



*Sweet
BUT
Twisted*

Sweet
RUIN

EMBER DAVIS

Sweet
RUIN
EMBER DAVIS

Sweet Ruin (Sweet but Twisted Christmas Series) by Ember Davis

Copyright © 2023 Ember Davis

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, organizations or locals is entirely coincidental. The use of actors, artists, movies, TV shows and song titles/lyrics throughout this book are done so for storytelling purposes and should in no way be seen as an advertisement. Trademark names are used editorially with no intention of infringement of the respective owner's trademark.

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author.

For permission requests, email Ember.A.Davis@gmail.com

Contains explicit love scenes and adult language. The suggested reading audience is 18 years or older.

Cover Design: [Literary Love Potions](#)

This book is available exclusively at Amazon.com. If you've obtained it anywhere else, you have an illegal copy.



For the runners.

When you run, hopefully you'll be caught.

Table of Contents

[TRIGGER WARNING](#)

[CHAPTER 1](#)

[CHAPTER 2](#)

[CHAPTER 3](#)

[CHAPTER 4](#)

[CHAPTER 5](#)

[CHAPTER 6](#)

[CHAPTER 7](#)

[CHAPTER 8](#)

[CHAPTER 9](#)

[CHAPTER 10](#)

[EPILOGUE](#)

[SWEET BUT TWISTED SERIES](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

[OTHER BOOKS BY EMBER](#)

TRIGGER WARNING

This story has dark themes and a morally gray Irish mob hero. You'll still find an insta-love story that is spicy and isn't necessarily simple, but with the potential for darker themes, situations, and depictions of violence (not between the MMC and MFC).

There is no cheating with a guaranteed HEA, however, if you don't like darker themes, then this book may not be for you.



CHAPTER 1

SAOIRSE

No one here knows my smile is fake as fuck. It's almost a joke at this point. I wonder how much I can get away with, how far I can take the ruse, and how deeply people believe I'm happy to be here and around them. Does anyone even care how much I hate it in California and have spent all semester wishing I was at home in Boston?

I doubt they do.

I hate to admit I was wrong about leaving home to go to school, but I was. I was so fucking wrong. I made the decision for the right reasons—I needed to get away and I thought going somewhere new and meeting new people would help with the feelings I was having. I figured California was as good a place as any, and it was far enough away from him to give me a fresh start.

It is far, there's no denying that, but I haven't stopped thinking about the man who owns my heart. I think the situation has gotten worse. Like I'm going through withdrawal or something. Before I left Boston, I could see Conor. Now I'm in California and going cold turkey is not all that it's cracked up to be.

Nothing I've done has shaken Conor from my system. I've become very aware of the hole in my soul which only Conor can fill. It's become a dark, yawning abyss.

I've tried to fill it with friends, a party here and there, courses, and anything else that's supposed to make up the college experience. I have the freedom I crave being all the way across the country from my brother, Declan, and Conor, but it's not as sweet as I wanted it to be.

My brother rules the city of Boston as head of the McCarthy Irish mob. It's something I grew up with as part of my life. I don't remember my parents because I was just a baby when they died. Declan wasn't an adult, not quite, and yet he still stepped up to not only be my big brother, but the only father figure I've ever known. He didn't have to. He could have hired someone until

I was old enough for boarding school.

He didn't.

Declan was there for all the scraped knees, tea parties, growing pains, homework, and friends who came and went. I wish I had gotten a picture of his face when I first got my period. He was beside himself and hated every moment, but it didn't stop him from putting his personal feelings aside and telling me straight up what was going on with my body. Then he took me to a gynecologist just in case he got anything wrong.

He wasn't the one who went out to the store to make sure I had what I needed, but he made sure it happened. I pity the poor guy who got assigned that task. I'm sure buying feminine products for me was not in his job description. I'm also sure he got paid a bonus for doing it.

Declan never made me feel like an obligation. We're family. I also felt the love he has for me, and he never let the world he walks within touch me. Not fucking once.

It's odd to be surrounded by people who have no idea who I am or how I could have their entire family killed with one phone call. Well, I probably could. I've never tested the theory because it's not the kind of person I am, but I bet I could make it happen.

