

“You guys have that many cars that you don’t know which one they brought?” Gene asked. “I’m in the wrong profession if you biker boys have a ton of cars and bikes at your disposal.”

“You couldn’t be more wrong, Gene. Stick with being a nurse, trust me. You won’t have to sell your soul to make a go of it.” Cue Ball stepped into the aisle of the parking lot and looked to the left and right.

Gene tipped his head to the side. “Oh, okay. Could you be a little bit more mysterious?”

“Well, I guess it’s a good thing your bike wasn’t stolen, but you think they would have told you what they left you to drive,” I interrupted. I wasn’t sure I wanted to know why or how Cue had sold his soul.

“If it were anyone but Throttle and Compass dropping off the car, they would have told me. Well,” he pondered, “if it would have been anyone but someone from the club, they would have told me where the car was.” His phone dinged, and he headed off to the left. “I’ll be right back, doll.”

“How long have you two been together?” Gene asked.

“Oh, uh, well, not very long,” I hemmed. That wasn’t a lie, right? I mean, we had been together for the past couple of hours, so under a very loose definition, we have been together for a short time. I settled back into my wheelchair and fiddled with the hem of the shirt I had borrowed from

Cue. My shirt had been torn and tattered from the explosion, and Cue had an extra shirt with him.

I assumed it was for when he was out and stayed the night with one of the many women who were pounding on his door. I may have been blown up, but I wasn't blind.

Cue Ball was a gorgeous man who, without a doubt, never had a problem having a warm body in bed with him every night.

"Hold on to that one, honey. He's a little rough around the edges, but you can tell he is a good guy." Gene sat down on the bench next to me and crossed his legs. "He reminds me of my James. Rough on the outside, but a teddy bear at heart."

"I like that for you," I smiled.

"Me, too," he laughed. "I wasn't looking for anyone after being burned so many times in the past, but James just came out of nowhere. Swept me off my feet, and it's been the best seven years of my life."

I had given up on love for myself after Tag showed me how easily a heart broke, but I still loved love for everyone else.

"Son of a bitch!" a loud shout rang.

"Uh, oh," Gene laughed. "Should we take bets on what kind of car Cue is going to roll up here with?" he chuckled.

"I can't even imagine what his friends did to him since I can't believe they didn't even tell him where they parked it."

"Pink Cadillac," Gene guessed. "Or something that is pink. I have a feeling Cue might not be so in touch with his feminine side and would be put off by a pink car."

"You might be right, but you would think with all that testosterone dripping off him, it wouldn't matter."

"You could be right," Gene agreed. "But if he is driving a pink car, I am taking a picture. James would want to see."

"I can't argue with that. If I had my phone, I would do the same." I had zero clue where my phone was. Another thing I was going to need to deal with when my head stopped pounding like a freight train was going through it.

Gene stood, and his mouth dropped open.

"What is it?" I asked. I couldn't see past the row of cars to the left.

"Wow."

“Oh,” I gasped when a white van stopped in front of us.
It wasn’t a minivan, though, that the soccer moms drove.
No.

It was one of those big vans that had no side windows, black rims, and dark tinted door windows.

A creeper van.

The ones you saw rolling slowly down the road and you just knew they were creeping looking for their next victim.

Stereotypical, yes, but I blame that on TV.

“If I didn’t know better, I wouldn’t let you get in the van, sweetie,” Gene snickered. “He might chain you up and never let you go.” Gene tipped his head to the side. “Maybe you should let me go instead.”

“Stop,” I laughed. “You and I both know that man wouldn’t have to kidnap anyone to have his way with them.”

“James, James, James,” Gene chanted. “I am in love with James, not Cue Ball.”

Cue Ball hopped out and rounded the front of the van. “Well, you’re in luck, doll. You can sit in the front, the second row, third row, or I could even toss you on the roof.”

“Uh,” I laughed. “I think I’ll go for the front seat.”

“I would have asked if his lap was an option,” Gene muttered.

“Gene,” I gasped.

“What? You know you were thinking the same thing.”

Well, I hadn’t been, but now I was.

“Everything okay?” Cue Ball called.

Gene popped up and wheeled me over to the van. “All good. I was just reminding Olive she needs to take it carefully for the next forty-eight hours. Having someone waiting on her hand and foot would be ideal.”

“Stop,” I laughed. Gene had been a sort of stick in the mud while I was up in my room, but he was like a different person out here. Probably because I had been discharged, and waiting for Cue to bring the van around gave him time to be outside.

“Someone will check in with you tomorrow to make sure you’re on the mend.” Gene helped me out of the wheelchair and into the van. “No abducting little kids on the way home, okay?” he instructed.

I gave a small salute. “I’ll do my best not to.”

Gene stepped back and waved. “Try not to get blown up again, Olive. You were pretty lucky this time.”

“Again, I’ll do my best not to.” Gene was just trying to make me laugh now.

Cue Ball shut my door and nodded to Gene. He jogged around the front of the van, and I fastened my seat belt.

“Good?” he asked. He slid into his seat and shifted into drive.

“As soon as you buckle,” I scolded.

Cue Ball rolled his eyes and pulled the belt over his chest. “Not used to buckling up, doll. Something motorcycles don’t have.”

“Please tell me you at least wear a helmet.”

“So, where do you live?” Cue asked, avoiding my very important question.

I rolled my eyes and settled into the seat. “King Road. I live in the blue house with a yellow door. My mom lives on Prescott Street.”

“In the country?” he asked.

I nodded.

“So you don’t live with your mom?” he asked.

I shook my head. “That is a big fat no. I love my mom, but we are like oil and water when we’re in close proximity for too long.”

“But she watches your son for you?”

“Yes. She was pissed as hell at me for getting pregnant ten years ago, but she never took that out on Rocky.”

“Is that why she wasn’t your emergency contact at the hospital?” he asked.

“Yup. I didn’t talk to her the whole time I was pregnant, and she wasn’t there when I gave birth. Though the day after Tag signed away his rights, she was at my door fawning over Rocky and hasn’t left since.”

“Sounds like she wasn’t a fan of Tag, not you,” he pointed out.

I hadn’t ever thought of it like that. I just figured she was there because she didn’t think I could do it on my own. “You know...” He was onto something there. Mom had never been a fan of Tag while we had dated, and when she found out I was pregnant, I was out the door before I could even get the sentence out of my mouth. “I should probably ask her, but I hate to ruin the good thing we have going.”

Cue Ball nodded and headed in the direction of Prescott Street.

“We could head to the gym to get my car,” I volunteered. “You can just drop me off, and I can get out of your hair.”

“Doll,” Cue Ball drawled.

“What?” I asked.

“Pretty sure your car has a weight bench on top of it right now.”

“No,” I cried. “Please tell me you are kidding.”

Cue Ball shook his head. “If you were parked in the back parking lot, your car is toast.”

Let’s make a list of the things I lost in the past day.

My job.

My car.

And now my sanity.

If I didn’t figure out another job, I could add my house to that list.

“It could be salvageable. I’ll get it hauled over to the garage and take a look at it.”

My car wasn’t the best before gym equipment was tossed on it. “Are you guys miracle workers there?” I laughed flatly. “I needed a new car before last night. I’m sure it’s just a big paperweight now.”

Cue Ball patted the steering wheel. “If you’re interested, I’m sure I could talk to Yarder to get you a sweet deal on this.”

“I know I need a new job, but I don’t think I’m that desperate that I need to dip my toes in human trafficking.” Not yet, at least. I would probably sell my own kidney before I would take someone else’s. My kidney would probably be worth a good bit if I found the right buyer.

Oh lord.

Was I really contemplating selling my own kidney on the black market?

“She’s here if you want her,” Cue Ball laughed. “And you still have a job. The gym is going to be rebuilt, and I’m sure we can find something for you to do until it’s done.”

“What?” I asked.

“You technically work for the club, so we’ll just find something else for you to do.”

“I have very few skills that a motorcycle club could use, Cue Ball.” The Iron Fiends owned a gym and a body shop. I had been doing pretty much the only job I could.

“Don’t worry about it right now, doll.”

I sighed and laid my head back. Yeah, I could worry about what the heck I was going to do with my crumbling life when the sun rose.

“Which house is hers?” Cue Ball asked.

We turned onto my mother’s street, and I directed Cue Ball to her house.

“I’ll just run in and get Rocky, okay?”

Cue Ball nodded to the house. “I don’t think that is going to be necessary.”

The front door flew open, and Rocky came running down the sidewalk with my mom close behind him.

“Why on earth is he awake?” I cried. I threw open my door, and Rocky was wrapped around my waist when my feet barely touched the driveway.

“Mom!” he called. “Are you okay?”

I cringed as he squeezed me tight, but I didn’t push him away. “I’ll be okay, sweetheart. I just had a little accident.”

“You call being blown up an accident?” my mom started. She wrapped her arms around me and pulled me close. “I was so worried about you, Olive,” she whispered into my ear.

I closed my eyes and soaked in the comfort my mother’s arms gave me. Things were good between my mom and me, but we had never talked about the time that things weren’t good. It always hung between us like a black balloon, and neither of us was brave enough to pop it.

“Your car was on the news,” Rocky called. “There was a weight bench on the hood and a dumbbell right through the windshield. He pulled back and tipped his head to the side. “Who’s that?” he asked.

“Is this the man who had the decency to call and tell me what was going on?” Mom scolded. “God forbid my daughter would have done that.” And there was that disapproving I was used to.

“Sorry, mom,” I grumbled. “I was a little preoccupied.”

“In her defense, that was the first thing she had me do,” Cue Ball called.

Mom stepped back from me and looked Cue Ball up and down as he walked around the front of the van. “Well, I guess that is something then, right?” She looked at the van. “Are you in a van club? A VC?”

Cue Ball smiled and shook his head. “No, ma’am. I didn’t really think Olive should be on the back of my bike after her accident. I managed to get this before she was released.”

“Sweet,” Rocky called. “You have a motorcycle?” he asked.

“Yeah, bud.” Cue Ball nodded to Rocky and held out his hand. “I’m Cue Ball.”

“Cool,” Rocky drawled. “I wish I had a name like that.”

“Rocky is a pretty good name to me. Way better than what my mom called me.” Cue Ball turned to my mom and nodded. “Hello, Mrs. Benson.”

“It’s Miss,” mom preened.

“What did your mom call you?” Rocky interrupted.

Cue Ball smirked underneath his bushy beard.

“Rocky,” I scolded. “You don’t ask someone what their real name is. For all you know, his mom could have named him Cue Ball.”

“Did your mom like pool?” Rocky asked. “My mom has a thing for Rocky Balboa.”

Shoot me now. I did not need Rocky telling Cue Ball who I have a thing for.

“Why don’t we get going?” I called.

Cue Ball and Rocky ignored me. “My mom did not call me Cue Ball, but she was a pretty good hustler when it came to pool and darts.”

“Is your name Dart?” Rocky asked.

Cue Ball shook his head. “Not that cool. It’s Jovi.”

I tipped my head to the side. Jovi?

“What is a Jovi?” Rocky asked.

“Like Jon Bon Jovi?” Mom asked.

Cue Ball nodded. “The one and the same. Your mom had a thing for Rocky Balboa, and mine had a thing for Bon Jovi. I guess Jovi is cooler than Jon, and I’m thankful she didn’t go with Bon.”

“Do all moms have a thing for weird famous people and then name their kids after them?” Rocky asked. “Because if my mom has another kid, I’m pretty sure she is going to call him Thor.”

I needed the earth to open up and swallow me whole right then and there. Why was my child telling all of my secrets to a man he had met two minutes ago? *God help me.*

Mom scoffed and covered her mouth to smother her laugh.

“Thor is a pretty badass dude,” Cue Ball pointed out. “I did know a guy from a different MC once whose road name was Thor.”

“Did he look like Thor, or did he have a thing for him?” Rocky asked.

“Uh, well, he did not have a thing for Thor like your mom does.”

“Then why did they call him Thor?” Rocky asked.

“I think that is a story I need to tell you when you’re a little older.” Cue Ball hitched his thumb toward the van. “Maybe we should get you two home?”

Oh, now Cue Ball was wanting to leave when things got uncomfortable for him. Oh, how the tables had turned.

“Am I old enough to hear that story?” Mom asked.

“Mother,” I hissed.

“What?” she asked. “He’s piqued my interest.”

“We’re going.” I herded Rocky toward the van and slid open the side door. “You need to get some sleep before work,” I told Mom.

She shooed her hand at me. “That ship has sailed. I’ll be making cakes and pies with one eye open today.”

“Or you could just call in for the day,” I called. I waited until Rocky buckled his seat belt and then slid the door shut.

“I’m not calling in. I couldn’t do that to your aunt.” Mom held out Rocky’s bag to me. “Though you might think about letting Rocky call off for school today. As soon as I got off the phone with you, he was awake, wondering why he was still at my house and where you were.”

Mom had worked for my aunt Ginger since before I was born. She owned a large bakery in Texarkana, and my Mom was her head baker. Ginger could survive one day without my mom.

“I’ll see how he feels when it’s time for school.”

She handed me his bookbag, but Cue Ball grabbed it. “I’ll put that in the back.” He nodded to Mom. “It was nice meeting you, Miss Benson.”

Mom nodded and pasted a friendly smile on her lips.

Cue Ball moved to the back of the van, and Mom grabbed my arm.

“Mom?” I whispered.

“Do not mess this up,” she hissed.

I reared back. “Mess what up?” I asked.

“You and that man. Do not bumble it up. He’s exactly what you and Rocky need.”

“I wasn’t aware that Rocky and I needed something,” I grumbled.

“You both need a man, Olive. Don’t act foolish.”

I tipped my head to the side. “Does that mean you like him more than Tag?”

Mom wrinkled her nose. “Why are you even saying that man’s name in my presence?”

“I guess that is better than seeing him like I did tonight?”

Mom’s jaw dropped. “You saw that poor excuse for a man tonight? Was he the one who blew up the gym?”

“What? No.” I rolled my eyes. “Tag is not a good man, but I don’t think he goes around blowing up buildings.”

“Then why did you see him tonight?” Mom demanded.

“Because the hospital still had him as my emergency contact.”

Mom cringed. “I’m surprised his phone number is still the same and that he actually came to the hospital.”

I had been more than surprised. “Yes, well, he did. Thankfully, he only stayed for a couple of minutes.”

“What did he think of Cue Ball?” Mom asked.

I squinted. “Uh, I didn’t ask him, Mom. Don’t really care what he thinks, either.”

“He was probably intimidated by a real man. No wonder he didn’t stick around for long.”

I shrugged. “I have no idea, but I hope I don’t see him again, though he said he had moved back to town a few months ago.”

“What?” Mom gasped.

I didn’t have time to go over all of this with her. I was exhausted, and if I was going to try to get Rocky to school in the morning, I needed to get him home. “Call me on the way home from work tomorrow, and I’ll fill you in on everything, okay?”

Mom pressed a kiss to my cheek and stepped back. “You can bet your butt I will.”

I hopped into the van, and I rolled down my window as Cue Ball backed out of the driveway.

“Don’t mess this up,” Mom called. “And I love you, Rocky!”

I rolled my eyes and gave a limp wave to Mom.

“Everything okay?” Cue Ball asked.

Hardly.

“Yup. All good. I’m just really tired, and I’m sure you are too. Rocky and I will just jump out when we get to my house, and you can be on your way.” I laid my head back on the seat and sighed. I needed this night to be

over.

“Do I have to go to school?” Rocky interrupted.

“We’ll see in the morning.”

“It is the morning,” Rocky pointed out.

“We’ll see, Rocky,” I sighed. “Just push me out when we get to my house, yeah?” I smothered a yawn with my hand.

“I’ll show him where we live, Mom,” Rocky offered.

I don’t know how the kid was even awake. “Fine.” I didn’t have it in me to say anything more. My exhaustion washed over me, and I was out like a light.

*

Chapter Five

Cue Ball

“Are you leaving?”

I pulled into the driveway Rocky had directed me to and shifted the van into park. “Do you want me to?” I asked. The kid was cool as hell and had talked my ear off the whole way to their house. I had been a little worried that he would be standoffish since I was a strange guy to him.

Yeah, I had been wrong thinking that.

“If I go to school, my mom is going to need someone to keep an eye on her.”

I nodded. “Yeah, you’re right.”

“But if I don’t go to school, I’m going to be too tired to take care of her, so someone else will need to take care of her,” he countered.

“You are also right again,” I chuckled.

“So,” Rocky drawled. “I guess it would just be best if you stayed, and that way, all of our bases are covered.”

“That sounds like a good plan to me, Rocky.” I had planned on staying either way, but if he didn’t want me to stay, I would have been sleeping in the van. Thankfully, he was cool with me, so I would be able to sleep in the house.

Rocky smiled broadly and slid open the door. “I’ll get the front door if you want to get Mom. She’s dead to the world right now. She might be heavy,” he advised.

Maybe for a ten-year-old to carry, she would be heavy, but I could more than handle Olive. “I got your mom.” I moved around the van and opened the passenger door. I lifted Olive into my arms, and she rolled into me. She rested her head on my shoulder and sighed lightly.

I carried her up the sidewalk, and Rocky held the door open.

“Her bedroom is down the hallway to the right,” he whispered.

I nodded and stepped into the house.

Rocky had turned on the lamp by the door, and I could just see enough to move down the hallway. I kicked open the door to her bedroom and gently laid her on the bed.

A moan fell from her lips, and she turned her face into the pillow. I

pulled the blanket over her and slipped out of her room. I left her door open to make sure I could hear if she needed anything.

“Is she still sleeping?” Rocky asked when I walked back into the living room. He was kicking off his tennis shoes and scratching his butt. Obviously, the kid was already comfortable with me.

“Uh, yeah. I think she’s going to be out of it for a bit.” I’m sure her adrenaline from the night had finally worn off, and she was going to sleep for a good bit as long as she wasn’t in too much pain.

Rocky yawned loudly.

“Why don’t you get in bed, and I’ll keep an eye on your mom,” I volunteered.

“Do I have to go to school tomorrow?” he asked.

That was something I didn’t have the right to decide on. “Uh, well, if I don’t know what time you need to be up to go to school, then I guess I can’t really get you up on time, can I?”

“Right.” Rocky waved at me. “I like the way you think. I’ll see you when I wake up.”

I nodded and watched him disappear down the hallway.

Definitely a cool kid.

I flopped down on the couch and kicked off my boots.

I wasn’t too sure what to expect in the morning, but all I knew right now was that I needed some damn sleep.

In the morning, I would deal with whatever else the world had to throw at me.

I had enough.

*

Chapter Six

Olive

There was someone walking around my house, and I knew it wasn't Rocky.

The footsteps were too heavy and purposeful.

Rocky was fast and all over the place.

Not Rocky at all.

"Hello?" I called and instantly felt foolish. Who calls out hello when they hear strange footsteps in their house? I should have hidden under the bed instead of freely calling out for the intruder to come find me.

I had a good idea of who was walking around my house, but I needed to know for sure.

I had told Cue Ball to basically throw me out of the van when we got home, but I don't think he listened to me.

"Doll?" he called from down the hallway.

"You're in my house," I stated.

I heard him move down the hallway toward my room. "Yeah."

"Why are you in my house?" I asked.

He appeared in the doorway and rested his arm above his head on the doorframe. If I wasn't in so much pain, I could have fully appreciated how handsome the man was. Hell, even with a raging headache, I couldn't ignore how fine he was. "How are you feeling?" he asked.

Totally ignored my question. He was good at that. "My head hurts and for some reason, my right foot is throbbing. Why are you in my house?"