Everyone knew who I was and who had my back when I was growing up. It made it difficult to make friends, especially when I got older. I found out some of the girls who were my friends just wanted to get close to Declan. Like in his bed close. Good genes run in the family, but I never needed that kind of visual in my life. Never.

Then there were the guys who wanted to try and use me to get in good with the organization and try to earn their spot. That was even stupider than the girls who thought Declan would want them in his bed. I've never had anything to do with Declan's business. I'm not naïve to the fact that my brother operates outside of the law, he never hid that from me, but I'm not privy to all the innerworkings.

I don't want to be.

Always being associated with Declan is one of the reasons I moved across the country for school. Not the biggest one, but it certainly was a factor. I

needed to get away and try something normal while hoping to forget that my heart is branded with the name of a man who will never want me.

“So,” my closest friend, if you can call her that, and roommate, Isla, throws her arm around my shoulders, “are you excited about going home?”

I keep my face a mask of neutrality instead of cringing at the thought of going home while also yearning for Boston, the cold, Declan, and fucking normalcy. I never thought I would experience culture shock when I’m in the same damn country, but things are so different in California compared to Boston.

The accents alone are enough to send me home with my tail between my legs. They all think mine is strange while I need everyone from here to hurry the fuck up and say their words like they aren’t stoned.

I held out for a long time, telling myself this is what I wanted. It was, it’s true, but I’m not afraid to admit I hate it here.

It’s too sunny. Everyone is too into their bodies. There are times when we’re speaking a completely different language.

I need to go home and stop trying to be someone I’m not.

“I’m excited for the holidays,” I hedge when I answer Isla.

I haven’t told her that when I leave, I’m not planning on coming back. I’ll be back and get my stuff, but by the time next semester starts again, she’ll have the room all to herself.

It hasn’t been bad sharing a dorm room with her, but there have been a few times when I really wished I had taken Declan up on his offer to get me an apartment. I staunchly refused the notion. Maybe there was something inside of me warning me I wasn’t going to stay, even though I didn’t want to acknowledge it.

“Will there be snow there?” Isla’s eyes twinkle at the thought and I can’t help but laugh at my friend. She’s a Cali girl through and through. “I’ve only ever seen snow when we’ve gone to Tahoe, and I’ve never had a white Christmas.”

“It doesn’t snow as much in December as it does in the other winter months. It’ll be fucking cold though.” I bump her shoulder with mine and

tease her, “You wouldn’t really give up the sunshine for winter gear, though.”

She shrugs her shoulders and takes a big gulp from the cup in her hand, finishing off her drink. “Probably not,” her words are starting to run together, and her cheeks are pink.

I learned quickly that the party scene isn’t really my thing. Maybe if I trusted the guys who seem to flock around us, it would be different. I don’t.

“You’d freeze your tits off.” I wink at her and smile as she starts to giggle.

She grabs her breasts and gives them a shake. “That would be a shame.” I laugh along with her, but I feel how forced it is. She glances around and then ducks her head and whispers, “Don’t look now.”

“Come on,” I whine, “you know that only makes me want to look around.” I give her a pointed look as she gives me a sheepish smile. I hiss, “What am I not looking at?”

“Miles is looking at you,” Isla gushes and it takes a concerted effort not to roll my eyes.

Ah, yes, Miles. I would almost think he’s a stalker, except he’s completely harmless. He just has a crush. I have a feeling it has a lot to do with the fact that he’s from some random state in the middle of the country and I’m a novelty. You’d think the California girls would catch his eye, considering where we are and all, but nope.

With my whole ‘turning over a new leaf’ outlook on life, which didn’t last nearly as long as I hoped it would, I tried to like Miles. He has an All-American ‘awe shucks’ thing going on which is so totally different from the man I’m running from. There’s nothing dangerous about Miles. He is exactly what he seems to be—a good guy with good values and manners.

But it didn’t take long to realize something important about him too. He’s boring.

I’m sure he’ll make a woman out there incredibly happy one day. I wish him the best and all, but that woman is not going to be me.

Apparently, I’m set to pine for a man who will never look at me as more than the little sister of his best friend and boss. I hate pining. I hate it and how it makes me feel pathetic and worthless.

Which is why I'm here and hating being here even more than I hated being there.

Fuck.

Life is really sucking right now and the thought of running home and admitting I made a mistake is making me cranky.

Declan will probably be overjoyed because he hates that I'm on the other side of the country. He's probably been beside himself with not being able to track everything I've been up to since his reach only goes so far. I'm sure there are people here he knows, he might even trust them...when it comes to business. Trusting them with my safety is a whole other matter.

I'm still not sure how I got him to agree to let me spread my wings and fly so far away. I was waiting for some type of bribery or guilt, but it never came, just sad eyes and him telling me he understood my choices. Except, he didn't. Not really.

"Saoirse," Miles says my name with a little twang in it, nothing like the smooth way Conor always says it, as if my name is a precious gem. Fuck. Right, stop thinking about the man for more than five minutes. Starting now. I focus on Miles and force a friendly smile on my face, the one I've perfected while I wallow inside because of my life choices. "I was hoping we could talk for a few minutes?" He glances at Isla before giving me a grin which shows off his dimples. "If it's not too much trouble."

So polite.

"Of course," my words are breezy even as I force them past my lips.

Isla stands and shakes her empty cup. "I'm going to grab another drink." She points an accusing finger in my direction with a look of hope in her eyes, as if something magical is going to happen between Miles and me. It won't. "Don't run off without me, we have to spend our last night together before break, in our room."

"As if I could forget you." The smile I give her is about as close to genuine as I've got since I forgot how to truly smile the moment that I left Boston and Conor.

"I know," Isla's words are wrapped in giggles with a hair flip over her

shoulder for good measure before she disappears into the crowd.

Miles steps closer, almost too close, and I force myself not to flinch or go rigid. He's a nice guy. I'm not afraid of him, but I'm also not looking to hurt anyone's feelings tonight.

"I know this is probably bad timing," Miles rubs the back of his neck, "but I was hoping that after the break we could get together and hang out."

I try not to react, but the question slips out before I can stop it, "Hang out?"

"Yeah, you know," he makes a motion between us with one of his hands, "you and me. Maybe we could watch a movie or something? Or sit and talk."

I narrow my eyes at him because if he's asking me out on a date, he really needs to up his game. Hang out? Like with his pals? Sit and talk? I want to groan, but I keep it inside. For now. I have a feeling when I flop down on my bed tonight that I'll be letting out a groan to end all groans.

When I don't say anything fast enough, he starts babbling, "I don't think I've hidden the fact that I think you're beautiful and I'm interested in you." He gives me hopeful eyes which would probably remind me of a puppy if I ever had one growing up. "I shouldn't have waited this long, but you always seem so busy, and there hasn't been an opportunity for me to ask."

Because I've been avoiding being alone with him for this exact reason.

I let out a heavy sigh, one he can interpret however he wants. "I think you're a nice guy, Miles. Really. I'm just," I glance away and bite my lip, unwilling to say out loud that I don't think I can ever give a guy the attention he deserves. Unless the guy is Conor and the chances of that happening are not in my favor.

"Ah," he holds the sound out like he's just figured out a secret of the universe. "I get it."

My eyebrows pull together, and I can't help but ask, "What do you get?"

"You're in love with someone," he throws the words out there casually, like they aren't arrows that hit dead center. I shake my head and his eyes soften with something close to pity. The impulse to slap him rides me hard. "It's cool. I get it. Whoever the guy is, he's lucky he caught your eye and

your heart.”

I open and close my mouth a few times, but no sound comes out. Miles reaches over and gives my shoulder a pat like he’s trying to console me or some shit.

The urge to lash out is almost uncontrollable, but I manage it. Only because his wild assumption gets me out of a bad situation. I’ve never talked to anyone about my feelings for Conor. I’ve kept them deep in the vault of my soul.

You never know who is listening. With how I grew up, you learn quickly that even the walls have ears. And maybe a recording device.