"Doc gave me meds for your head, and I'll need to take a look at your foot. I'm sure you're going to start feeling sore all over."

Oh, goody, something to look forward to. "My house," I called. "Why are you in my house?" The hell with my foot and head. Why was this man still in my house? He had helped me last night, and I really appreciated it, but I needed to get back to reality. The reality where Cue Ball was not in my house. "And where is Rocky?" I asked.

"At school. He slept until about ten thirty, and then wanted to go to school because he was worried you would be mad if he skipped the whole day," Cue Ball explained.

“You took him to school?” And I wouldn’t have been mad at him for not going to school. One day wouldn’t have made a difference.

Cue Ball nodded. “Yeah. He said he was thankful his friends didn’t see him get out of the van. Made me promise the next time I take him to school that we take my bike.”

Next time? Why on earth would there be a next time? “There won’t be a need for next time, and how did you sign him in?”

Cue Ball shrugged. “I walked him into the office. Rocky told them what happened last night, and they sent him off to class. I’m sure you’ll get a phone call or something, but they seemed good with me dropping him off.”

My child went into school with a man who was a stranger to the school.

I was going to be the talk of the next PTA meeting. Not like I went to the PTA meetings, but you know. “Thank you for taking him to school, but you can go now. I can handle things.” More like fix things from here. I’m sure there was an email or two waiting for me, needing to know what was going on.

“Uh, you can handle the school thing, but I’m not going anywhere, doll.”

I closed my eyes. “What do you mean, you are not going anywhere?” I asked.

“You’re connected to the club, and until we figure out who blew up the gym, I’m here.”

My eyes snapped open. “No.”

“No?” Cue Ball laughed.

“Yes, no. I don’t accept anything you just said. I am not connected to the club, and you do not need to stay in my house like a watchdog. I am fine. Please go.” I opened my eyes and shooed my hand at Cue Ball. “Bye.” I wasn’t going to be a burden to Cue Ball and the club.

He shook his head and smirked. “You’re cute when you’re trying to be bossy.”

“I’m not cute, but I am bossy. There is no trying to it. I don’t need you here.” I was fine on my own.

Cue Ball raised his hand. “The only way I am leaving is when we know who tried to kill you. So for that to happen, you need to tell me who it is that blew up the gym. Was it someone connected to you? Maybe your ex?”

I wrinkled my nose. “What? Why would I know that? And no. I haven’t seen or spoken to my ex for ten years. If he blew up the gym, he has been

holding a grudge for a long time. It was obviously someone who has a problem with the club,” I pointed out.

“Then why did they do it to you?” he asked.

“I wasn’t even supposed to be there. It was Faye’s day to work. I was filling in for her because her car broke down.”

“Then it’s someone who has a problem with Faye.”

“Or the club,” I insisted. “Faye and I do not deal in shady things that would warrant someone wanting to blow us up.”

“And neither does the club.”

“Well, then, I guess you can go, and we’ll just chalk it up to a freak accident, yeah?”

Cue Ball shook his head. “Nope. I’m here until we figure out what is going on. Like it or hate it, that is what it is.”

“No,” I moaned.

“You hungry?” he asked.

“Are you just going to ignore me?”

He nodded. “If it has anything to do with me leaving, yes. Everything else, I’ll listen.”

I grabbed my pillow and covered my face. I let out a frustrated scream and flailed my legs.

“Better?” Cue Ball called.

I took the pillow off my face and threw it in his direction. It, of course, didn’t hit him because my body was still sore all over. “This isn’t fair. What is Rocky going to think? Some strange man is suddenly living with us?”

Cue Ball shrugged. “He seemed to take it a lot better than you are, and he’s going to think I’m keeping you safe because that is what I told him I was doing.”

“You told him you were staying?” I asked. Where in the heck did this man get his gall?

“Uh, yeah. He’s a smart kid, Olive. Not like I could spin some lie, and he would fall for it. I told him the same thing I just told you. He’s good with it.”

“Of course, he would be good with it. He thinks you are some amazing guy.” Cue Ball had this air about him that made you feel comfortable with him. Sure, he was sort of intimidating, but it was a comforting intimidation. Made zero sense, but that was what I felt when he was around.

He tipped his head to the side. “I’m trying not to be offended by that.”

“Ugh, you know what I mean. He’s a kid who only sees what is in front of him. He doesn’t see the big picture.” I saw it all, and I didn’t want any of it. I didn’t need Cue Ball watching my every move.

“You mean the big picture of me making sure you two are safe? No, I’m sure he gets that, Olive. The kid is pretty worried about the fact you were blown up not even a day ago.”

I flattened my lips. “That is not going to happen again.”

Cue Ball pushed off the door frame. “Yeah, you’re right. It’s not going to happen again because I’m going to make sure it doesn’t. Rocky is worried about you, and I’m going to help take that worry away from him.”

“You don’t even know us,” I pointed out. “No one in their right mind just uproots their whole life to help protect someone they just met.” This was crazy. Sure, I didn’t like that Rocky was worried about me, but I wasn’t sure Cue Ball moving in and being our guard dog was the right answer. What would happen after all of this was over, and then something else happens? Would Rocky think that someone would always swoop in and save the day?

“I wouldn’t say no one, doll. I know of nine other guys who would do the same exact thing I am doing.” He pointed at me. “Maybe call Faye and see if she is putting up as much of a fuss as you are.”

I rolled my eyes and sat up. “I can guarantee that Faye is not okay with one of you coming into her house.”

Cue Ball tipped his head to the side. “Call your girl, doll. You might be surprised.”

Faye was okay with one of the guys just taking over her life? I didn’t believe it. “I’m going to call her,” I warned.

Cue Ball winked at me. “Sounds good to me.” He headed down the hallway, whistling under his breath.

“I don’t want you here,” I called. “I have my life exactly how I want it.”

“You want lunch?” he called.

“I want you to leave.”

“I’m in the mood for a burger.”

I growled and folded my arms over my chest. “I’ll take mine with everything on it, but that doesn’t mean that I accept you being here.”

“Fries?”

I closed my eyes and laid back. “Onion rings. And also honey mustard.”

“You got it, doll.”

How had this happened?

Why was this happening?

I was obviously not the target of the gym blowing up, but I was somehow now swept up in it.

I didn't *want* to be swept up in all of this.

It was more than enough for Cue Ball to come to the hospital last night, and then to even bring me home and take Rocky to school was great. But that was it.

That *should* be it!

But somehow, it was one o'clock in the afternoon, and I was still in bed while a hot biker was in my kitchen ordering me a burger and onion rings. With honey mustard.

I didn't have a job, a car, or my phone, but I at least had lunch on the way.

And a hot biker in my kitchen.

Oh, lord.

*

Chapter Seven

Cue Ball

“You calling to tell me you are on the way to the clubhouse because you can’t handle her?”

I rolled my eyes and leaned against the porch railing. “Hardly, brother. I was just calling to see if you guys have any leads on what the hell happened at the gym.”

“Nah, man,” Yarder grunted. “Cops are being tightlipped about everything. You would think they would be a little bit nicer to us since we were the damn victims in all of this.”

“Treating you like a dirty biker?” I laughed.

“You fucking know it.” Yarder sighed. “Stretch says he’s got a connection at the police department.”

“Benny?” I laughed.

“Yeah, you know him, too?”

I scoffed. “Stretch and I went to high school with him. Works the gate at the impound. The guy isn’t even a cop.”

“Fucking hell,” Yarder groaned. “Here I was hopeful that the guy was actually going to be able to help us.”

“Well, if your car got impounded, I’m sure he could maybe help, but I don’t think he is going to be able to get any info on the explosion.” Though maybe I was wrong. Stretch kept in touch better with Benny than I did, so maybe he knew something I didn’t. “I don’t think it will hurt if Stretch talks to Benny, I just don’t think he’s going to get much info.”

“Stretch already took off to talk to him. I guess we’ll just wait to see what he comes back with. Compass was going to talk to the Bone Hawks.”

“The MC up in Oklahoma?” As far as I knew, we didn’t have anything to do with those guys. Why would they be able to help us?

“Yeah. Compass’ cousin is the prez. They have connections that we don’t,” Yarder explained.

“Connections that could get us into shit we don’t want to be in?” I asked. “Is this another solo decision you made, or are the rest of the guys in on this?”

Yarder sighed heavily. “We had church this morning, Cue. I didn’t call

you in because I figured you had enough to deal with from last night. The rest of the guys are cool with talking to the Bone Hawks. Throttle said you would be, too.”

Well, I guess that was okay. As long as more than Yarder and Compass were making decisions, I was good with whatever the club wanted. “So we’re dipping our toes into shit?”

“We’re probably already in that shit, brother, seeing as someone just blew up the gym. No sense in burying our heads in the sand when we can do everything in our power to get ahead of this before it happens again.”

“You think this is going to happen again?” I had promised Olive it wouldn’t, but it was hard to stop something that you didn’t know where it was coming from.

Yarder clicked his tongue. “I fucking hope not, but I gotta believe that whoever did this wanted to do more than blow out the back of the gym. The explosives were rigged to go off when the door opened, so they obviously wanted someone dead or at least badly hurt.”

“Maybe it was a message,” I suggested.

“Yeah, well, we got it loud and clear. Now we’re going to do everything we can to make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

“Shitty timing for all of this to be happening when the show is set to start soon,” I sighed.

“And that is why we need to take care of this now. Compass is going to talk to his cousin, and I’ll let you know what he finds out.”

“What am I supposed to do until then?”

“What I told you to do,” Yarder grunted. “Keep Olive and her kid safe. The last thing we need is anything happening to them and have it fall back on the club. We take care of our own, and that includes them.”

Yarder ended the call, and I shoved the phone into my pocket.

“So I went to call Faye but realized I don’t have a phone.”

I jumped a little and turned to see Olive standing on the other side of the screen door. She had managed to sneak up on me. Her hair was piled on top of her head, and she was still wearing my shirt.

It looked good on her.

Real good.

“I also would like to know how you are going to get a burger and onion rings delivered here. No one delivers here,” she pointed out. She motioned

around us. "In case you didn't notice, we're not in the middle of town."

I figured that out when I went to order, and they told me I had to pick it up. "I have my ways, doll."

She pushed open the screen door and plopped down on the rocking chair in the corner.

"You're moving pretty good after being blown up yesterday."

She rolled her eyes and rocked back and forth. "I don't really have much choice. If I sit around doing nothing, it's going to be even harder to get going. Did anyone find my phone when they were putting out the fire?"

"I think you can take a day to rest, doll, and you'll be fine."

She shrugged. "Maybe."

"And no one found your phone. We can head to the phone store after our lunch gets here if you want."

"How is our lunch getting here?" she asked again. "Pidgeon?"

"You know you're kind of all over the place, doll?" I chuckled. "Good thing I can keep up with you."

"I have a lot going on in my head," she said simply. "Who is that?" She nodded to the end of the driveway and a motorcycle turning in.

"Delivery boy," I laughed.

Dice parked behind the van and pulled a bag out of his saddlebag.

"You had one of your friends bring us food?" she laughed. "I should have figured that, or you paid the restaurant an obscene amount for them to deliver."

I had initially tried that, but Dave's Burgers shot me down without hesitation. Dice was my second choice, and he thankfully didn't say no. I think he was curious to see Olive, and this gave him an in to meet her.

"You fucking owe me," Dice called. "We were out until five this morning fixing Faye's car, and I've only got about two hours of sleep because Yarder is on a tear trying to figure out who the hell blew up the gym." He held the bag out to me and stood at the bottom of the steps. "You in the middle of nowhere with only one other person looks mighty good to me right now."

I grabbed the bag and hitched my chin to Olive. "This is Dice."

She gave a little wave. "Thanks for being the delivery boy and for helping Faye. I was going to help her when I got done cleaning the gym, but something came up."

Dice chuckled. "It's for the best we went to rescue her because I'm pretty sure you both would still be on the side of the road. The chick pretty much had her whole engine taken apart by the time we got there. I don't know what the hell she was thinking."

"She was thinking she didn't want to have her ex help her, so she was going to do everything she could to get the car running," Olive explained.

"Anthony?" Dice asked.

Olive stopped rocking, and her jaw dropped. "He showed up?"

Dice nodded. "About an hour after we got there, he rolled up half in the bag with some chick driving him."

"No," Olive gasped.

"Yup," Dice chuckled. "Dude sobered up pretty quick when he realized he wasn't going to embarrass Faye with some chick who acted like she didn't even like him."

"He was mad?"

Dice nodded. "Pissed as fuck. Stayed for about two minutes and then took off in a huff. Though not before he called Faye a bitch, and Faye knocked out one of his teeth."

Olive clasped her hands together and smiled wide. "Oh my god, I freaking love you guys! That is exactly what Faye needed to happen to get it through Anthony's thick skull that she is done with him. Though he should know they are done since he cheated on her."

"That dude cheated on her?" Dice asked. He shook his head and whistled low. "What a fucking idiot. That chick is lightyears better than he is. He should have been thankful she gave him the time of day."

"That is what I have been saying for years."

"I guess things were pretty chill for us," I laughed. "Getting blown up and staying the night in the hospital is pretty boring."

"I would kill for a quiet night, brother. Hopefully, we can figure out this whole bombing thing, and then life can be boring for the cameras."

"Cameras?" Olive asked.

"Tread," Dice replied.

Olive shook her head. "You're speaking Greek to me."

Dice smirked at me. "You didn't tell her we are just months away from being famous?"

I rolled my eyes and walked into the house.

“Wait,” Olive called. “What is going on?” She followed me into the house with Dice close behind her.

“Are you hungry?” I asked her.

“I’m starving, but I also want to know how you guys are going to be famous in a couple of months. Do you guys have a band or something? Hoping to have a video go viral?” she teased.

“Something like that,” Dice laughed. “We have a TV show that is going to be about us.”

“Not just us,” I growled. I grabbed two paper plates and set them on the counter. “You guys forget there are three other clubs doing this.”

“Three other clubs that will have their own show,” Dice pointed out. “We’re *Tread: Iron Fiends*. They’re not going to have the Fallen Lords in the Iron Fiends, will they? No. That would be ridiculous.”

I pulled the burgers out of the bag and dropped Olive’s onion rings on her plate. “This whole reality TV show is ridiculous,” I grumbled. Sure, when Yarder and Compass had told us about the reality show, it seemed pretty neat. Now I wasn’t too sure about that. People were actually going to want to watch four MCs doing their day-to-day life? I could only speak for the Iron Fiends, but that wasn’t very entertaining.

Either the production crew was going to drop us after a week of watching us fix cars and watch TV at night, or they were going to need us to liven things up.

“You’re going to be on a reality show?” Olive gasped.

“We *are* the reality show, babe.” Dice snagged a fry off my plate and popped it into his mouth. “Fucking famous.”

“Shouldn’t you be back at the clubhouse trying to figure out who blew up Olive?” I growled.

“We’re sitting around with our thumbs up our ass while we wait for Compass to get back from Oklahoma. Probably won’t be until after dinner,” Dice explained. “Stretch is out trying to find Benny, but I know that isn’t going to get us anywhere.”

“So you’re just going to torment us instead of sticking your thumb up your ass?” I asked.

Olive laughed and grabbed her plate. “Where’s Faye? I was going to call her, but my phone is probably charred bits at the gym.”

“She’s at the clubhouse. Fade gave her the option of where she wanted to

stay, and she chose there.”

“Why didn’t you give me a choice?” Olive asked me.

I leveled my gaze on her. “Would you have picked one?”

She rolled her eyes and popped a stray piece of lettuce in her mouth. “I mean...”

“And you had a problem with me taking Rocky to school. You really think having the school bus drop him off at the clubhouse would be better?”

“Fine,” she sighed. “I guess I’m just saying it would have been nice to have a choice. Do I get a choice to see Faye, or am I a prisoner in my own home?” She sat at the kitchen island and grabbed her burger with both hands. “Is that against the rules?”

“There are rules?” Dice asked. “If there are, no one told Faye. That chick is in heaven in the clubhouse. She thinks it’s like some vacation. She’s telling everyone who will listen about Fade knocking out her douchebag ex.”

“I love Faye,” Olive laughed.

“There aren’t any rules. You can go wherever the hell you want as long as I’m with you. I’m not your warden, Olive. I’m just keeping you safe.”

“Good,” she beamed. “Because once we eat lunch, we can wait until Rocky gets home, and then we can head to the phone store. After, we can grab pizza and go visit Faye at the biker hangout.”

“Clubhouse,” I laughed.

She shrugged and took a huge bite of her burger. “Whatever,” she mumbled around a mouthful.

“Well, then I’ll let you two eat, and I’ll let everyone know you’re coming over with dinner tonight.” Dice knocked his knuckles on the counter and smiled. “Later.”

“I like him,” Olive announced after Dice roared out of the driveway.

“You talked to him for five minutes, doll.”

She shrugged and shoved an onion ring in her mouth. “I can tell if I like someone after ten seconds.”

“No, you can’t,” I laughed.

“I can, and I do,” she insisted.

“What, after ten seconds, made you think that you like Dice?” I asked.

She shrugged. “He was funny, and he was genuine. He also seemed to like Faye.”

“In the first ten seconds, he told me I owed him for making him bring us

lunch.”

“He also said he was out until the early morning helping Faye. Very noble of him to help someone he didn’t even know.”

I chewed thoughtfully. “You do know last night and today, I’ve been here with you, right?”

She nodded. “Yes, but I’ve also tried to run you off more times than I can count. You insist on staying.”

“And that doesn’t make me noble?” I laughed.

“It makes you annoyingly noble,” she whispered.

I would take that. “Rocky likes me.”

“Rocky is ten,” she pointed out.

I shrugged. “Sometimes it’s harder to impress someone younger because they have high standards of liking superheroes and football players.”

“Are you comparing yourself to a superhero because my son likes you?” she laughed.

“If you would just tell me you liked me after ten seconds, I could just let this drop.”

She shook her head.

“Why not?” I asked. “Does that mean you don’t like me?”

“Cue.” She rolled her eyes and took another bite of her burger.

“Olive.”

She stared at me and chewed thoughtfully.

“Do you really have a thing for Rocky Balboa?” Maybe a change of subject was needed.

“Did your Mom really have a thing for Bon Jovi?” she countered.

“Was your Mom’s pregnancy craving olives, and that is why she called you Olive?” I asked. That one I really didn’t know the answer to. I had just taken a guess to get under her skin a bit. “Green, black, Kalamata?” I drawled.

Her eyes narrowed, and she swallowed. “My great-great-grandmother, who came from Europe and once single-handedly fought off two rabid goats to save her daughter from their jaws, was named Olive.”

I tipped my head to the side and wiped my mouth. “Seriously?”

Olive nodded her head. “Nope, I’m totally lying.”

I laughed and shook my head. “You had me going for a moment there.”

Olive shrugged. “I just didn’t like the fact that you so easily guessed why

my name is Olive.”

“Come on,” I laughed. “You had to know after I told you my name was Jovi that my Mom was obsessed with Bon Jovi. When I was just a baby, the little mobile thing that spun above me was guitars and had 80s big hair bands on it.”

“It did not,” she laughed.

I held up my hand. “I swear to Christ, Olive. My mother was obsessed.” I finished my fries and walked to the fridge. “You didn’t have cutouts of Rocky Balboa in Rocky’s room, did you?”

She ducked her head. “Of course not. That would be ridiculous.”

“My god,” I laughed. “Did you dress him up in the sweat shorts and a headband for Halloween, too?”