“Just know if something happens over break and you change your mind,” he flashes me his dimply grin again, “I’ll be here when you get back.”

“That’s really sweet,” the words feel like glass in my mouth, but I get them out all the same.

Miles leans towards me and for a moment I think he’s going to kiss me—my lips or my forehead, it’s a toss-up on that one—but he doesn’t. Thankfully. Instead, he gives me a quick hug, winks, and walks away.

What a strange fucking night. It’s kind of the perfect send-off before I return home tomorrow. I’m not sure how I’m going to face Conor, but it’ll be unavoidable. Then I’ll have to tell Declan I’m coming home for good.

It’s fine. What could go wrong?

Merry fucking Christmas to me.



CHAPTER 2

CONOR

I don't get nervous. Yet, here I am, feeling like I'm about to rip my hair out at the root. All because of a certain woman who I haven't been able to forget. The distance between us has only made me more rabid for her.

I thought I had myself under control. I wasn't going to touch her. Ever.

Then she announced she was going to go to college in California and I nearly lost it. I wanted to rage and stomp around while telling her there was no fucking way that she was going to go all the way across the country to go to school.

I couldn't say a fucking word. All I could do was congratulate her and wish her well.

Because if I had given into my impulses, the feelings I had spent months stuffing down would have come out and then there would have been hell to pay.

No, instead, I've been in my own personal hell.

Because I can't see her.

Because I don't even talk to her.

Because I haven't seen her, other than in pictures, for far too long.

Since she's been gone, I've done some shit that would get me in trouble with the big boss and my best friend, Declan, if he knew. He also happens to be the big brother of my obsession.

Declan might be Saoirse's big brother, but it's more than that. After their parents died, when Saoirse was far too young to even remember them, he became the only father figure she's ever known.

I remember the first time I saw the little girl who had no problem leaning into the role of Irish mob princess. She was eight and adorable with a bunch of sass on the side. I became like her big brother, since Declan couldn't be,

but we both knew I wasn't.

I never wanted her to feel like I was hired family though and we made sure to make memories together. I was there right next to Declan as she grew up. It was all so fucking innocent then.

I'm not even sure when it changed.

When I noticed how she would sometimes look at me when she was 16, I knew I had to put some distance between us. I hated it because my family has always been shit and it felt like I was losing someone important in my life.

Even when I vouched for my brother, Patrick, and he started working for the McCarthy family, we weren't close. I thought it might be possible for us to be more than blood, but it didn't happen. Then, he fucked up and betrayed not only the limited trust I put in him, but Declan's as well.

I'm sure another man would be sad about his death, but not me. He deserved to visit the reaper, up close and personal. The only thing I regret is putting even a little bit of trust in him in the first place. I should have known better. I should have known he'd fuck it up.

It wasn't the first time.

Declan and Saoirse have been the only family I've had for the last ten years. But then I could tell Saoirse stopped seeing me as a big brother in her life. She saw me as so much more.

Hurting her was the last thing I wanted, and I thought putting some walls between us would be enough. And it was, for a while.

Then she turned 18 not long after the New Year and the way I saw her, when I couldn't avoid her any longer, started to change. I found myself wondering when the fuck she grew up. How the hell did she become such a beautiful woman?

A woman I wanted to know.

A woman I wanted to be mine.

I couldn't be around her and I made sure that I spent more time working on whatever the fuck Declan needed. Work and fighting in the underground ring Declan runs were my only outlets because even looking at another

woman made me fucking sick. I couldn't do it, couldn't even consider it.

Now I've spent months with Saoirse on the other side of the country.

I don't know if I can keep doing it.

I don't know if I care anymore what Declan will say or think. There is one thing I know to my bones—Saoirse McCarthy is mine.

I've gotten all the updates from Jamie, who was sent to California to keep an eye on her. I've sent Jamie a little bonus to ensure he doesn't mention to anyone how he's keeping me in the loop and sending me a few extra pictures here and there. If he suspects why I want them, he hasn't mentioned a damn thing.

She's coming back. Tomorrow.

Which is why I can't fucking sleep.