She pointed her finger at me. “I will have you know that he enjoyed it each and every time.”

“Every time?” I burst. “How many times did you dress the poor kid up?” I demanded.

“I plead the fifth,” she muttered.

“You want a drink, Adrian?” I turned to the fridge and opened the door. Olive’s mouth dropped open, and she gasped.

I busted out laughing, and she launched an onion ring at me. “How dare you!” she giggled.

“Just calling it as I see ‘em.” I grabbed her a bottle of water and set it in front of her. “But please tell me you dressed up, too.”

She ducked her head and nibbled on a French fry. “I might have been Adrian, Mickey Goldmill, and Paulie at some point.”

“Ivan Drago?” I asked.

Olive wrinkled her nose. “God no. I hated that man. *Loathe*,” she drawled.

“Sounds like you still do, doll.”

“You wouldn’t be wrong,” she sang. She finished her burger and pushed the last of her onion rings to me. “I can’t finish those. I also need to go get dressed if we are going to leave when Rocky gets here.”

“It’s not even two o’clock, doll,” I pointed out.

She stood gingerly and smiled. “Yeah, I think it’s going to take me a little longer than normal to get my butt presentable.”

“You look good to me, doll.” She did. Even the day after getting blown

up, Olive was beautiful. Her dark brown hair was piled on top of her head; her skin was free of makeup, revealing the natural blush of her cheeks. Granted, I had never seen her before being blown up, but if she had looked better than this, I had to wonder how she didn't have men lining up at her door.

She grabbed her bottle of water and headed toward her bedroom.

I popped an onion ring in my mouth but froze mid-chew.

"I didn't need ten seconds to know I liked you, Cue. I knew the second I looked into your eyes." Her footsteps hurried down the hallway, and her door clicked shut.

Well, hell.

I was not expecting that.

I thought Olive wasn't a big fan of me since I was insisting on staying with her.

More times than not, she was arguing with me or rolling her eyes at me.

But it didn't matter if she liked me or not. That wasn't what I was here for.

I was here to keep her safe, and that was going to happen if she liked me or not.

*

Chapter Eight

Olive

Yeah, I was fooling myself, thinking that I wasn't hurting too much from last night.

I was in quite a bit of pain and trying to find the willpower to stand up without groaning.

"Olive?"

Oh, hell. This was not what I needed right now.

"I'll be out in a minute," I called, though it sounded more like a breathless plea.

"Do you need help?" Cue Ball called.

More than was physically possible. "No, no. I'm just trying to..." Stand? Breath? *Live?*

"I'm coming, doll. Cover up if you're not decent," he warned.

Getting decent was the reason why I was so out of breath. Putting my bra on had almost taken me out.

My door swung open, and Cue Ball rushed in. "What happened?" he asked. He rushed to my side and pushed me back onto the bed. My head hit the pillow, and I closed my eyes.

"Something is wrong?" I asked softly. "This isn't your normal routine after getting out of the shower?" I tried to joke over the pain.

"Can't say that it is, doll. You need me to call an ambulance." His voice was worried, and I knew he was seconds away from calling the ambulance.

"God no," I gasped. "I just need a second to rest. My body is screaming at me to lay down." I stared up at the ceiling and tried to gather my strength to get up.

"I guess it's a good thing I came in here, then." He brushed my hair off my forehead. "You need to listen to your body, Olive."

I rolled my eyes. "I was taking a rest before you barged in here." See, totally listening to my body.

"Did you forget that the reason why I'm here is to make sure you are safe? I guess that means also from yourself, too. You're pushing yourself entirely too hard," he insisted.

"I can't lay around and do nothing, Cue Ball. The world doesn't stop just

because I'm hurt," I pointed out. The world stopped for no one.

"What is it that you have to be doing right now?" He stood over me and folded his arms over his chest.

I held up one finger. "Get Rocky from the bus stop."

"I can get him. We both know he would like that."

I added another finger. "I have to replace my phone."

"We can do that after you rest."

"Make dinner."

He shook his head. "Did you forget that we're getting pizza after we take care of your phone?"

Actually, I had forgotten. I laid the back of my hand on my forehead. "I need to find a new job."

"You have a job."

"No, I don't. My job blew up last night. I need to find a new one." I may have forgotten we were going to get pizza tonight, but I hadn't forgotten about being blown up.

He walked to the doorway and shut off the light.

"What are you doing?" I demanded.

"You're going to take a nap until I bring Rocky back from the bus stop. There is no reason to be superwoman right now. Rest."

"Cue Ball," I groaned. "I don't have time for this." So many things needed to be done, and they weren't going to be done if I was sleeping. "I need to do a couple loads of laundry. I've been putting it off, and Rocky is dangerously close to having no clean underwear."

He pulled the door halfway shut. "Your body is telling you that you need to slow down and rest, Olive. Listen to it, or I'm going to make you listen to it."

"Is that a threat?" I asked. "And the laundry," I moaned.

"It's a promise, doll. Sleep for an hour, please," he pleaded.

I rolled my eyes. "Fine, whatever. But as soon as Rocky gets home from school, we are going to get a phone and visit Faye. I can do the laundry when we get home."

"Promise." He pulled the door shut, and I listened to his footsteps fade down the hallway.

One hour of rest was all he was going to get out of me.

He kept brushing aside the fact that I didn't have a job, but I knew I

didn't. There was no way the club was going to keep paying me to do nothing.

I needed to find something else, and time was ticking away.

Just a one-hour nap, and I was jumping up to take care of Rocky and find a job.

Once all the dust settled from the explosion, and Cue Ball went back to the clubhouse, it was only going to be Rocky and me.

Just like before.

*

Chapter Nine

Cue Ball

“Are you sure we shouldn’t wake up your mom?”

Rocky shook his head and grabbed a slice of the pepperoni and mushroom pizza. For the record, this was the first time I had ever seen a kid willingly eat mushrooms. I figured that was a taste bud most people didn’t get until they were in their thirties.

“I checked on her before the pizza got here. She’s still breathing,” Rocky advised. “She’s fine.”

I knew she was fine, but I didn’t know if she was going to be happy when she woke up, and it was nighttime. Or hell, if she kept sleeping, it very well could be morning when she cracked open her eyes.

She obviously needed rest. She had been pushing herself to bounce back to normal like she hadn’t been tossed through the air a good twenty feet.

“When is your normal bedtime?” I asked.

Rocky shrugged. “Mom let’s me go to sleep whenever I want.”

I tipped my head to the side and raised my eyebrows. “Are you forgetting that I have met your mom before?” I chuckled. “I find it hard to believe that she just lets you go to sleep whenever you want.”

“I mean, she doesn’t care as long as my light is off by eleven.”

I closed my eyes and opened them slowly.

“Ten?” he squeaked.

I cleared my throat and wiped my hands. “I guess I’ll just wake your mom up and ask her what your bedtime is.”

“Nine!” Rocky whisper shouted. “My light has to be off by nine, and I need to be up by seven. The bus picks me up at seven forty.”

I nodded slowly. “That sounds reasonable. I guess we can just let your mom sleep.”

Rocky wiped his forehead with the back of his hand and sighed.

“You have any homework?” I asked.

Rocky shook his head. “I normally do, but I had a substitute teacher today. I’m sure tomorrow I’m going to have a boatload.”

That also seemed believable.

“So, what do you want to do tonight?” He still had two hours before his

lights-out time.

“We could watch a movie and pop some popcorn,” he suggested.

“I’m game for that.” I grabbed another slice of pizza and flipped the box shut. “If your mom wakes up, we better save her a few slices.”

“Good idea.” Rocky jumped up with his pizza in his hand and jogged into the living room. “I’ll pick the movie if you want to pop the popcorn.” I could tell that he was Olive’s kid. They both had a way of being bossy without being overly bossy. Well, Olive was straight-up bossy when she had been trying to get rid of me, but I obviously didn’t listen.

“You got it.”

Ten minutes later, I had the pizza cleaned up, and I was camped out on the sofa with Rocky while the opening credits to one of the *Transformer* movies played.

“Have you seen this one before?” Rocky asked.

“Which one is it?” I asked.

“Transformers: Dark of the Moon.”

“Nope,” I shook my head. “Can’t say I have seen this one.”

“Have you seen any of them?”

“I think I saw the first one.” I was a bit behind on keeping up with movies. I didn’t have a TV in my bedroom at the clubhouse, and normally I just watched whatever everyone else was watching in the common room.

“You missed the second one, then, but that’s okay. I fill you in on the things you missed.”

“Good deal, bud,” I laughed. “You’re like CliffsNotes for the movie.”

“Yeah, whatever that is,” he agreed.

Rocky made it an hour into the movie before he was knocked out on my shoulder.

I finished watching the movie with him snoring on me, and then I carried him to his bed.

Just like his mom when I had carried her to bed last night, he didn’t budge.

They both slept like a sack of rocks.

I kept his door cracked open and made my way back to the couch. Thankfully, Olive had a decent couch, and it wasn’t hell having to sleep on it.

It wasn’t even nine o’clock, and my eyelids were already heavy.

I locked up the house and sprawled out on the couch.

I had a pretty good feeling that Olive was going to be pissed when she woke up, but at least she was going to be rested and pissed off.

*

Chapter Ten

Olive

“Ready?”

Cue Ball looked up from his coffee cup.

Wait, why was he drinking coffee at three in the afternoon? I glanced at the clock on the stove and frowned. “Why does the clock say nine-thirty?” I looked out the window and was even more confused. “Why is it nine-thirty, and the sun is out?”

“Is this a trick question?” Cue Ball asked. He sipped his coffee and shifted stiffly.

“Unless we magically transported to Alaska where the sun is out all day long, then no, it’s not a trick question.” The clock had to be wrong.

Cue Ball cringed.

“And where is Rocky?”

“Uh, maybe you should have a cup of coffee,” Cue Ball suggested. “It might help.”

“Help with what?” I demanded. All I needed to know was where Rocky was and why the damn sun was out. Or why had Cue Ball changed all of the clocks?

“Help you realize that it is nine-thirty in the morning.”

“What?” I squawked. “How in the world is it nine-thirty in the morning?” I demanded.

He grabbed a coffee cup from the cabinet and filled it to the brim with coffee. “Uh, well, it’s nine-thirty in the morning because when you laid down yesterday at two, I just let you sleep until you woke up on your own.”

“That’s impossible! I have never in my life slept for seventeen and a half hours!”

“First time for everything?” Cue ball guessed.

I threw my hands up in the air. “I can’t believe you let me sleep that long. I didn’t even get to see Rocky yesterday. How did he get to school? Did he have dinner? Did he even brush his teeth this morning?” I demanded. This was absolutely insane. I was a mother who had no right to sleep for almost eighteen hours straight. I wasn’t some frat guy coming off of a bender.

INSANE!

He set the coffee on the table and stepped back slowly. “Are you hungry?”

I was absolutely starving, but that wasn’t important right now. “Why on earth would you let me sleep that long?”

“I didn’t let you do anything, Olive. You slept that long because you needed it. Your body was yelling at you to rest yesterday when you couldn’t even stand.”

“I was fine,” I insisted.

He tipped his head to the side. “Are you really going to be this stubborn?” he asked.

“I am not at all stubborn,” I insisted.

“Then sit down and have something to eat. Sleeping for eighteen hours isn’t going to do much for you if you refuse to eat.”

“I’m not refusing to eat; I’m just wondering why you let me sleep this long.”

“I told Rocky this was not going to be a good idea,” he mumbled.

“You told the ten-year-old this wasn’t a good idea? Who was in charge while I was sleeping?” I asked.

“I was, but your son was worried about you, Olive.”

“We had plans to get me a new phone and then go visit Faye.”

Cue Ball motioned to the black bag on the counter. “I sent one of the guys to get you a phone. We just need to activate it this morning.”

“You got me a new phone while I was sleeping?” I snapped.

“Yeah, pretty mean, right?” He finished his coffee and set the cup in the sink. “And Faye should be here around lunch with Fade. You should try to be done being irrational by the time she gets here. That is, unless you want to get mad at her for coming over to see you.”

“I’m not being irrational,” I shouted.

Cue Ball wiped his hands on his pants and leaned against the counter. “You’re right. Most people get mad when people take care of them so they can rest.”

“I never asked for you to take care of me.” Never. Not once did I ask Cue Ball for help. I never asked anyone for help. I could handle everything by myself. Sure, my mom helped watch Rocky when I couldn’t swing working while he was in school, but that wasn’t all of the time.

“I think you need to drink that cup of coffee, and then we can talk.”

“I don’t need to do anything.”

Cue Ball held up his hands. “Well, while you do whatever it is you want to do, I am going to go make a few phone calls on the porch.” He hesitated and motioned to me. “As long as that is okay with you.”

I scowled and shooed him with my hand. “Do whatever you want. Hell, you can even go back to the playhouse if you want.”

“Clubhouse,” Cue Ball chuckled.

“Whatever,” I muttered.

Cue Ball headed out the front door to the porch, and he left the screen door open. The low timber of his voice drifted into the house, and I plopped down in front of the brimming cup of coffee.

Coffee that I needed to help wake me up, but I didn’t want to drink because then Cue Ball would think it was his idea when, in reality, I drank coffee every morning without him telling me to.

I braced my elbows on the table and buried my fingers in my hair.

What on earth was I going on about?

I should appreciate the fact that I had been able to sleep and rest without having to worry about anything, but instead, I was mad.

Was I mad that I wasn’t needed?

Ugh. I don’t think I was ready to admit that.

By the time I got to the bottom of my coffee, I was a little less irrational, more human.

Coffee always seemed to do the trick.

And maybe getting a good night's sleep might have helped, too.

Not that I was going to let Cue Ball know that.

“Feeling better?” Cue Ball called through the screen door.

I rolled my eyes and set my cup in the sink. “I was feeling fine before,” I muttered.

“Sure you were,” Cue Ball chuckled. “Can I come to the kitchen, or are you going to throw your coffee cup at me?”

I eyed my cup in the sink. “You’re safe for the time being.”

Cue Ball walked back into the house and sat at the kitchen table.

“What?” I asked after he just stared at me. “Do I have something on my face?” I hadn’t stopped to look in the mirror after I woke up. I had been thinking we needed to get moving if we were going to make it to the phone store and clubhouse. Obviously, I had missed both of those.

Cue Ball shook his head. “Nothing on your face, doll.”

I didn’t want to be snappy with him, but why in the world was he just staring at me? “Is there a reason why you are staring at me, then?” I asked.

He waved his hand around his head. “Uh, well, you’ve got an interesting hairstyle going on.”

I frantically patted my head and cringed as I felt all of the lumps, bumps, and cowlicks. “Sweet Jesus,” I muttered. “This is why I don’t fall asleep when my hair is wet.”

“I’m assuming you’re going to add this to the list of things that are my fault,” Cue Ball drawled.

It seemed like a good idea to do, but I shook my head. “No. I’ll take the blame for this.” I slipped into the bathroom and managed to tame my hair to where I didn’t look like Medusa.

“You want to set up your new phone?” Cue Ball called.

I wrinkled my nose at myself in the mirror and shrugged. “That’s as good as it’s going to get,” I mumbled. I walked back into the kitchen and sat down next to Cue Ball.

He grabbed the black bag and pushed it toward me.

“How much do I owe you?” I asked. I had a little chunk in savings, and I was going to have to break into it for the phone. I grabbed the box out of the bag, and my jaw dropped. “Take this back,” I gasped.

“You need a phone, Olive.”

I shook my head and dropped the phone into the bag. “I need a phone, but there is no way in hell I can afford the phone you bought.”

“I know a guy,” Cue Ball reasoned.

I wrinkled my nose. “You know a guy who can get you the latest phone for the price of my four-year-old one?” I asked. “Highly doubtful.” There was a reason why I had a junky old phone. I couldn’t afford a new one. All of my money went to bills and Rocky. A fancy, high-tech phone was nowhere near a priority.

“Just take the phone, Olive. I didn’t buy it expecting you to pay me back.”

I shook my head. “No.”

“Are we back to you being stubborn?” he drawled.

“I can’t afford that phone, Cue. Take it back, and I will get something cheaper. I appreciate you getting it, but I can’t take that.”

“Then pay me what you can afford. I’m not kidding when I say I got a good deal on it.”

I wrinkled my nose. “What I can afford will insult you.”

“Fifty bucks,” he offered.

I choked and reared back. “You’re insane if you think I’m just going to give you fifty bucks for that expensive phone.”

“Then give me what you can afford, Olive,” he drawled.

I quickly ran through all of my bills and how much I had in savings. “Two fifty.” That would make things a little hard if I went too long without a job, but I had been through rougher times. “We’ll need to go to the bank so I can pull it out of my savings.”

“Deal.” Cue Ball pushed the bag toward me. “Now open it and get it hooked up.”

“We really can return this, Cue,” I tried one last time. Two hundred and fifty dollars was a fraction of what that phone was worth.

“Open the phone, Olive,” he ordered. “We made a deal.”

I huffed but pulled the phone from the bag. “It’s even purple,” I whispered.

Cue Ball chuckled. “I figured you would like that.”

I always had phones that were three to four models out of date, but that didn’t mean I was clueless about the latest phones. I figured I wouldn’t have this phone for at least four years.

“Thank you,” I whispered.

“No thank you is necessary, doll. The club is the reason why you need a new phone.”

They were, but I still was thankful Cue Ball had helped me get this one. “So this is from…”

“It’s from me, doll. Yarder has enough to deal with right now without me throwing in your charred phone.”

I opened the box and ran my fingers over the phone. “Uh, I’m sorry about earlier. I’m just not used to…”

“Help?” Cue Ball laughed.

“Yes, help.”

“Could have fooled me, doll.”

I rolled my eyes and pulled the phone out of its protective cardboard. “Rocky has always been my responsibility, and it was just a little for you to

take care of him.”

“I thought your mom helps you with him?” he asked.

“She does,” I drawled. “But it’s more like she helps when I have absolutely no other option. Don’t get me wrong, my mom will do anything for Rocky, but I don’t really give her the chance to help.”

“She thinks everything is aces even when it’s not?” he asked.

I nodded and powered on the phone. “That would be correct. Not that things are bad, but they’re not as easygoing as she thinks they are.”

“Or, she knows they’re not as easygoing, but she knows you would ask for help if you need it.”

“Which I don’t,” I pointed out.

“But if you did, you would ask.”

Maybe. “If I was desperate.”

“Damn, babe,” he laughed. “It really does take a lot for you even to say you would possibly need help.”

“But I don’t,” I reminded him. The phone powered on, and I started setting it up. “I’m probably going to have to call my carrier to get this done,” I mumbled. “Oh, no,” I groaned.

“What’s wrong?” Cue Ball asked.

“I’m going to have to use a new SIM card, and I won’t be able to transfer over my contacts because my old phone is a pile of ashes.” Son of a gun.

“I’m sure you’ll be fine, doll, and figure it out.”

It wasn’t like I had that many contacts, but it was going to be a pain in the butt to find the ones I did have and enter them into my phone.

“Faye and Fade should be here in an hour or so. They’re bringing lunch.”

I nodded and chewed on my bottom lip. “I’m going to need your phone to call my phone company.”

Cue Ball slid his phone across the table to me. “Have at it, doll. I’ll leave you to set up your phone.”

“Thank you,” I absently called.

Cue Ball plopped on the couch and turned on the TV.

Just like the past couple of days, I was doing things I never thought I would do. Holding a *very* expensive phone in my hand that was *mine* was insane, but here I was.

Life was a trip.

*

Chapter Eleven

Cue Ball

“I am in hell.”

I grabbed two beers from the fridge and handed one to Fade. “What?”

He motioned to the front porch. “I am in hell with that woman.”

“I thought shit was going good.”

Fade grabbed the beer and popped the top. “She’s so nice! I can’t handle her telling me how amazing I am anymore. Who does that?” He drank half the beer and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. “All she talks about me punching her douchebag ex. I don’t wanna talk about that shit anymore. The dude isn’t worth my breath, let alone the endless minutes Faye talks about him.” He sliced his hand across his neck. “I am fucking done with this shit. You are taking Faye back to the clubhouse, and I will stay with Olive.”

“The fuck you will,” I laughed. “Yarder said you were to stay with Faye, and I had Olive. We’re not trading, brother, because that chick thinks you are her prince charming. Eat that shit up with a spoon, man.”

Fade shook his head. “I can’t handle it.”

“Well,” I shrugged. “You guys are staying at the clubhouse, right? Just hang around everyone else, and she’ll drop the whole punch thing. Is she cool other than that?”

Fade nodded. “Yeah. It’s just that I don’t think she’s over her ex seeing as she talks about him all of the time even though he called her a bitch.”

“Just chill out, man. It’s barely been two days since everything happened. You’re gonna be with her until we find out who blew up the gym.”

“Don’t remind me,” Fade drawled. He finished his beer and grabbed another one from the fridge.

“Slow down,” I laughed.

Fade shook his head. “We’re staying here all day. If I drink now, I’ll be sober by the time we leave after dinner.”

“After dinner?” I hadn’t planned on Fade and Faye staying that long. I wasn’t sure Olive would be up for company that long.

“Oh, yeah, brother. You’re telling me to calm down and what not, well, you’re gonna see just what I’m talking about.” Fade popped open his beer, and took a long swig. “Just wait.”

*

Olive

“So, how is it with Cue Ball staying here?”

I shrugged and rocked back and forth in the rocking chair. “It’s not bad. I mean, it would be better if I didn’t have him staying with here because I might be in danger, but it is what it is for the time being.”

“Do you guys talk?”

I tipped my head to the side. “Uh, yeah? He’s really good with Rocky, and when he isn’t trying to tell me what to do, I get along with him.”

Faye sighed heavily. “I don’t know how to talk to Fade,” she cried. “The man is this beautiful specimen, and all I can talk to him about is Anthony!”

I reared back. “Anthony?”

Faye nodded and dropped her head back. “Yes,” she drawled. “It’s like I open my mouth to talk about anything *but* Anthony, but Anthony is all that comes out.” She sat up abruptly and leaned forward. “Fade punched Anthony. Knocked him out in the middle of the road, and it was the best thing that has ever happened. For years I wanted to punch him right in the nose, and within two minutes of Fade knowing Anthony, he just lays him out flat. Amazing!” she cheered.

“Then why on earth are you talking about Anthony all of the time?” I laughed. “And for the record, I would have paid to watch Fade punch him.”

Faye sat back and laughed. “I did offer him money after he did it. He, of course, didn’t take it, but the offer is always on the table.”

“So what are you going to do now?” I asked.

“Well, I need to figure out how to stop talking about Anthony and talk about anything else with Fade.”

It seemed pretty simple to me to stop, but obviously, Faye was having a problem. “Ask him what he wants to talk about. Have him get the ball rolling and lead the conversation,” I suggested.

Faye sighed. “I’m such a mess, Olive. Here I am talking about me when you were the one who was blown up.”

I rolled my eyes. “I’m fine.”

“Could we be any different, Olive? All I can do is talk about myself, and you just always say you are fine.”

“Because I am fine, Faye.” Fine was what I was, and I was good with that. “Aren’t you fine?”

She laughed loudly. “I am far from fine, Olive. I’m waiting for my prince, and when I possibly find him, all I can talk about is the douchebag frog I used to kiss.”

I tipped my head to the side and cringed. “Eww?”

“Anthony is definitely eww.” She leaned forward and dropped her head in her hands. “All I talk about is the eww.”

Poor Faye. I wasn’t sure how to help her. Anthony had been in her life for a while, and even though he had treated Faye like shit, he was still hanging on in her mind. “How about when you think about Anthony or start talking about him, you have to pay whoever you are with a dollar?”

“Faye is going to be a millionaire in a week,” she laughed.

I shrugged. “Well, maybe it might become more bearable for him if he’s getting paid.”

“That is the worst idea, but I’m going to do it because I have no idea what else to do. I want to have a shot with Faye, but that isn’t going to happen if I keep talking about Anthony.”

“The hell with Anthony,” I called.

“Yes,” Faye cheered. “The hell with Anthony!” She pointed at herself. “Does that count as me having to pay you a dollar?” she asked.

I shook my head. “How about you start when we go back inside?” I suggested.

Faye nodded. “Good idea. No sense in bankrupting myself right away.”

I chuckled and shook my head. “Hopefully, you stop talking about he who shall not be named before that happens.”

“Voldemort?” Faye slowly dropped her chin, and a huge smile spread across her lips.

“Uh, Anthony is a douche, but I don’t think he’s that bad.”

“Olive,” Cue Ball called.

“Uh, yeah?”

“What do you guys want for lunch?” he asked. “And also dinner.”

I closed one eye and pursed my lips. “Uh, we can just do frozen pizza for lunch, and Rocky can pick dinner when he gets home.”

“Sounds good, doll. I’ll put a pizza in.”

“How?” Faye whisper shouted. “How did you just talk to him without

mentioning Tag?”

“Because he asked me what I wanted for lunch, Faye, not if I would want Tag stoned or beaten.”

She flipped me off and threw her hands in the air. “I’m just going to become a mute. No more words are going to come out of my mouth.” She held her pointer finger and thumb together and moved them across her lips.

I tipped my head to the side. “If you’re not going to talk to me the whole afternoon, Faye, then you might as well go back to the playhouse.”

She sputtered and struggled to keep her mouth shut.

“I mean the biker hangout.”

“Stop,” Faye gasped. “I can’t talk.”

I reached out and patted her knee. “Then you might want to get the duct tape because there is no way in hell you are going to be able to keep your mouth shut. Just when you feel the urge to talk about Anthony, pinch yourself.”

“I thought I was paying a dollar when I talked about him.”

This was getting out of hand.

“Just do whatever works to keep that douchebag’s name off your lips, okay? Pinch yourself, pay a dollar, whatever!” I laughed. “But you gotta stop talking about him.”

“I just pray I haven’t driven Faye away.”

“I’m sure you haven’t, honey. It’s been two days, not two months.” I gingerly stood and held my hand out to her. “Now, let’s go eat some frozen pizza, watch trashy daytime talk shows, and wait for Rocky to get home from school.”

“And not talk about Anthony.”

Dear, god. “Yes, Faye, let’s not do that.”

We all had our own challenges and problems in life.

Faye’s were just a bit ridiculous and brought on by herself.

Lord help her.

*

Chapter Twelve

Olive

“I need a ride.”

I stood at the screen door with my hands on my hips and a scowl on my lips.

“Uh, you don’t look so happy about needing a ride,” Cue Ball chuckled.

“That’s because where I want to go is not fun.” I pushed through the door and dropped into the rocking chair.

Cue Ball had been on the porch enjoying the peace and quiet of the country. It was a different world out here without the hustle and bustle of town. Granted, Mt. Pleasant wasn’t some big city, but it was still busy.

“Where is it that you want to go?” Cue Ball asked.

“The grocery store. We’re running low on food,” I sighed. “And then I need to swing by the temp agency and see if there are any jobs available.” I like to grocery shop, but going to the temp agency was not going to be fun. I knew I was going to find a job, but it was probably going to be one I didn’t want. I liked working at the gym.

“I’m good with the grocery store, but you’re not going to the temp agency.”

“And why not?” I asked. It had been eight days since the explosion, and I was feeling much better. Each day I got stronger, and I was getting restless. I needed something to do with my time other than sitting around waiting for Rocky to get off school.

“Because you’re still healing, and you already have a job. How are you going to work two jobs?”

I looked around. “Uh, what job?” Last I knew, I wasn’t getting paid, and my monthly bills were on the horizon. My savings could cover the bills this time, but after that, I was broke with a capital b.

“The club,” Cue Ball replied simply.

“What about the club?” Not this again.

Cue Ball sighed heavily. “For the twentieth time, Olive, you work for the club. Whether it be at the gym or the clubhouse, you work for the club.”

I rolled my eyes and propped my hands on my hips. “I haven’t done a lick since the explosion, Cue. I don’t have a job.” I motioned to the driveway.

“I need to go find one.” I pointed my finger at him. “And you also have to take me to the bank so I can pay you for my phone. You keep putting it off, and I am on the brink of learning how to drive your bike just to get to the bank.”

“You’re not learning how to drive my bike,” he growled.

“Then take me to the bank before I *YouTube* how to hot wire that thing.” I was sure I could figure out how to start it; it was keeping it upright that I would struggle with. I had ridden a bicycle for years, and even though it was said you never forget how to ride a bike, I think I very well had.

“That a threat?” he laughed.

“A promise,” I smiled. “A very real promise.” Cue Ball told me I wasn’t a prisoner in my own home, but it was starting to feel like it. “Can we please go?”

Cue Ball grunted and stood. “We can go anywhere you want, except for the temp agency and the bank.”

I threw my hands up in the air and stormed down the porch. “How ridiculous! I want to pay you for my phone, and get a job and you won’t let me. Are you a caveman or a biker?” I shouted.

Cue Ball’s thundering footsteps followed me, but I picked up my pace. I jogged down the driveway and then headed in the direction of town.

“Olive!” Cue Ball shouted. “Where the hell are you going?”

I glanced over my shoulder as I continued to jog. Cue Ball had stopped at the bottom of the driveway and watched me with his hands on his hips. “I’m going to town, and I’m going where I want!”

“You’re going to get hit by a car!” he shouted.

“I’ve been blown up! I think I can survive being hit by a car.” I turned back to face where I was jogging. I was at least wearing my tennis shoes, and I had my wallet in my back pocket. I was very well going to be exhausted after the five-mile jog into town, but at least I was doing what I wanted.

My victory of being on the way to town to do what I want was short-lived when the roar of Cue Ball’s bike grew close behind me.

If I kept moving, he couldn’t stop me.

He rode closely behind me for a few seconds before he roared around me and stopped in the middle of the road. He killed the engine and hopped off his bike.

“You’re in the middle of the road,” I scolded.

Cue Ball stood at the ready and watched me closely.

I could get around him. He was all muscle and bulky, while I was, well, I wasn't svelte and agile, but I felt my odds of beating Cue Ball in a foot race were good.

I jumped to the right, but then quickly dodged to the left.

Cue Ball didn't go right at all. He moved left as soon as I did, and took a huge, hulking step toward me.

"No," I yelped when I realized the man may not be as quick as me, but his long arm and legs were an advantage I didn't consider. "That's not fair," I screeched.

His arms wrapped around me, and I slammed into his chest. "Oof," he grunted. "You could have put the brakes on, doll."

"Brakes don't stop a freight train," I grumbled. They actually did, but I was beyond flustered to make sense. "And they need jobs." Jesus. I might be able to get to the temp agency, but god knew if they would actually make sense if I started talking like the Rain Man.

"What in the hell are you babbling about?" he growled.

"I need a purpose, Cue Ball!" I struggled against his hold, but he didn't budge.

"You have a purpose," he countered. "You have a job, and you're Rocky's mom. What the hell else do you want?"

I stopped trying to break free and tipped my head back to look at him.

Cue Ball was close. *Very* close. So close that a shiver rocked through my body, and I became very aware of his body pressed against mine. "What?" I whispered. I blinked rapidly and tried to gather my wits. "What did you ask me?"

"Do you have a fever or something, doll? You're acting crazy."

"You're the one who parked his bike in the middle of the road and tried to tackle me," I countered. Thankfully, I lived on a road that saw barely any traffic and his bike should be safe. "Let me go."

He shook his head. "Not until I know you're not going to make a run for it."

"I won't run," I lied.

A smirk spread across his lips, and I found a new appreciation for his handsome smile this close up.

The second I saw him, I knew he was gorgeous, but up close, he was

breathhtaking.

“Bullshit,” he growled.

I blinked rapidly and replayed the last thing I said. “I can’t focus when you’re…”

“When I’m what?” he asked.

“When you’re you.”

He chuckled low, and his arms loosened around me, but he kept me close. “I can say the same thing about you, doll.”

I watched his lips move as he spoke, and I wondered how his beard would feel against my skin. I licked my lips and fought the urge to pet his beard.

“Olive,” he whispered.

“Hmm?”

“Doll, you gotta stop looking at me like that.”

I ripped my eyes off his lips and stared into his eyes. “Like what?” I mumbled.

“Like you want to jump me right here in the middle of the road.”

I shook my head slightly. “I was wondering what your kiss would feel like.”

His eyes drifted close for a second and opened with passion burning in them. “Olive.” My name on his lips was my favorite thing to hear. “I’m going to kiss you if you don’t tell me to stop right now.”

Kiss? Me?

The word no was nowhere near the tip of my tongue. There was only one word I wanted to say. “Please,” I whispered.

“God damn,” he growled.

My heart raced as he leaned in, and his warm breath brushed against my skin. His eyes locked with mine, and the world faded away.

His lips finally met mine, and his soft beard brushed against my chin. His kiss was soft and tender, almost as if he was afraid to hurt me. I wrapped my arms around his shoulders and pushed up to him.

His touch made my whole body tingle, and shivers coursed through me. My fingers tangled in his hair, not wanting to let him go.

His lips were soft and lush and moved effortlessly against mine. His taste was intoxicating, and I knew I could easily become addicted to it.

To him.

He pulled back, his lips leaving mine, and he reached up to trace the curve of my cheek. “You have no idea how long I’ve wanted to do that?”

“Eight days?” I whispered. “Because that’s how long I’ve thought about kissing you.” The cat was out of the bag, so there was no point in trying to deny that I wanted that kiss. I wanted that and so much more.

“Yeah, about that long,” he chuckled.

I brushed my fingers over my lips. “Are we going to do that again?”

“I fucking hope so,” he whispered.

Another shiver ran through my body and instinctively leaned into him. “Right now?” I asked.

I didn’t need to say anything more.

His lips slammed down on mine, and he cupped my face with his hands. My arms wrapped around his waist, and I sunk into the desire I had been trying to fight.

I lost track of time as his lips moved over mine, and our hands roamed over each other. Our bodies were pressed together, and it felt like I was swimming in a pool of want and desire.

“Olive,” he gasped when he finally pulled back.

My eyes drifted open, and our breathing was ragged. Our eyes locked, and I knew this was just the beginning.

A loud car horn sounded behind me, and I jumped into Cue Ball’s arms. “Oh my god,” I laughed.

I turned in his arms and was surprised to see a white car and two motorcycles.

“Fucking hell,” Cue Ball grunted.

“Uh, do you know them?” I asked. The two men on the motorcycles shook their heads, and the woman behind the wheel of the car honked her horny happily.

“Yeah, doll.” He pressed a kiss to my cheek and threaded his fingers through mine. “I guess it’s time to meet Sloane, Aero, and Compass.”

*

Chapter Thirteen

Cue Ball

“Can you stop tapping your fucking fingers?” I growled.

Compass glared at me. “Oh, I’m sorry. Is that bothering you?” He tapped his fingers harder and added stomping his foot.

Aero snickered and cracked open his beer. “Not only do we roll up to you and Olive making out in the road, but now I get to watch you two bicker like two-year-olds.”

I flipped off Aero and leaned against the kitchen counter. “Neither thing you would have to deal with if you would have given me a heads up that you were headed out here.”

Aero held up his hands. “I am at the mercy of my ol’ lady, Cue. She’s been going crazy wanting to meet Olive, and I decided today was the day.”

“And you brought Compass with you, too,” I growled.

“Don’t fucking act like you’re miserable having an ol’ lady, either,” Compass growled. “You’re happy as fuck to have Sloane.”

Aero shrugged. “Maybe.”

Compass turned to me. “When the hell did you start to have a problem with me?”

“I don’t have a problem with you,” I muttered. “You just have the worst fucking timing to drop in.”

“Because you were making out in the middle of the road for all of the world to see?” Aero asked. “I should probably warn you that Sloane mentally wrote down everything she saw, and she is going to report back to her author chick she talks to.” Aero leaned forward. “All. Of. It.”

“Great,” I mumbled. “The whole world is going to know about Olive and me when I don’t even know what the hell we are.”

“Looked to me like you like each other; what else is there to know?” Aero asked.

I glared at Aero. “Not all of us just easily fall into bed with their ol’ lady and call it good.”

Aero splayed his hands out. “Why the hell not? You’re making this shit too hard. Life is hard in general; no reason to make being in love hard, too.”

“Whoa, whoa,” I laughed. “No one said anything about being in love. Literally, what you guys saw in the road is all that has happened.”

“A whole lot more would have happened if we hadn’t rolled up on you,” Aero laughed.

“You know Yarder is not going to be happy about this with the filming starting soon,” Compass pointed out.

“I’m pretty sure who I am kissing is not a concern of Yarder’s while he’s trying to figure out who blew up the gym. He needs to focus on that and not on what I’m doing with Olive.”

“Don’t worry, the cameras will focus on you two.” Aero held up his beer to me. “We’ll be the soft, romantic side to the reality show. At least that is what Sloane is telling me.”

“Or I’ll just hide from the fucking cameras and leave the filming up to you fucks,” I offered. “You guys work the cameras, and I’ll work on the cars.”

“Or just keep your personal shit off camera. Especially if you don’t know what is going on with you and Olive,” Compass suggested. “I’m not saying we all need to be saints, but if you don’t want the whole world knowing your business, keep that shit behind closed doors.”

I nodded. “Fine, makes sense.”

“So, do whatever the hell you want with Olive, but just know if you bring it to the clubhouse in the next couple of weeks, everyone will know.” Compass sighed heavily. “Now can we talk about what we really came here for?” he asked.

“We didn’t come here to talk about where Cue Ball is putting his dick?” Aero joked.

Compass grunted and shook his head. “No.”

“What happened?” I asked.

“Claw got back to me late last night,” Compass started.

“Good news?” I asked.

Compass shrugged. “Not really sure.”

“Just fucking tell him,” Aero called. “You were the one who wanted to come out here to tell him, and it’s like pulling teeth to get it out of you.”

Compass glared at Aero but continued. “About a month ago, Claw heard some rumblings about someone looking for an explosives guy.”

I quirked my eyebrow. “That doesn’t seem like a coincidence, seeing as

the gym just blew up.”

“Right?” Aero agreed.

“So who was it?” I asked.

Compass threw his hands in the air. “Fuck if Claw can find that out. He’s been asking around the past week, but he’s running up against a wall. No one wants to say anything more than they heard about it, but no clue who it was.”

“Fucking bullshit. We need to find out who was looking and ask what the hell they have against the Iron Fiends.”

“And the Fallen Lords,” Aero added.

I tipped my head to the side. “What? The other MC that is doing the show?”

Compass nodded. “Three days after the gym blew up, up in Wisconsin, the Fallen Lords were having a club picnic, and a car blew up in their parking lot.”

“Was someone in it?” I asked. Holy shit!

Compass shook his head. “No one was in the car. Wrecker, their prez, said as far as they have been able to figure it out, the bomb was on a timer.”

“Holy fuck,” I sighed. “That could have wiped out their whole club.”

Compass nodded. “Yeah, brother.”

“But what the hell does this mean? We have to think these are connected, don’t we?” It was too much of a coincidence that two MCs with a thousand miles between them suddenly had explosions. The only thing that connected the Iron Fiends and the Fallen Lords was Tread.

“You ready for the next bad news?” Aero laughed.

“Stop fucking laughing,” Compass growled. “This shit is not funny.”

Aero shrugged. “If I don’t laugh, I’ll just be pissed.”

“You should be pissed that someone is trying to wipe us out,” I muttered. “I don’t know how this shit can get any worse.”

Compass held up his hand. “Things can always get worse, Cue.”

Fucking hell.

“Wrecker and Yarder were both asked to come to New York for a meeting with the producers of Tread,” Compass announced.

I tipped my head to the side.

“It’s actually undecided if that is good or bad. There are a hundred different scenarios that could come of the meeting.” Compass tipped his head back and forth. “There are a few good ones, but there are a hell of a lot worse

ones.”

“Wrecker is flying here tomorrow with his ol’ lady, and then they are all heading to New York,” Aero explained.

“You going with them?” I asked Compass.

He shook his head. “Nah, I’m staying here to make sure nothing else happens.”

“Does the show know about the explosions?” I asked.

“That is something we don’t know,” Compass sighed.

“It would be hard for them not to know, but I mean, they are in New York,” I guessed.

“Well, I guess we’ll find out soon what they do and don’t know.”

Compass nodded to the fridge. “Grab me a beer,” he told Aero.

Aero grabbed a beer from the fridge and handed it to Compass.

“Come to the clubhouse tomorrow to meet Wrecker and his ol’ lady,” Aero called. “I think Sloane is cooking and Faye offered to help.”

“I’m sure Olive will want to come. You okay with Rocky coming?” I asked.

Compass shrugged. “Should be fine. Not like we’re having a rager or something.”

“Nice.”

Compass’ phone rang as soon as he popped the top on his beer. “What?” he grunted when he answered. His face hardened, and he pushed the beer away. “I’ll be there.” He ended the call and shoved his phone in his pocket.

“Everything okay?” I asked.

“With the club? Yeah.” He stood and pulled his keys out of his pocket.

“Then where are you going?” Aero asked.

“Personal,” he grunted. He nodded to me. “I’ll see you tomorrow for dinner at the clubhouse. Bring Olive and the kid.” He breezed out the door, and I heard him quickly say goodbye to Sloane and Olive.

“Any idea what the hell that was about?” I asked Aero.

Aero shook his head and grabbed Compass’ untouched beer. “Not a fucking clue.”

“You gonna drink all of my beer?” I laughed.

Aero shrugged. “If all you’ve got is two beers, then yeah.”

I shook my head and sighed. “You think all of this crazy shit is going to be over soon?” I asked.

Aero laughed and shook his head. “Even if we figure out who is fucking with us, we still have the show to deal with, Cue. There ain’t no way in hell shit is going to be calm for a longtime.”

“Hell,” I grumbled. I grabbed a beer from the fridge and flopped onto the couch.

Aero sat down in the recliner and kicked his feet up. “Might as well enjoy the peace now, right?”

Olive’s laughter floated through the screen door.

Olive, happy and laughing, was my peace. As long as Rocky and she stayed safe, I would always be able to find peace.

I just hoped she didn’t try to take that away from me when the dust settled.

*

Chapter Fourteen

Olive

Sloane ran her finger around the rim of her glass and smiled at me. “He’s good with Rocky, isn’t he?”

I sighed and couldn’t hide my smile. “Well, of course. Rocky is ten, and Cue drives a Harley. He’s the epitome of a badass. Rocky loves him.”

“That is very good, Olive. If Rocky didn’t like him, things would be much harder between you two.”

I rocked back and forth in my chair. Rocky had gotten home from school this afternoon and had stuck to Cue Ball’s side pretty much the whole time. Even during dinner, he made sure to sit between me and Cue Ball.

He was becoming pretty attached to Cue, and I was telling myself not to worry. It wasn’t working very well, but I was trying not to stress about Cue Ball being here constantly and then suddenly disappearing when they found out who blew up the gym. Hell, the whole club could become wildly famous if the reality show took off, and I might not be good enough for Cue Ball anymore.

For the past hour after dinner, Sloane had told me about her whirlwind romance with Aero and how a weekend away had turned into her finding her biker.

Of course, she wanted to know everything that was going on with Cue Ball and me, but there wasn’t a ton to tell. I had been absolutely shocked when Cue Ball kissed me. Don’t get me wrong, I liked it a lot, but I didn’t know if it would happen again. I hoped it would. I did need to take a second to think about everything.

Sloane and the guys had driven up on pretty much everything between Cue Ball and me, and she wanted to know things I didn’t even know yet. “There wouldn’t be anything with Cue Ball if Rocky didn’t like him. Cue wouldn’t have stepped foot in my house.”

“But he did, and it doesn’t seem like he is going anywhere soon,” Sloane sang.

I rolled my eyes, but I hoped she was right. “Weren’t you worried about when you got back home and went back to reality what was going to happen

between you and Aero?”

Sloane shrugged. “Uh, yeah,” she giggled. “But then I stopped thinking and just enjoyed being with Aero. If I’ve learned anything from the books I’ve read, it’s just to sit back and enjoy the ride.”

“Easy to say, but kind of hard to do,” I sighed.

“Because of Rocky?” she asked.

I nodded and took a sip of my water. “I really thought I was over his dad, bu—.”

“You’re not over his dad?” Sloane gasped.

I held up my hand and shook my head. “Let me rephrase that. I really thought I was over what his dad *did to me*, but it still messes with my head.”

“What did his dad do?”

“Nothing,” I laughed flatly. “He did absolutely nothing other than grabbing a pen and signing his rights away.”

Sloane leaned forward and scowled. “Are you serious?”

I nodded sadly. “Rocky was only six days old when he signed the papers, and I never saw him again. Well, that is, until I was in the hospital from the explosion, and they called him as my emergency contact because I hadn’t been in the hospital since I gave birth to Rocky.”

“Wow,” Sloane breathed. “And Cue Ball was there?”

I nodded and cringed. “Uh, yeah, and I made it look like Cue and I were together even though he had just met me three minutes earlier.”

“Girl,” Sloane laughed. “You are talking to me like a damn romance novel. I’m going to have to take notes and call Winter.”

I tipped my head to the side. “Is that one of the guy’s girlfriends?”

Sloane shook her head. “No, though I’m sure she would love to come spend a few weeks at the clubhouse.”

“You have completely confused me, Sloane.”

“She writes romance novels. I met her at the signing, where I met Aero. She sort of gave me the nudge to take a chance with Aero.”

“Oh,” I gasped. “That is pretty cool.”

“And I am so going to tell her about you and Cue Ball. She won’t be able to resist writing a few books about the Iron Fiends.”

“And I told you we better be getting royalties from all the books she is going to sell about the club.” Aero pushed through the screen door and leaned down to press a kiss to Sloan’s lips. “You good?” he asked softly.

Sloane smiled broadly. "Never better."

"Ready to head home?"

"Home or the clubhouse?" Sloane asked.

"Clubhouse, babe."

Sloane wrinkled her nose. "Do you think you'll ever take me back to my house?"

Aero shrugged. "Eventually."

"You do know I only have today and tomorrow off, right?" Sloane reminded him.

"And then it's the weekend. I'll have you home by Sunday. Night," he added.

Sloane rolled her eyes, and he pulled her out of the chair. "Dove is going to think you kidnapped me."

"It's not kidnapping when you coming willingly, Sloane," he tsked. He wrapped his arm around her neck and pulled her close.

"I'm going to need to write that down."

"Sloane," he groaned. "Not everything I say needs to be in a romance novel."

Sloane rolled her eyes and patted his chest. "Sure, honey. Whatever you say."

Aero growled and swiftly moved back and crouched down. He placed his shoulder to her stomach and lifted her over his head.

"Oh my god!" Sloane screeched. "What are you doing? I'm too heavy for this?"

Aero slapped her butt and jogged down the steps. "You're gonna pay for that."

"For what?" she squeaked.

"Saying you're heavy," he retorted.

I rocked up and leaned against the railing to watch Aero toss Sloane on the back of his bike and wave to us.

"See you tomorrow?" Cue Ball called.

"We'll be there," Aero cheered.

"Come early, Olive," Sloane ordered.

"Uh, it won't be until Rocky gets out of school," I hollered.

"Perfect!" Sloane waved happily and wrapped her arms around Aero's waist.

I watched as he backed up and then rocketed down the driveway and onto the road.

“I like them,” I whispered.

“Know in the first ten seconds?” Cue Ball asked.

I glanced over at him and smiled. “I think it took a good minute because I was in shock when I met them. Having our first kiss in the middle of the road was out of the normal, and then having your friends interrupt fried my brain.”

“Not the best first kiss?” he asked softly. “Maybe the second one will be better.” A wave of electricity coursed between us, and he closed the distance between us.

“Rocky’s sleeping?” I whispered.

Cue Ball nodded and brushed my hair behind my ear. “I checked on him before I came out here. He was snoring and drooling all over his pillow.”

“Remind me to wash the sheets tomorrow,” I laughed.

He stepped closer, and I tipped my head back to look at him.

“Shh, doll. I don’t think either of us is worried about laundry right now.”

“You’re right,” I whispered.

Our lips met, and it was just like earlier.

Amazing.

This kiss, though, was more confident and familiar. His lips moved against mine, and his hand rested at the small of my back while the other cradled my neck, keeping me close.

I could feel the heat of his body through his thin t-shirt, and my fingers itch to pull the fabric over his head and get it out of my way.

“I’ve been thing about this all afternoon,” he whispered against my lips.

“Me, too,” I confessed. I couldn’t help but feel that this kiss was a huge promise of what was to come for Cue Ball and me.

He pressed his forehead to mine, and our eyes locked.

“I gotta tell you, Olive, I was not at all happy when Yarder sent me to the hospital to make sure you were okay.”

“Oh, yeah?” That was a tad disappointing. Though, what person would be happy being sent somewhere to take care of a stranger? A paramedic or firefighter, maybe? “I have to assume this is turning out better than you imagined.”

A soft smile spread across his lips. “Doll, it is going to take a force of

god to get me away from you and Rocky.”

My heart melted at him mentioning Rocky.

When Rocky was younger, I tried dating. None of them worked out. Most ran when they found out about Rocky, and the ones who said they were fine with it were, in fact, not fine with it. They didn't like that my number one priority was Rocky and not them.

What they didn't get and never would, was I could have more than one priority.

“I think Rocky is a pretty big fan of yours,” I laughed.

“Wait until I tell him I'm taking him to school tomorrow on the bike.”

I rolled my eyes and rested my hands on his shoulders. “He might be good with that, but maybe you should ask his mom first.”

“Oh yeah?” Cue Ball laughed. “You think she'll be okay with it?”

I pressed a kiss to his lips and sighed. “I think you might be able to convince her to be okay with it.”

“Convince her, huh?” He pulled me flush against his body. “I think we need to get more comfortable.” He swung me up into his arms and pulled open the screen door. He moved to the couch and sat down with me on top of him. I planted my knees on each side of his hips and draped my arms over his shoulders.

“This is a good start,” I purred.

He leaned in and pressed a kiss to my forehead. “There's a whole lot more to come, doll,” he teased.

The soft glow of the lamp next to the couch created a warm and intimate vibe around us. There was a shift in the air when Cue Ball's lips touched mine, and my body ignited. He deepened the kiss, our breaths mingling, and the soft sound of our sighs filled the room.

“Cue,” I gasped when we finally pulled apart. My shirt was pulled up to my neck, and his hand was cupping my breast.

“God damn, Olive. You're like a fucking drug. I don't think I'll ever get enough of you.” He squeezed my breast and growled deep.

I could feel his dick through his jeans and ground my pussy into him.

“Doll,” he groaned, “if you keep doing that, things are going to move along a lot quicker.”

I bit my bottom lip and locked eyes with him. “Promise?” Cue and I were both grown adults, and we wanted each other. There wasn't any reason

to stop if we both wanted it.

He reached up and cupped my chin. He pressed his thumb against my lip, and I sucked his thumb into my mouth. "I'm a man who takes what he wants and doesn't give it back, Olive. I take you, and you're mine." He pulled his thumb out of my mouth and trailed it down my throat. "I don't play around."

"And neither do I. I can't remember the last time I was with a man." Seriously, no clue. It had to have been when Rocky was a toddler. After that shitty experience, I just took care of myself. Less drama, and I didn't need to dress up to impress anyone.

That was until Cue Ball.

Just a simple touch from him was more than anything I could do to myself.

"Doll," he uttered. "You should not have told me that."

"Going to run away?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Hardly. Now you're really never going to be able to get away from me."

I shimmied off his lap and held my hand out to him. I wasn't going to run away from Cue Ball. "Come with me."

Sure, I had only had myself to rely on for the past ten years, but Cue Ball was here right now showing and even telling me he wasn't going anywhere.

Tag had never done that. The first sign of turbulence he had hit the door without a thought. Cue Ball was the exact opposite. He had come rushing in when my world was literally blown up, and he stayed.

"You sure, doll?" he asked.

I had never been more sure of anything in my life other than being Rocky's mom. I wanted Cue Ball. I knew the second I met him that he was it. Of course, at the time, I thought it crazy to think this man would ever want me.

I nodded and grabbed his hand. "I'm sure. You were there when I needed saving, and you haven't left."

"You didn't need saving, doll. You were killing life without me."

I may have been, but now I wanted to do life with him. For however long he wanted to be by my side. "Sloane found her biker with Aero, and now you're my savior, but only if you want me."

“Any man who says no to you is a fucking fool, Olive. I’m not going to claim saving you, though. You did that all on your own the past ten years.” He wrapped his fingers around mine and stood. I stepped back and turned to head down the hallway, but he again swept me up into his arms.

“This really seems like a move a savior would do,” I laughed.

“Stop,” he gaffed. He strode down the hallway and walked into my bedroom. He tossed me on the bed and closed the door behind him.

“Good thing Rocky sleeps like the dead. I plan on keeping his mom up for a while tonight.”

Anticipation coursed through my body, and I pulled my shirt over my head.

I was ready.

*

Chapter Fifteen

Cue Ball

Olive was frantically trying to take her clothes off, and I couldn't do anything else but watch her.

How had I gotten so lucky to be here right now?

This morning, things had been great between us, but I had no idea the day would end this way. Life changed in an instant, and right now, I was completely ready for this change.

She finally got her pants off and shimmied out of her underwear. "Are you going to get closer, or just watch me?" she laughed.

I pulled my shirt over my head and tossed it on the floor. I toed off my boots and tugged my jeans off.

"Good lord, Cue," she gasped. "All this time, you haven't been wearing underwear?"

I shook my head and dimmed the light. "Never been a fan of them." I stalked to the bed and stood at the side. "Last chance for you to change your mind."

Olive rolled her eyes and grabbed my hand. "I fully appreciate you giving me many opportunities to bail out, but I don't need them, Cue Ball. I'm pretty sure I want and need this more than you do."

That was very doubtful. I had never wanted someone more than I wanted Olive. She was like a forbidden fruit being dangled in front of me, and I couldn't resist plucking her for my own. "How about we agree that we equally want each other?"

She tugged my hand, and I landed next to her. "Hello, there," she giggled.

The air around us crackled with anticipation and desire. My hand glided over her hip, and I tugged her close. I closed the distance between our lips and claimed her mouth once again.

Her bare body molded against mine, and she mewled against my lips.

Her lips were soft, and a perfect fit against mine. A deep rush of desire coursed through me as her hands ran over my body, and one wrapped around my shaft.

I pushed her onto her back, our mouths still connected, and her hand

stroking me. I caged her in with my arms, and I held myself above her.

The taste of her mouth, the way her fingers caressed my cock was enough to send me over the edge.

This was going to end fast if I didn't take control.

I pulled her hand away from me, and I settled between her legs.

"I want that," she laughed.

I pressed a kiss to her lips. "It's yours, doll, but you need to leave it alone for a bit before this is over before we even start." My hand trailed over her breasts and down her stomach. I cupped her mound, and she rocked her hips up.

"Please," she pleaded.

"Please what, doll?" I asked.

She closed her eyes and laid her head back. "Please touch me... there."

A slick smile spread across my lips. "Here?" I parted the lips of her pussy.

"Yes," she hissed. "I haven't... It's been..."

I knew what she was trying to tell me, and it made me want to beat my chest like King Kong to know it had been a very long time since Olive had been with anyone. "Just you and your imagination?" I whispered.

"Yes," she gasped.

I pressed a finger to her clit, and she about jumped off the bed. "I'm gonna assume you don't take care of yourself that often."

"It's different," she purred. "Everything is different with you."

I circled my finger around her clit, and she rocked her hips again. "Do you like that?"

"Yes," she drawled. "I like anything you do to me."

Her breath hitched as my finger sped up, and she raised one leg to plant her heel on the mattress. She gripped the sheets with her hands, and she arched her back. "Feel it, doll," I urged.

This first time was going to be quick for Olive, too, but I reveled in the thought that I was the one about to set her off like a rocket.

"Oh my god," she gasped. "How..."

She arched her back, rising off the bed, and my name ripped from her lips. "Oh my god!" she screamed.

Whoa, boy. Olive was a screamer. Under normal circumstances, that was great, but with Rocky just across the hallway, she was going to have to keep

that under wraps.

I covered her body with mine and swallowed her moans and mewls of pleasure. Her body relaxed as her orgasm washed through her, and her grip loosened on the sheets.

“My god,” she whispered against my lips. “I did not mean to come that fast.”

“I think that was fucking amazing, doll. We’re going to do that again after I fuck you.” I trailed kisses across her cheek to her mouth. “You’re going to be mine.”

“Yes,” she whispered. “Please.”

I leaned back and fell between her legs. I position my dick against her pussy, and slowly push in. Her pussy was like a warm glove wrapping around me. This is what I wanted. I wanted her wrapped around me, and never to come up for air.

I slowly pulled back and then rocked back into her.

“Cue,” she gasped when I sped up. “Don’t stop,” she pleaded.

Nothing was going to make me stop. I was on the brink of exploding inside Olive, and from the way her pussy was contracting and squeezing my dick, she was just as close.

I pressed my thumb to her clit, and her back arched off the bed. “I’m coming,” she groaned. “Oh my god!”

I plunged inside her, her pussy milking me, and I followed her over the edge of ecstasy. “God damn,” I groaned. I fell on top of her, and she wrapped her arms and legs around me. I shifted to the side, and she turned on her side with her head on my shoulder.

“That was…” Olive started, but her soft whisper trailed off.

“Amazing?” I finished.

Her eyes drifted shut, and a blissful smile played on her lips. “Perfect.”

“Amazingly perfect.”

She patted my chest and sighed. “Exactly.”

A comfortable silence settled between us, and her breathing evened out.

“I need to turn off the light, doll.”

Olive raised her hands and clapped twice. The lights turned off, and we were enveloped in darkness.

“You have the clapper,” I chuckled.

“Don’t laugh,” she whispered. “Neither of us had to get up to turn off the

light.”

“You got a clapper that locks all of the doors?” I asked. Olive and I had fallen into bed, and I didn’t have a chance to lock up the house.

“No,” she moaned.

I patted her hip. “Stay here, and I’ll be right back.” I rolled out of bed and pulled the covers over her.

“I’m not going anywhere,” she sighed. “I’m pretty sure my legs won’t work for a while after that performance.”

“Mission accomplished then,” I laughed. I grabbed my pants off the floor and tugged them on.

“Hurry back,” she yawned.

She was more than likely going to be asleep by the time I got back into bed. That was okay, though. I planned on waking her up at least one time in the middle of the night to remind her that she was mine now. “Sleep, doll, the night isn’t over yet.”

She hummed softly and burrowed under the blanket.

I softly padded around the house, making sure everything was locked up tight.

I slipped back into her bed, and she wrapped her body around me like we had slept together for years.

“Please don’t leave,” she whispered sleepily.

I buried my face in her hair and drifted off to sleep.

This was where I belonged, and I wasn’t going anywhere.

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Chapter Sixteen

Olive

“You’re sure?”

I took a sip of my coffee and smiled. “Yes, Rocky.”

He pumped his fist in the air. “Yes! Everyone is going to be so jealous when I get dropped off on the back of a motorcycle.”

I chuckled and nodded to his half-eaten breakfast. “Finished your breakfast, first.” I sat down next to him and sipped my coffee.

“Mom?” Rocky called.

“Yeah?” I sat back in my chair and looked at Rocky.

“Is it wrong for me to be happy that the gym blew up?”

I tipped my head to the side. “Why would you be happy about that?” I asked.

He popped the last of his PopTart into his mouth. “Because if the gym wouldn’t have gotten blown up, then we never would have met Cue.”

Well, I wasn’t sure that was entirely true, but it would have been less likely. “Does that mean you like Cue?” I asked. I was going to overlook the fact that Rocky wasn’t factoring in the fact I was in the gym when it exploded. In a strange way, I was happy too about the way things had turned out.

“Why wouldn’t I like him? He’s nice to me, plays with me, and he’s always here when I need him.”

My heart broke for Rocky. I had always tried to fill the void Tag had left, but I couldn’t fill the shoes of a dad. The special things they did with their kids that a mom couldn’t do. “Do you need him a lot?” I asked.

He shrugged. “As much as I need you. I just like having him here. He makes me feel safer.”

Same.

Completely and utterly the same.

We were fine before Cue Ball, but I knew we weren’t going to be fine if he ever left. “So you’d be okay with him sticking around?”

“The only way he will stay is if you marry him, Mom.” He wrinkled his nose. “And then you would have to kiss him all of the time.”

Something I would willingly do to take one for the team. “Uh, well, what

if I wanted to kiss him?” I was treading into possibly unsteady territory. I knew that Rocky liked Cue, but I didn’t know if he liked the idea of Cue and me together.

“Do I have to watch?”

“Watch what?” I laughed.

“You kiss him?”

Oh, Rocky. He sometimes seemed years older than ten, but then sometimes he was firmly a ten-year-old. “Well, I wouldn’t purposely kiss him in front of you, but you might see a kiss here and there.”

“Like when you kiss me goodbye every morning? You would do the same to him?” he asked.

“Exactly.”

“Do you think Cue would take me fishing? Jay was talking about fishing with his dad the other day, and it sounded like a lot of fun.”

I glanced at the clock and heard Cue Ball walk into the house. He had been outside getting the bike ready to take Rocky to school. “Well, I think that is something you are going to have to ask Cue.”

“Ask Cue what?” he called. He walked into the kitchen and ruffled Rocky’s hair.

Rocky jumped up from his chair and stood in front of Cue. “If I’m cool with you kissing my mom, do you think you could take me fishing?”

Cue Ball glanced at me, and I subtly nodded.

This morning while I had watched Cue get dressed, I asked him what we were going to do about Rocky. He simply said we should ask him what he thought about us being together. All of us.

“All I have to do is take you fishing, and then I can kiss your mom whenever I want?” Cue asked Rocky.

Rocky tipped his head to the side. “I mean, I think I’m getting the better end of the deal on this, but yeah.”

Cue Ball held his hand out to Rocky. Rocky put his hand in Cue’s and smiled broadly. “You got a deal, man. I’ll be your fishing buddy, and I get to kiss your momma whenever I want.”

Rocky held up his hands and stepped back. “Keep it to a minimum in front of me, though, okay? I’m gonna go get my backpack, and you can kiss her while I’m gone.”

Rocky ran down the hallway, and Cue Ball laughed loudly. He grabbed

my arm and pulled me to his chest. “That went extremely well,” he whispered.

I laid my arms on his shoulders and smiled. “I raised a pretty cool kid.”

“That you did, doll. And now I get to be his fishing buddy.”

“I think you are the one who came out on top with this,” I giggled.

Cue Ball pressed a soft, sweet kiss to my lips, making my toes curl and wanting to drag him back to bed.

“I’m walking out of my room,” Rocky called.

A laugh erupted from my lips, and I stepped away from Cue Ball. “We’ll continue that when you get back from dropping him off.”

“What a cock blocker,” Cue Ball muttered.

“Stop,” I grinned. “If he hears you say that, he is going to want to know what it means,” I warned.

“He *is* one,” Cue Ball laughed.

“I’m ready!” Rocky hollered. “I’ll meet you by the bike.”

“Wait!” Cue Ball called. “I think you’re forgetting something, kid.”

Rocky turned on his heel and walked straight into me. “I love you,” he whispered. He wrapped his arms around me tightly for two seconds and then ran out the door. “Let’s go, Cue! If we don’t leave now, everyone will be lined up at the door, and won’t see me on the back of your bike.”

I threw my arms up in the air and tried to act offended, but I just couldn’t do it.

I had never in my life been this happy before.

And it was because of Cue Ball.

He saved me from thinking that love wasn’t meant for me.

Cue Ball saved me.

Cue Ball wrapped his arm around my waist and pulled me in for a hot, quick kiss. “Be back ten minutes, doll. Lock the door and call me if you need me.”

I patted his cheek gently. “I’ll be waiting for you.”

I followed him out and stood at the top of the steps. I watched Rocky hop on behind Cue Ball after he helped him put on his helmet, and then they rolled out of the driveway.

Never in a million years would I think I was going to watch my heart ride away on a motorcycle, but it just did.

Half belonged to Rocky, and the other half to Cue Ball.

I didn't know how or when it happened, but that man had not only made me his, but he also stole my heart.
And I never wanted it back.

*

Chapter Seventeen

Cue Ball

I was being followed.

I had picked up the tail when I turned out of the school parking lot, and I was trying to figure out what the hell to do. I had left Olive alone and needed to get back to her, but I didn't want to lead whoever was behind me straight to her.

The clubhouse. It was only a couple of minutes away, and I could lead whoever this was there.

I pulled out my phone and connected to Yarder.

"Yeah?" he called. "Are you fucking driving?"

"I'm being followed," I called over the roar of my engine. "I'll be at the clubhouse in three minutes."

"We'll be ready." Thank fuck for Yarder being a serious asshole sometimes. That was exactly what I needed right now.

I called Olive, and she picked up on the first ring. "Where are you?" she laughed.

"Lock all of the doors, and don't open them to anyone but me or the club," I ordered. I didn't know what was going on. For all I knew, whoever had bombed the gym was getting ready to attack again.

"What's going on?" she stammered.

"I don't know."

"Where is Rocky?" she asked.

"At school and safe. I already dropped him off. Now lock the doors, and I will call you when I'm on the way to you."

"Cue," she cried.

"Lock the doors, hide. I'll see you soon." I ended the call and made the turn onto the road for the clubhouse. I didn't have time to tell Olive what was going on.

My phone buzzed, and a message from Olive flashed on the screen. **I love you.**

I tucked my phone in my cut and pulled into the parking lot. The car was still behind me and pulled in with me.

What in the hell was going on?

Were we about to be attacked in broad daylight?

I kicked down my kickstand but didn't get off my bike. I watched in my rearview mirror the car door open, and a man stepped out.

A man I had met once before.

Tag.

What in the fuck was going on?

Yarder, Compass, and Throttle stepped out of the clubhouse and watched Tag.

"Lost?" Yarder called out.

Tag nervously raised his hand in a wave. "Uh, no."

"Then what are you doing here?" Yarder demanded.

Tag nodded toward me. "I just needed to talk to him for a second."

"You know his name?" Compass asked. "Or do you just follow random bikers to their clubhouse?"

"Not very fucking smart," Throttle drawled.

I didn't know why the hell Tag had been following, but I didn't think it was to hurt me or the club. "He's Olive's..." Tag didn't deserve any credit when it came to Rocky other than the squirt he gave, "sperm donor."

Compass tipped his head to the side and cracked his knuckles. "I've heard about you."

Tag held up his hands. "I just want to talk for a minute and then you'll never see me again."

I swung my leg off my bike and stood. I turned to face Tag, and it took all my willpower to not knock him out flat. "Talk," I growled.

Tag shoved his hands in his pockets. "I, uh, happened to see you driving this morning."

I nodded.

"You have a boy with you."

"You're telling me something I already know."

Tag ran his fingers through his hair. "I didn't mean to follow you, but it was like I couldn't stop. I had to see him." His eyes connected with mine. "I had to see you with him."

"You a fucking pedo or something?" Throttle called. "Watching a kid you don't know?"

Tag shook his head. "Rocky. I watched you with Rocky and I realized something."

“Realized what?” I asked.

Tag sighed heavily. “I realized that what I did to Rocky and Olive was wrong, but I’m glad I did it.”

“Did he just say he’s glad he abandoned his kid?” Throttle asked.

I held up my hand to silence Throttle. “You got ten seconds to get in your car and get the fuck out of here.” I should have gone with my gut instinct and knocked his teeth out when he got out of his car.

“I wasn’t ready,” he blurted. “I’m still not ready. I knew there was no way I would have been able to do what you’re doing. I’m too selfish, and I only think about myself. It’s been ten years since I left Olive, and I’m still that same guy. I would leave her and Rocky all over again because I would make their life miserable. Even if I would have stayed and tried, I would have left eventually. She was too good for me when we were dating, and I know her son is, too.”

At least the guy had the decency to not call Rocky his son.

“Why are you telling me this?” I demanded. “I’m still going to fucking hate you.”

Tag held up his hands. “I’m not looking for pity or anything. I just wanted you to know I’m living in Mt. Pleasant, but I’m not here to make things hard for Olive and Rocky.”

“How noble of you,” I drawled. “It would be better if you got the hell out of Mt. Pleasant and never came back.”

“That was always my plan, but father is sick, and I’m here taking care of him,” he explained. “Just, if we happen to bump into each other, or be in the same place, I won’t know you, Olive, and Rocky. I don’t want Rocky to know who I am. I can see he has a good life, and the least I can do is not mess that up for him.” He dropped his hands to his sides. “I don’t want to be a problem.”

“You’re nothing,” I called. “Haven’t been for ten years.”

He nodded. “Good. I’m glad Olive was able to get the life she deserves. I could see the way she loves you in the hospital.”

I nodded.

He hitched his thumb toward his car. “And now I’m going to leave. Thank you for listening to me and not beating the shit out of me.” He got into his car and drove away without looking back.

“You believe him?” Yarder called. “Because if you don’t, I can find out

where he lives and make him disappear.”

Yarder pissed me off most of the time, but I knew he always would be there for me and the guys. “He’s never going to come around again.” The guy was a complete douchebag for doing what he did to Olive, but I believed him. He knew he wasn’t going to be a good dad, and instead of showing Rocky what a piece of shit he was, he just left.

“Was I the only one who was kind of hoping it would be the asshole who blew up the gym so we could just move on from that shit?” Compass called.

“Yes!”

I spun to the left and watched Pirate and Smoke walk out of the body shop.

Pirate threw his hand up in the air. “I had the dude in my crosshairs ready to take him out.”

“We can still take him down if you wanted,” Smoke offered.

“I should probably call off Dice and Fade,” Yarder muttered. “I’m pretty sure they’re following him.” Yarder pulled out his phone and walked into the clubhouse.

“Seriously?” I asked Compass. “How the hell did you guys manage to spread out so fast? I gave you maybe a three-minute warning.”

Compass shrugged. “We’ve got your back, brother. Don’t forget that.”

I ran my fingers through my hair and looked up at the sky.

Jesus Christ.

I did not need that bullshit so early in the morning.

All I had wanted to do today was take Rocky to school and spend all day in bed with Olive. Dealing with Olive’s sperm donor was not something I ever wanted to do again.

The guy knew what he was capable of and left when he knew he would fuck everything up. Slightly noble but still douche.

“I gotta get back to Olive,” I called.

“Later,” Compass called. “Don’t forget about coming over after Rocky gets out of school.”

I hopped back on my bike and roared out of the parking lot.

Tag had promised he was never going to be in Rocky’s life, and even though I knew he meant it, I would make sure he didn’t fuck up Olive and Rocky’s life any more than he already had.

Now I needed to decide if I was going to tell Olive about Tag’s visit.

I pulled into her driveway and parked at the foot of the porch. “Olive,” I called. I jogged up the steps and pulled out my phone. I tried the front door, but she had it locked up. *Good girl.*

I connected the call to her and pressed the phone to my ear.

“Cue Ball?” she called. “Are you okay?” she demanded.

“Open the front door, and you can find out for yourself, doll.”

Ten seconds later, I listened to her struggle with the deadbolt, and then the door flung open. She pushed through the screen door and threw herself into my arms.

“Cue,” she cried. She threw her arms around my neck and climbed me like a tree.

“Doll,” I laughed. “You’re going to strangle me.”

She buried her face in my shirt, and it was quickly soaked with her tears. I wrapped my arms around her and carried her into the house. I headed straight to the bedroom and laid down with her in my arms.

“I didn’t think you were going to come back,” she finally whispered.

“I’m here, Olive. I told you I’m not going anywhere.”

“You’ve only been here a short time, but it feels so much longer.”

“Because this is where I belong, doll. I should have been here ten years ago, but I’m here now.” I rolled to the side and laid her on the bed. “I need to tell you something.”

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Actually, nothing, but I did have a conversation today that I never thought I would have.”

“Just tell me, Cue. I’m already a mess.”

I brushed her hair behind her ear. “Tag saw me headed to school with Rocky today and then followed me to the clubhouse.”

Olive’s eyes bugged out, and she gasped. “Did Rocky...”

I shook my head. “He waited until I had dropped off Rocky and at the clubhouse before talking to me.”

“Not like Rocky would have known him, but I know he would have asked who he was,” she muttered.

“I know you want all the details, doll, and I will give them to you, but right now, I don’t want to talk about that guy anymore.” I pressed a kiss to her lips, and she looked at me expectantly. “Long story short, he doesn’t want to make problems for us. He doesn’t ever want Rocky to know who he is, and

if we bump into each other in town, we don't know him."

"Really?" Olive furrowed her brow. "He followed you just to tell you that?"

I nodded. "He said he knew he would have messed up Rocky's life even more than he did if he had stuck around."

"I mean, he's not wrong," she sighed.

"The guy is a douchebag, but he at least knows he is one." I pressed a kiss to her forehead and laid my head on the pillow. "And he won't be a problem in the future."

"I guess that's good, right? I was worried about him since he showed up at the hospital; now I guess I don't need to." She took a deep breath and blew it out. "Why am I a little sad?" she whispered.

"Because you're human, and there was probably a small part of you that hoped Rocky would have his dad one day."

"Instead, Tag rolls back into town and verifies he wants nothing at all to do with Rocky." She closed her eyes, and a tear streaked down her cheek. "How messed up am I to be crying about that idiot all over again?" she whispered.

I wiped away her tears and pulled her into my arms. "You're not crying for Tag, doll, you're crying for Rocky."

"I just want him to have a dad," she sobbed.

"Someone to take him fishing?" I asked. "Drive him to school on the back of his motorcycle?"

"There is going to be so much more that he needs, Cue," she sighed.

"And I am going to be here for it, Olive. I'm not going anywhere. Not voluntarily."

We fell into a comfortable silence, and she nestled herself into me.

It wasn't going to happen overnight for Olive to realize I wasn't going anywhere. It was going to take time.

Time I had to give to her and Rocky.

"I know we were supposed to spend all day naked in bed, but I think I need a nap before the day's festivities can commence," she muttered around a yawn.

"Whatever you need, doll."

It didn't matter what Olive wanted; I would always be there.

Forever.

*

Chapter Eighteen

Olive

Alice rubbed her stomach and groaned loudly. “My god that was good. I’m going to need you guys to come up to Wisconsin and cook for the club.”

“We have good food at the club,” Wrecker growled.

“I know,” Alice laughed. “I just like this food better because I didn’t have to cook any of it,” she confessed. She grabbed her purse off the floor and pulled out two Tupperware containers. “Do you mind if I grab some for a late-night snack later?”

“Jesus Christ,” Wrecker groaned. “You brought your own Tupperware?”

Alice stood and waddled over to the food. “Well, yeah, I didn’t want to have to borrow from here and then have to figure out how to get the container back to them.”

Wrecker and Alice were a damn hoot.

I had never met someone like her before, and it was mind-boggling the grumpy, growly Wrecker was her husband. Those two were the epitome of water and oil.

Though it seemed to work.

Wrecker gave her crap, and teased her, but you could tell he would also move heaven and hell for her.

They loved each other.

I loved that for her.

“Doll,” Cue Ball whispered in my ear. “Did you see she is wearing cow print pants?”

I nodded and smiled. “I did. I already asked her where I can get a pair. She’s going to send me the website.”

“Seriously?”

I pressed a kiss to his cheek. “Oh, yeah, babe. I’m starting to see the appeal.”

“The appeal of what?” Faye asked.

“Alice’s pants,” I laughed.

Faye pulled up her phone and held it in my face. “I already ordered a pair.”

“See,” I laughed. “I’m not the only one who likes them.”

“Sorry,” Wrecker grunted. “I don’t know what it is about Alice, but she always gets people loving cows and shit. If none of you are married, I would suggest not talking to Alice about our wedding.”

And now my interest was piqued. I wasn’t anywhere near getting married, but I wanted to know what happened at Alice and Wrecker’s.

“Baby cow,” Alice called. “I had one walk me down the aisle.” She finished filling her Tupperware and sat back down. “I highly recommend renting one.”

“Am I the only one surprised she didn’t buy one?” Smoke laughed.

Alice smiled broadly. “Silly man. I had to wait until after Wrecker put a ring on my finger before I started building my mini farm.”

Smoke choked on his beer, and Yarder sputtered.

“You have a mini farm?” I asked.

Alice nodded proudly, but Wrecker shook his head. “That thing was mini thirteen cows ago. Now she has a herd,” he grunted.

“Based on the Census of Agriculture, an average herd of cows is forty-four. I have a long way to go to get there,” Alice rattled off. “Thirteen is not forty-four. Who wants to see Blanche, Rose, Dorothy, and Sofia? They got delivered last week, and they are the cutest mini Highland’s.” She pulled out her phone and turned it to Sloane.

Sloane hadn’t said much.

It was like she was in shock and was just taking in Wrecker and Alice.

I couldn’t blame her.

I bet she was mentally taking notes and was going to report back to her author friend. Alice and Wrecker would definitely make a great romance book.

The crazy woman catches the eye of the bearded biker. Even I would read that book.

After we cleaned up dinner, the guys headed to have a meeting, and the rest of us put on a movie.

And we also had Alice as entertainment.

She camped out on the floor with Rocky, and they were playfully arguing back and forth about which *Transformers* movie was the best.

I didn’t have the heart to tell them that any of the *Rocky* movies blew *Transformers* out of the water.

Faye flopped on the couch next to me. “Were you going to even tell me,

or was I going to have to wait for the wedding invitation?”

“Excuse me?” I laughed.

“You’re in love, Olive.”

“I’m not in love,” I insisted. “I have known Cue two weeks, Faye. You can’t fall in love that quickly.”

“You can,” Alice called. She pointed her finger to her chest. “I did. Well, I’m pretty sure Wrecker would tell you he fell in love with me the second I curtsied, but it took me a few days to fall for the bearded giant.”

“See,” Faye called. “Alice has been married for years.”

Alice side-eyed Faye. “I’m not that old,” she grumbled.

“How old are you?” Rocky asked. “I bet you’re not over thirty.”

Alice wrapped her arms around Rocky and hugged him. “I’m taking him home with me. He’s good for my ego.”

“How old do you think I am, Rocky?” Faye asked.

Rocky pulled out of Alice’s hug and tapped his finger to his mouth. “I would think you are thirty-eight.”

“What?” Faye gasped. “You just said she’s not over thirty, but you think I am pushing forty?”

“Easy,” I laughed. “He’s only ten, Faye. Give the kid a break.” Though I was surprised he had said thirty-eight. He was not going to be Faye’s favorite little man anymore, though it seemed like Alice would boost him to her favorite.

“She’s funny and has purple hair. It makes her young,” Rocky explained.

Alice fluffed her hair. “Make sure you tell Wrecker that when he gets out of Church. He keeps telling me I need to tone it down.” She scoffed and shook her head. “Was it not enough for me to push two children out of my hoo-ha and raise them to be decent people? Twenty-two years of my life given to those kids, and if I wanted to have purple hair, then that is what I am going to do.”

“You have kids in their twenties?” Rocky asked.

“So she was ten when she had them,” Faye sassed.

Alice eyed Faye. “Is there a reason why you’re projecting your bitchiness onto me?”

Sloane’s eyes bugged out, and even Rocky gasped.

“I also call it like I see it,” Alice explained. “You’re obviously mad about something, and instead of dealing with it, you’re being rude to me.”

“I’m not being bitchy,” Faye replied defensively, “I’m just...” she sighed heavily and threw her hands in the air. “Fine, I’m being bitchy, but it has nothing to do with you, Alice. I’m sorry. You really do look like you are in your thirties, and there is no way you have kids who are in their twenties.”

Alice reached back and patted Faye’s leg. “Thank you. And for the record, I’m forty-nine.”

I would have to process Alice’s age later because Faye was going through something. “What’s wrong?” I asked her softly.

She ran her fingers through her hair and looked on the brink of tears. “I really messed things up with Fade, Olive. I finally had a decent guy show a little bit of interest in me, and I blow it.”

“Is this still about the whole Anthony thing?”

“Yes,” she drawled. “I stopped mentioning him, but Fade still will only say a few words to me.”

“Give me the CliffsNotes of what we’re dealing with.” Alice nudged Rocky. “Grab me one of those pillows, will you?”

Rocky grabbed a pillow off the couch and tossed it to Alice.

She tossed it on the floor and laid down. “I’m waiting,” she called.

Faye gave her the rundown of what happened, and everyone was silent.

“Well?” Faye called. “What am I supposed to do?” she cried.

“You think I can pretend to sleep and they’ll believe me?” Alice whispered loudly to Rocky.

“Only if I can pretend with you,” he laughed.

Rocky’s laughter was contagious, and soon we were all laughing, even Faye.

Who would have known being thrown into the world of an MC would be an amazing thing for me and Rocky. I had never seen him so happy, and he really was surrounded by amazing people.

“I’m a lost cause, aren’t I?” Faye laughed. She wiped a stray tear off her cheek and sighed. “I’m just going to give up.”

“That would be my advice,” Alice advised. “You’re trying too hard, girl. If there is one thing I had learned from being with Wrecker for over twenty-five years is that you can’t force it. If it doesn’t happen naturally, then it’s not going to last.”

Faye nudged me and smiled. “Like you and Cue Ball. Nothing more natural than a gym exploding, and Cue Ball saving you.”

Alice raised her finger in the air. “Kidnappings, explosions, and dead animals are good examples of natural things that bring people together.”

“Uh, dead animals?” Sloane asked. “I can get behind the explosions and kidnappings, but the dead animals?”

“I mean, I’ve heard it happen before.”

Sloane tipped her head to the side. “Interesting. Though, Aero and I don’t fall under any of those.”

Alice smiled. “You’ve got the *Beauty and the Beast* thing going for you, sweetie. The beast always falls for the beauty.”

Sloane blinked rapidly. “Thank you.”

Alice winked at her. “You’re welcome, hon.”

I patted Faye’s hand. “And your prince is out there somewhere, Faye. Maybe you’re like *Snow White*.”

“I need to go into the forest and live with seven strange men and wait for my prince to rescue me?” she asked.

“Uh, well,” Alice chuckled. “You might not need to be so literal.”

Faye threw her hands up in the air. “I’m just going to not try and wait for whoever my prince is to come to me.”

“Solid plan,” I replied. “No reason to be out there chasing after guys who are not worth your time.”

“Right on,” Alice called. “Now, who is going to go pop some popcorn?”

Rocky jumped up. “Mom and I can do it. She always makes the best popcorn.”

Rocky grabbed my hand and pulled me into the kitchen.

“I don’t know where anything is, Rocky,” I laughed.

We opened all of the cupboards until we found a box of microwave popcorn. I didn’t do anything special to the popcorn other than add salt to it. Apparently, that made amazing popcorn to Rocky.

“Having fun?” I asked.

Rocky watched the bag of popcorn spin around the microwave. “Yeah. Alice is super funny, and I like all of the guys. I wonder if they can come fishing when Cue takes me?”

I ruffled his hair and pulled him to my side. “You can always ask, but I know they have a lot going on.”

“Maybe they need help? I can help.”

Oh, Rocky. How did I manage to raise such an amazing boy? “We’ll talk

to Cue on the way home, okay? See what he thinks.”

Rocky nodded and opened the microwave when the timer ended. “Work your magic, Mom.”

I grabbed the bag of popcorn and dumped it in a bowl. I sprinkled salt all over it and gave it a toss. “Think we should make another bag?”

“Make four,” Alice called. “The guys aren’t going to be in their meeting all night, and Wrecker can take down two bags by himself.”

“See,” Rocky whispered, “she’s funny.”

That she was.

He ran the first bowl of popcorn out to the girls and by the time we had the last bag popped, the guys filed out of their meeting.

“Some of that for me?” Cue Ball called. He snagged me around the waist and pressed a kiss to my cheek.

“Everything okay?” I asked.

Cue Ball nodded. “All good, doll.”

“Cue!” Rocky cheered. “I saved some popcorn for you, and you can lay on the floor next to me.”

I bumped my hip against his. “You better go. We can talk when we get home.” I tried to not be jealous of the fact I was going to have to share Cue Ball with Rocky. Though it did make me understand better how guys I dated in the past didn’t like to share me with Rocky. The shoe was on the other foot now.

I wouldn’t want it any other way, though.

*

Chapter Nineteen

Cue Ball

“Do you think we could go visit Alice in Wisconsin?”

“What?” I chuckled.

“Alice. Do you think we can go visit her? Rocky really took a liking to her.”

And I’m sure Olive took a liking to her, too. Alice was a cool chick, but also a bit cooky.

“I mean, I’m sure we could make it happen. I’m not sure if we can do it while we’re filming, but we’ll plan a trip.”

Olive sighed and rolled into me. “Is it weird that I forget that you guys are going to be reality stars?”

I pressed kiss to her forehead. “Me, too, doll. I’m not doing the show without everyone knowing you’re mine.”

She wrinkled her brow. “Uh, no. That is a you thing, not a me thing. And you can just casually mention that you are attached.”

“Attached?” I chuckled. “Is that what we’re calling this? I think that text message you sent me was more than attached.”

She wrinkled her nose. “Text message?”

I nodded. “The one you sent me when Tag was tailing me.”

“Can we please not mention that man ever again?” she groaned.

“Done, but stop avoiding the text message.”

She tried to roll away from me, but I rolled on top of her and pinned her to the bed.

“Did I tell you I think there might be something wrong with my phone? It keeps randomly texting people. Maybe that is what text you are talking about.” She quirked her lips. “My phone randomly texted Faye **The elephant meets the mouse at midnight.**”

“Olive,” I chuckled.

“Totally weird, right?”

I leaned down and pressed a kiss to her lips. “Doll.”

Her eyes connected with mine. “Cue.”

“You know what you texted me. Your phone did not randomly send it to me.”

“Uh, well, did you reply when I sent it? Or, I mean, when my phone sent it?” she asked.

I shook my head. “I did not.”

“Then maybe that is why I don’t remember what I sent,” she replied coyly.

I leaned to the side and pressed a kiss next to her ear. “I love you,” I whispered.

“Cue,” she cried.

“I love you, Olive Benson.”

“Stop,” she pleaded. “My heart can’t take it. It’s already too much watching you with Rocky. I can’t take you loving him *and* me.”

“I have to choose?” I asked.

“No, no,” she giggled. “I just mean you need to not lay all of this on me at one time because no one should be this happy. This whirlwind romance is too much for my mended heart.”

“I love you, Olive,” I repeated. “I love Rocky. I love you both.” Mended heart take that. I was going to fix every crack and break in her heart.

“Not playing fair at all,” she whispered.

“And you didn’t play fair either when you told me it only took you one second to like me.”

She leaned up and pressed a kiss to my lips. “I lied.”

“You lied?”

She nodded. “It only took me one second to fall in love with you.”

“Dammit, Olive,” I groaned.

“Now tell me again.” She wound her arms around my neck and pulled me close. “Tell me again that you love me and Rocky.”

“I love you. I love Rocky. I love you both.”

“Equally?” she whispered.

“I’d die for you both, doll.”

“Our savior,” she breathed.

I didn’t save her. She saved me. She saved me from a life of loneliness. “I love you, Olive.”

She cupped my cheek with her hand. “I love you, too.”

*

Chapter Twenty

Cue Ball

Don't panic.

"Rocky!"

Don't panic.

"ROCKY!"

DON'T PANIC!

He was gone. He had been right next to me, and now he was fucking gone.

Olive was in the clubhouse with Faye while Rocky and I had been stringing line on our fishing poles. Pirate and Smoke had headed to the gas station for night crawlers and were going to meet us at the lake.

Except there was no us. It was just me.

"ROCKY!"

Where could he have gone? We were in the parking lot of the clubhouse. THERE WAS NOWHERE TO GO!

"Yo," Throttle called. "You good?"

I jogged to the end of the driveway and looked up and down the road. "I can't find Rocky," I shouted. "He was right fucking there, and now he's gone." All I had done was duck into the garage for thirty seconds to get more line, and when I came out, he was gone.

"Rocky," Throttle called. "He's gotta be around here, man. Let's spread out," he suggested.

"Cue!"

Olive.

She was standing in the open door of the clubhouse, confusion on her face. "What is going on? We heard you screaming."

Faye stood behind her with her hands on her hips.

"I... He was right there, Olive."

Olive stepped onto the gravel parking lot. "Who was right there?" she asked.

My gut dropped to my feet. I was going to have to tell her that her son was missing. "Rocky."

Olive looked around. "And where is he now?"

“I’m gonna check the back,” Throttle called. “He couldn’t have gotten far.” He jogged around the clubhouse, calling Rocky’s name.

“I’ll go check by the garage. Maybe he’s just hanging out with one of the guys working on a car.” Faye hurriedly moved to the open bay doors.

“Rocky!” Olive hollered. “Rocky!”

“We’re gonna find him, Olive. I promise.” I moved back to the road and watched a motorcycle heading toward me.

Yarder was back from New York.

I had lost Rocky.

He roared into the parking lot and stared at me.

“What the hell are you doing in the road?” he called as soon as he killed the engine.

“Rocky is missing,” Olive called faintly. Her face was pale, and she rung her hands together.

“Someone took him?” Yarder asked.

I didn’t know. I didn’t know a fucking thing. “He was right there.” I motioned to the open tackle box and abandoned fishing poles. “I went to go get more line, and when I came back, he was gone.”

Yarder jogged to the clubhouse and bellowed for everyone to get their asses outside.

Olive and Faye moved through all of the cars, checking to make sure he wasn’t in any while the rest of us fanned out and searched around the clubhouse.

Half an hour later, we still hadn’t found him, and dread filled my heart.

“Pull up the cameras,” Yarder told Compass. “If someone took him, we should have video of it.”

“Who would take him?” Olive demanded. “Who would take my son?” she screeched.

Compass disappeared into the clubhouse.

My knees hit the gravel, and I scrubbed my hands down my face. “I’m so sorry, Olive,” I whispered.

“Hey!” Compass called.

Everyone’s eyes snapped to the open door of the clubhouse.

“You got something on video?” Yarder called.

Compass appeared in the doorway. “Even better.” He stepped to the side and my heart leapt.

Rocky.

“Oh my god,” Olive gasped. She clutched her hand to her chest and scrambled to Rocky.

“I found him in the surveillance room,” Compass explained. “Clocked him with the damn door. He was sleeping.”

“What were you doing in the surveillance room?” Olive demanded.

“I was hiding. I thought it would be funny to hide, and then jump out at Cue when he found me.” He ran his fingers through his hair. “I fell asleep though.”

I raised my arms above my head and turned away from Olive hugging Rocky.

He was safe.

HE WAS SAFE.

That didn't take away the panic that still coursed through me.

My heart couldn't take this.

With Rocky and Olive, they were my heart literally walking around, and as much as I said I would do everything to keep them safe, I obviously couldn't.

I didn't know what to do.

I wanted to hug them and never let them go, but I also never wanted to see them because I had failed them.

I had failed Olive.

Not even a month knowing each other, and I had failed her in the biggest way possible.

I had lost Rocky.

“Hey!” Yarder called. “Where the hell are you going?” he demanded.

I had to get out of here. I couldn't be here. I couldn't handle knowing I had failed Olive and Rocky.

I walked.

Down the middle of the road.

I walked.

“Cue!” Yarder shouted.

“Cue!” Olive called.

How could she be calling me? How could she even want to see me right now?

Heavy footsteps sounded behind me, but I didn't stop.

Yarder grabbed my arm and whirled me around. “Where in the fuck are you going?”

I tried to rip my arm from his grasp. “Let me go,” I growled.

“What the fuck is going on in your head, man?” he demanded. “We found him.”

“Yeah, but I also lost him!” I shouted. “He was there, and then he was gone, and I had no clue what the fuck happened.”

“He’s a kid,” Yarder reasoned. “He thought it would be funny to hide and scare you.”

“But what if that wasn’t what happened? What if whoever blew up the gym had taken him while I was supposed to be watching him?” I ran my fingers through my hair and paced back and forth. “How do I keep them safe, Yarder? How can I stand in front of Olive, and swear on my life she will be safe when I couldn’t even keep track of Rocky when he was ten feet away from me?”

“This wasn’t your fault, Cue. No one is at fault. You can’t be mad at Rocky.”

Mad at Rocky? I was mad at myself. “You know his dad? His dad that knew he would be a shitty dad so he left? I should do that. I should just leave them alone because I obviously can’t keep them safe.”

“You’re comparing yourself to that piece of shit?” Yarder shouted. “You are nothing like him, Cue. He didn’t even try. He gave up before he even tried.”

“Yeah, well,” I laughed flatly, “I fucking tried, and I fucked up. I don’t know if that’s just as bad as him trying or worse. I’m gonna say worse because I will never forget the terror I felt in my heart when I thought something happened to him.”

Yarder stepped in front of my pacing and stuck his finger in my chest. “That. That right there is what sets you apart from that douchebag. From the first second he was missing, you did everything you could think of to find him.” Yarder pointed down the road. “That asshole has missed ten years of his kid’s life, and instead of coming back to town and begging for a chance to know his son, he talks to you and promises to never see him. Never care about him. Never know what an amazing job his mom did raising him. Never love him a tenth as much as you do.”

I shook my head.

“Do you love them, Cue?”

I closed my eyes.

“Cue,” Olive called softly.

The light tread of her feet moved closer.

“Open your eyes, Cue,” she ordered.

“I can’t do this, Olive.”

“Do what?” she asked.

“I can’t keep you safe. I can’t take your love, and in return, give you nothing other than losing Rocky.”

Her hand touched my arm, and I stepped back. “I can’t touch you?” she whispered.

“I don’t deserve you, Olive. I don’t deserve you and Rocky.”

“Please open your eyes.”

I had to get this over with. The sooner she realized that I couldn’t be what she needed, the sooner she could move on to find the man who could keep her safe.

I opened my eyes, and the most beautiful woman stood on front of me with tear tracks down her cheeks.

And Rocky.

Rocky stood next to her.

My heart standing in front of me.

“I can—.”

Rocky launched himself at me, and I instinctively caught him.

“I’m so sorry, Cue. I didn’t mean to scare you. We were talking about playing hide and seek, and when you went to get more line, I thought we could play.”

“Except he forgot to tell you he was playing,” Olive called. “He’s done it to me before, too. Though,” she scolded, “I thought the last time he did it we agreed that he would always tell someone when he was playing so they would know to look for him.”

Rocky buried his face in my neck. “I’m sorry. Please don’t leave us, Cue. I promise to never play hide and seek again,” he promised. “I know you and Mom are mad at me, but I’m really sorry.”

“I’m not mad at you, Rocky,” I whispered.

“Then don’t leave,” Olive called. “I know exactly how you feel, but I can tell you the fact you feel that means you can do this. You can stay with

Rocky and me.”

I wasn't so sure about that. “I saw the way you looked, Olive. That was because of me.”

She shook her head. “I was worried and feeling the exact same thing as you, Cue. This is my fault, too. I was *inside* the clubhouse when he snuck into the surveillance room, and I didn't see him. What kind of mom does that make me?” she asked. “Don't leave me. Don't leave me to be Rocky's mom by myself again. I can't do this without you.”

“She really can't,” Rocky interrupted. “I'm going to be a teenager soon, and Mom has no idea how to be a boy.”

“She's done amazing by herself so far,” I sighed.

“Barely,” Rocky cringed. “There have been some touch and go moments.”

Olive threw her hands up in the air. “Ten years, and now he tells me I did an okay job.”

A chuckle rumbled from my chest. “You sure you want me to stick around?” I asked Olive.

“I have never been surer of anything in my life, Cue. You can't leave because you promised me up and down nothing could ever make you leave,” she reminded me.

Rocky wiggled in my arms, and I set him down. “That includes me playing hide and seek without telling you I am hiding.” He held up his hand. “I swear.”

“And you'll tell me if I'm messing up this parenting thing?” I asked him.

He nodded. “Oh, yeah. I'll let you know, but I don't really see that happening unless you decided to not take me fishing now.”

I ruffled his hair and chuckled. “Deal.”

Rocky pumped his fist in the air. “Sweet! I'll finish sorting the worms!” He took off down the middle of the road and I moved to follow him.

“I got him,” Yarder called. He jogged to catch up with him and followed closely behind him.

My eyes were on Rocky, but Olive was looking at me.

“Were you really going to leave us?” she asked.

“I should, Olive. I don't think I'm the best thing for you, but I will do everything in my power to be the man you deserve.”

She stepped toward me. “That's all I want, Cue. All I want is for you to

be the man I fell in love with. The man who walked through my hospital door not knowing who I was, but vowed to keep me safe. That's all I want."

"You're in luck because that's exactly what I have to give."

"Good," she whispered.

She launched herself into my arms like Rocky had, and I pulled her to my chest. "Jesus," I chuckled. "You and Rocky need to give warning before you launch yourself at me."

She wrapped her arms around my neck and squeezed tightly. "I love you, Cue."

"I don't deserve you, Olive, but I'm a selfish bastard who is going to die keeping you safe and loving you."

She leaned back and smiled broadly. "You saved me, and now you get to love me, Cue. You more than deserve me."

"How about we saved each other, Olive?"

"I might have to write that down and tell Sloane. You're sounding like one of her romance novels, Cue."

I rolled my eyes and pressed a soft kiss to her lips. "I think we should probably get out of the middle of the road."

A motorcycle started by the clubhouse.

"Are they sending the calvary to herd us back to the clubhouse?" Olive laughed.

I set her down and threaded my fingers through hers.

Throttle and Aero pulled out of the driveway and headed our way.

They pulled up next to us.

"Sloane called," Aero shouted over the roar of his bike. "Dove didn't show up to work, and Sloane can't get ahold of her."

We were jumping from one crisis to another.

"You want help?" I asked.

Aero shook his head. "I'm sure she's fine. I'll let you guys know what I find out." He roared off with Throttle and we walked back to the clubhouse.

"You two good?" Yarder asked.

I looked at Olive, and she nodded. "Yeah, we're great."

"Good," Yarder grunted. "Because when I was in New York, they wanted to know if any of the members had girlfriends, and I told them about Olive and Sloane."

"No," Olive whispered.

I couldn't help but laugh. "Did you pitch them a single mom who fell for the rough biker?"

Yarder smiled. "Sure the fuck did. The more they focus on you two, the less they pester me." He nodded to Rocky. "And you know this kid is going to just cut it up next week."

"Next week?" I asked.

"Oh, that was the other thing." He cupped his hands around his mouth. "Filming starts next week."

Everyone groaned.

"What about the asshole who blew up the gym?" Dice asked. "Are we gonna have to deal with that when the cameras are rolling?"

"I'm taking care of it," Compass replied.

"The show is probably going to touch on the explosion, but we all keep our mouths shut about it. They ask, we tell them about it, and that we don't know what happened," Yarder explained.

That would work. It wasn't like any of us would be lying.

"So we carry on like business as usual?" I asked.

Yarder nodded. "Yup. You guys entertain the cameras, and I'll keep the wheels rolling at the shop." Something told me things weren't going to go as smoothly as Yarder hoped.

Yarder waltzed into the clubhouse rather proud of himself.

"You'll be famous in no time," Olive proclaimed.

I shook my head and wrapped her in my arms. "You mean *we'll* be famous in no time. You know everyone is going to love the single mom who gave the dirty biker a chance."

She slapped my chest and shook her head. "Stop calling yourself a dirty biker. You're my savior, remember?"

"How can I forget when you keep saying it," I drawled.

She pressed a soft kiss to my lips and sighed. "I think you secretly like it."

I did, but we didn't need to broadcast it.

"Are we going fishing?" Rocky called. "Aren't Pirate and Smoke at the lake waiting for us?"

They were. "I still need to finish stringing the poles."

"Why don't you string the poles, and I'll grab some snacks with Rocky?" Olive suggested.

“Are you coming with us, Mom?” Rocky asked.

“If you’ll have me. Though,” she drawled. “I refuse to touch any worms, and if I catch anything, one of you is going to have to take the fish off the hook.”

“Deal!” Rocky called.

Olive leaned up on her tiptoes and pressed a kiss to my lips. “That okay with you?”

I nodded. “Best plan I’ve ever heard.”

She grabbed Rocky’s hand, and my heart walked into the clubhouse.

Till my last breath, I would do everything in my power to keep those two safe and happy.

Just like I knew they would do the same for me.

*

Chapter Twenty-One

Dove

I hated this room.

Always did.

The garish flower wallpaper was the thing nightmares were made of. Hell, it still gave me nightmares.

I flopped back on the bed and blew out a frustrated breath.

I should have seen this coming.

It had been almost two years since the last time I was here, and in the past week, I had seventeen missed calls. Missed calls from a number that never called.

Unless he needed something from me, and like a good little girl, I would do whatever he wanted. This was a bit more dramatic than in the past. Usually, he would come to my apartment, tell me what he needed from me, and then slink back to his mansion.

Not this time.

This time I was here, and I knew this wasn't a good sign.

The door creaked open, and I sat up.

"Dove."

"Father."

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About the Author

Wall Street Journal and USA Today bestselling author Winter Travers is a devoted wife, mother, and aunt-turned-author born and raised in Wisconsin. After a brief stint in South Carolina, following her heart to chase the man who is now her hubby, they retreated up North to the changing seasons and to the place they now call home.

Winter spends her days writing happily ever afters and her nights being a karate mom hauling her son to practices and tournaments. She also has an addiction to anything MC-related, puppies and baking.

Winter loves to stay connected with her readers. Don't hesitate to reach out and contact her.

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Check out the first chapter of
[*Wilder Presley Says He Loves Me*](#)

Chapter One

He's back...

Shelby Lyn

“He’s back.”

I snagged the last roll of black ribbon and dropped it into my basket.

“I saw him this morning at the diner. When he walked right by, I was getting my two scrambled eggs with wheat toast and maple sausage.” Missy clicked her tongue. “He looked as fine as fireworks on the fourth of July out on Mason Lake, let me tell you.”

My eyes searched the shelf for the second time hoping for more black ribbon to magically appear. “Maybe they have more black ribbon in the back,” I mumbled. I needed at least five more yards to ensure I had enough to finish the wreath Mrs. Baxter ordered. Halloween was fast approaching, and I needed to get a jump on my yearly orders.

“Shelby Lyn.” Missy snapped her fingers in my face. “Have you heard a word I’ve said?”

I stepped back and swatted her hand out of my face. “Yeah, you ate your breakfast this morning, and it was as good as the fourth of July fireworks.”

Missy scoffed. “You missed the important part.”

Missy spoke a mile a minute, and while I’m sure most of what she said was necessary to someone somewhere, most of the time, I tuned her out. After almost twenty years of friendship, I learned that if I missed something important that came out of her mouth, she tended to return to it until I heard her. This was one of those times. “Then tell me the important part while we wait for Jack to get his ass out of the backroom and help me.”

“You know he’s probably reading the old *Playboys* back there.” Missy visibly shivered. “Thank god I never had a boy. I don’t think I could have handled the crusty socks and forty-minute showers.”

“Missy. Did you need to go there?” Dear god in heaven. I did not need that mental picture painted in my brain. “I doubt Jack is doing anything in the

backroom. Please, he's eighteen. I hope he can control himself till he gets off work."

Missy shrugged. "Girl, you remember how boys were when we were eighteen. Horn dogs looking to rut."

"Uh, rut?" Was she talking about men or deer? *Sometimes the lines did blur.*

She scoffed and grabbed the dark blue ribbon. "Dad was watching the hunting channel last time I stopped by. What about this one?"

I shook my head. "It's navy."

"Nonsense. This is black," she insisted.

I grabbed the ribbon from her and set it back on the shelf. "It's navy, and it won't work." The backroom door swung open, and Jack walked out. "There's Jack."

"Oh lordy. See, he's tucking his shirt in." Missy hissed. "Whatever you do, do not touch his hands," she advised.

"Jack," I called. "Can you check to see if there is any more one-inch black ribbon in the back?"

Jack gave me a two-fingered salute and backtracked to the backroom.

"Gonna be ten minutes before he surfaces again. You gave him an excuse to read a few more pages," Missy laughed.

"You're a nut, Missy." I moved over to the selection of orange ribbons and tried to figure out which shade would be perfect. It needed to be bright, but not neon bright.

"Can we get back to what we were talking about before?"

"Your breakfast? It must have been pretty good if you want to keep talking about it." I fingered a light shade of orange and wondered if it would clash with the dark shadow of orange I already had at home. Mrs. Baxter was as sweet as pie, but she would have a bird if the colors weren't right for her fall wreath.

Missy scoffed. "Wilder Presley is back, Shelby," she shouted.

I dropped the light orange ribbon, and Missy's words hit me like bullets to my head. "Uh, what?" There was no way she had just said *that*.

No.

No, no, no.

Missy snapped her fingers in my face. "Now you're gonna listen, huh?" she laughed. She shook her head and turned to the rack of ribbon. "What if

you did a dark purple instead of black?” she suggested.

I grabbed her shoulder and spun her back to face me. “We’re not going to talk about ribbon right now,” I spat.

“You’re about a minute behind on your shock, Shelby. I’m over having to tell you about Wilder.”

“I was listening all along,” I muttered.

“Wilder Presley is back in Adams, Shelby Lyn, and you look like you saw a ghost.”

I glared at Missy. “I heard you the first time you said it.”

Missy cackled. “Second time I said it, you heard, but I had to repeat it because the look you get when I say his name says so much.”

I didn’t get a look when she said his name. There was no reason why I would get a look. *None*. “Where is Jack with my ribbon?” I grumbled.

“So you’re just going to act like I didn’t tell you *the* Wilder Presley is home?” Missy smirked. “You can’t act like this with me, Shelby. You told me what you said the day he left.” She wagged her finger in my face. “I have known you for nineteen years and one hundred ten days.”

I rolled my eyes. I wasn’t acting anyway, just like I hadn’t had a look when she said Wilder’s name. “And this isn’t his home,” I insisted. “When you leave for more than nine years, the place you go to becomes your home.”

“Is that a rule?” Missy questioned.

“Here ya go,” Jack called. He held up three rolls of black ribbon. “These are the last of them.” He made his way to me, and I grabbed the rolls from him.

“Thanks.” I nodded to the orange ribbon. “I need to grab a couple of rolls of orange. I’ll meet you at the register.”

Jack nodded. “Sounds good.”

I grabbed two shades of orange and hoped they would work for the wreath, but my mind was too wound up about Wilder to even notice what I grabbed.

“Shelby,” Missy called.

My eyes darted to her. “What?”

“What is going on in that head of yours right now?” she demanded.

I shrugged and dropped the orange ribbon into my basket. “I think I have two days to finish this wreath, and then I need to start thinking about the Christmas wreaths for the church while I work on the twenty other orders I

have for fall or Halloween wreaths. I'm busy, Missy."

Missy tipped her head to the side and crossed her arms over her chest. "You are so full of shit, girlfriend. The man you had a crush on all of your life is back in town, and you're going to tell me you're thinking about wreaths? That you didn't tell him you loved him?"

I nodded my head. "Yes, you will believe that because you are my best friend, and you know I don't want to have this conversation at the craft store. And I told him I loved him as a friend. It was a "Have a great life, buddy. I love you." Turning on my heel, I headed to where Jack stood behind the check-out counter.

"You know I'm just going to come over to your house after I get off of work," Missy called after me.

I raised my hand over my head. "I wouldn't expect anything less from you, Missy." Missy had been my best friend for almost twenty years. She had moved to Adams when we were both ten and had become one of my close friends that summer.

"You want wine or hard booze?" she asked.

I needed a damn tranquilizer if what she had told me was true. "Bring the Southern," I replied.

"Woo, wee," Missy chuckled. "This is going to be a fun night."

I rolled my eyes and set my basket on the check-out counter. "You wouldn't by chance have a bottle of booze behind the counter, would you, Jack?" I blew my hair out of my face and sighed.

"Uh, well, I think my dad might have a bottle hidden in his office," Jack stammered. "I could see if I could get you a glass."

Oh, sweet Jack. He was just a little too naïve for his good.

I nodded to the basket. "I think I can make it home without a glass. Thank you, though."

Jack looked visibly relieved.

Five minutes later, I was sitting behind the steering wheel of my truck and closed my eyes.

Wilder Presley was back in town.

Twelve years ago, I had watched that man drive out of my life with not so much as a backward glance. He had broken my heart that day, and he hadn't even known it.

Wilder Presley was back, and so were all those feelings I thought I had

buried.

No amount of Southern was going to make this any easier.

*

Check out the First Chapter of
[*Drop a Gear and Disappear*](#)

Chapter One

Quinn

A lady in the streets and a freak in the bed...

“Come with me, baby.”

Kimber rolled into my side. “I’ll pass.”

I looked down at her naked body and ran my fingers over her smooth, flawless skin. “You’re gonna have to come there one day.”

“But today is not that day, Quinn.”

“It’s Gear, baby.”

She snorted and tipped her head back to look at me. “Okay, Quinn.”

I fucking hated my name, yet Kimber insisted on calling me it even though I finally got my road name from the Rolling Devils. “You gotta learn to tolerate the club, baby. I know you don’t like it, but you gotta not hate it.”

“Mhmm,” she hummed under her breath and laid her head back on my shoulder. Her hand slid across the expanse of my chest, and her fingers trailed over the tattoo of an eagle holding a skull. “But you don’t need to leave just yet,” she whispered.

“Soon.”

“Maybe I need to remind you what will be waiting for you while you’re fetching beers for all of your club buddies.”

“I do more than that.”

“Right,” she drawled.

At least on normal days, I did more than that. On nights like tonight, I did basically just fetch beer and booze the whole time. “So what exactly are you going to do to make me not forget about you?”

She rolled onto her back and slowly raised her hands over her head.

“It’s more like, what are you going to do.”

I turned onto my side and slid my hand down between her tits.

“Daddy’s choice?” I whispered.

Her eyes flared with desire.

I was a lucky fucker to have Kimber in my bed.

The saying “a lady in the streets and a freak in the bed” was Kimber to a T.

During the day, she worked at a doctor’s office where she answered phones and dealt with bitchy ass people with a smile on her lips, and at night, she was my naughty little minx who couldn’t get enough of me.

I grabbed her by the waist and flipped her over onto her stomach. “On your knees, ass in the air.”

She scampered up to her knees and wiggled her ass at me. I moved behind her, my knees between her legs, and slapped her ass. “Always hungry for my cock,” I growled.

She looked over her shoulder at me with her bottom lip between her teeth and nodded her head. “Always,” she whispered.

My hand wrapped around my cock, and I stroked up and down with my eyes never leaving hers. “Greedy pussy.”

She reared back and bumped her ass against my hand. “Stop talking and start doing.”

I gripped the globe of her ass and parted her cheeks. Her pussy was dripping, and the bud of her ass begged to be fucked. “Anything I want, baby?”

“I guess that all depends on what time you need to leave,” she replied coyly.

I knew I didn’t have the time to fuck her properly. She was trying to distract me from going to the club, but I couldn’t miss the party. I pressed my dick against the entrance to her pussy and slowly pushed in. “Your ass is mine later tonight,” I promised.

She reared back again, her ass grinding against me. “Promises, promises,” she muttered.

Damn right, it was a fucking promise. It was one I planned on keeping, too. I grabbed a handful of her hair and pulled her head back. “I’m gonna fuck you so hard, you aren’t going to be able to get out of bed the whole time I’m gone.”

“Yes,” she hissed.

I put a hand on her hip and thrust deep. “Who do you belong to, Kimber?” I demanded.

“You,” she breathed out.

“Say my name.”

A sultry laugh fell from her lips. “Does one name get me a fucking and the other a spanking?”

“Damn straight, baby. Choose carefully.”

She rubbed her ass against me and flexed the walls of her pussy around my dick. “As fun as a spanking sounds, I need your dick.”

I slowly pulled out then slammed back into her. “Like that? You want it hard?”

She groaned and shook her head. “Yes, Daddy.”

I let go of her hair and grabbed her hips.

She dropped her head to the mattress and braced her arms. “Please, Gear. Fuck me.”

She spoke the words she knew would drive me crazy and give her exactly what she wanted.

With each thrust of my hips, she moaned my name.

My fingers dug into her hips as I held her still and drove into her. “Tell me again,” I grunted.

“I’m yours,” she gasped. “I’m yours, Gear.”

I felt her climax climbing and moved faster. “Play with yourself, baby.” I was going to come soon, and I wanted her pussy to milk every last drop of cum from me.

Her hand snaked between her legs. “Gear, please,” she pleaded. “Fuck me.”

While her fingers stroked her clit, my dick pounded her pussy.

“I’m...I’m coming,” she whimpered. “Gear...please.”

Her pussy contracted around my dick as her orgasm washed over her, and she ripped my release from me. “Fuck yeah,” I grunted. “Take it all, baby.”

She panted my name then buried her face in the pillow.

The final tremors rocked through me, and I fell onto the mattress next to her.

She dropped the rest of the way and partially rolled into me.

I threw an arm over her and pulled her close. “Sure you don’t want to come with me?” I asked again. “We could find a room at the clubhouse and find the time to do that all over again.”

She laughed and shook her head. “Or I could just stay here, eat some pizza, and sleep until you get home.”

“It’s gonna be late.” I didn’t expect to leave the clubhouse ‘til well into the morning.

“Just wake me up when you get home.”

She wasn’t going to budge on this. I had been a prospect for the club for four months, and she refused to step foot at the clubhouse. “One day, I’m going to get you to come to a party.”

She scoffed. “But that day is not today,” she laughed.

I pressed a kiss to the side of her head and rolled out of bed. She pulled the blanket over her body and turned onto her back. “You didn’t need to cover up.”

She rolled her eyes and fluffed the pillow under her head. “Last I checked, if you’re not in this bed, then you don’t have a say about what I’m wearing or doing.”

I grabbed the blanket and tugged it down her body ‘til I could see her tits. “Is that so?”

She grabbed the blanket to tug it up, but I didn’t let it go. “You’re gonna be late, Quinn,” she tried to reason.

“I’m already late, Kimber. My ass should have been on my bike half an hour ago, but your greedy pussy kept me in bed.”

She scooted down the bed and managed to get under the covers enough to conceal her body from me. “Well, this pussy is staying in bed cause I had a long day at work, and since you just fucked me twice, I think a nap is needed before I order pizza.”

“A nap and pizza, huh?” That did seem like a good night, but the club couldn’t be put off. I let go of the blanket and bent to pick up my clothes. “Save me a slice, and don’t put fucking olives on it.”

She snuggled under the blanket and watched me get dressed. “How many people are going to be there tonight?”

This was the fourth large party the club had since I had started prospecting, and each one kept getting bigger than the last. “I think a shit-ton. I don’t get to sit in on the meetings, but Mud had mentioned another club was coming in for the night.”

“Still can’t believe the guy who is your sponsor goes by the name Mud.”

I shrugged on my shirt. “Baby, I told you road names can be anything. You should be happy and realize I was lucky to get a name like Gear and not Mud or Bug.” I pulled on my socks and then my pants.

She wrinkled her nose. “Doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

I sat down on the edge of the mattress and pulled on my shoes. “But you don’t have to bust my balls about it all the time,” I reminded her.

“I know,” she sighed. “I promise I’ll come to the next party with you. I just don’t want to go to one of these and then be left all alone because you have some obligation to grab someone a beer every five minutes.”

I stood up and turned to look down at her. “You’re really going to go to the next one?” I asked, surprised. I really didn’t think I was ever going to be able to get her to come to the clubhouse.

She nodded. “Only for you, though. I’m not interested in making friends with the other chicks.”

“They’re called ol’ ladies, Kimber,” I chuckled. “And I happen to know when the next party is.”

“Oh God,” she laughed. “I have time to look forward to dreading going.”

I shook my head. “You won’t have to wait long. Tomorrow night is another party.”

Her jaw dropped. “Wait...what?” she squawked. “I can’t...you didn’t...”

She knew there wasn’t a way in hell that I was going to let her go back on her promise of coming to the next party. I leaned down and pressed a kiss to her lips. “Get some rest, baby. You’re going to need it for the party tomorrow.”

I strutted out of the room and straight out of our apartment.

Kimber may not like the club, but she was going to start coming to these damn parties with me.

She had said she would, and I wasn’t going to let her go back on her word.

*