Saoirse is going to be in Boston. She'll be home. Close enough to touch. Close enough for me to do all the things I've been fantasizing about for months. Close enough that I'll be able to make her mine.

Finally.

Then I'll never let her go.

She has no idea about my obsession or how much it's grown since she's been at school.

My phone ringing brings me out of my thoughts, and I almost drop the damn thing as I pick it up and fumble it. Jamie's name flashes on the screen and I know he has an update for me on my woman.

"Jamie," I bark when I answer, my voice gruff and my impatience to get even a little fucking morsel about Saoirse is right there for him to hear.

"Conor," he grunts. "The princess is safe in her castle."

"She went out tonight? Isn't her flight early in the morning?"

I sound like a controlling asshole, but I don't care. I've heard about the parties she's gone to, the people she's hung out with, and the men who have been sniffing around her. Jamie keeps close, but not too close. He sure as fuck wasn't going to intervene if she showed genuine interest in someone,

and I don't ask if she has.

That would be stepping over a line and I deserved the punishment if she did spend time with a guy. I'm the one who let her travel to the other side of the fucking country for school.

I should have claimed her almost a year ago when she turned 18.

But I didn't. I was a fucking coward and now I'm paying for it.

I hope she had fun because once she's home, I'm not going to be able to let her go again. Getting little glimpses of her light hasn't been nearly enough. I want her to smile at me and not one of those fake ones she's been flashing around her college.

Yeah, I've seen the pictures and there is something going on in my woman's eyes. I don't know if she's not happy there or if something else is going on. But I'm going to find out and then I'm going to make it right.

I know whatever she's hiding isn't about her safety and with her not close enough to be in my arms, that's the only thing I could find comfort in.

She's been safe. She's spread her wings.

Now it's time for her to come home.

"Yeah," he growls slightly, "with her roommate. It was a smaller party, more intimate." I growl when he says that fucking word in relationship to my Saoirse, but he ignores me—as he fucking should. "I couldn't get too close so I'm not sure what happened inside."

"You're not telling me something," I challenge him.

He sighs and I can practically see the grimace on his face. "They walked back to the dorm and her roommate was giving her a hard time about why she won't give some guy a chance. That he's a nice guy and he likes her."

I take a deep breath and let it out slowly through my nose.

Jamie can't get too close because she would spot him immediately. He never spent that much time around her, but he was around. It's not like Declan was going to ensure her safety with a complete fucking stranger.

Jamie has always been able to blend in and he's closer to her age than a lot

of the other options for her personal security. It was the best we could do and he's more than earned his keep this semester.

I feel like a complete creeper, but I need to know. "What did she say?"

"Nothing. She just shrugged her friend off and said the guy was nice, but not the right one for her," he sounds reluctant as fuck to give me this information. I get it.

When is it crossing a line and breaking her trust, even though she has no idea he's been watching her? She's been given enough room to enjoy her college experience without being in danger. For the most part, I'm okay with it considering caging Saoirse would be a fucking shame.

She deserves to be free. She deserves to soar.

"Did you catch his name?"

Too fucking far, Conor.

I just can't find it in me to care. I need all the details I can get.

"Miles," he grunts. "I've looked into him when I noticed him trying to get close to her. He's from the Midwest. He's a good guy. Nice and respectful, for the most part. He just watches her and has tried to be friendly."

I bite out, "Should I be concerned?"

"From a safety standpoint or are you asking for another reason?" There's no judgement in Jamie's tone, but this is the first time he's questioned my motives for wanting to know what is going on with his charge.

"Fuck off," I bark.

He chuckles softly. "Look, Conor, I get it. I'm not stupid. She's been a good girl while in college. She's had a little fun, but none of it has involved guys. Some have wanted to get with her, and it's been obvious as fuck. But she's never given anyone a second look. She's kept shit friendly."

"Yeah," I grunt, "fine."

"She's been," he starts cautiously, "kind of sad, maybe? I almost threw out my orders to stay in the shadows a few days ago when she was in a coffee shop. She just looked so," he pauses and blows out a breath, "lost and out of

place.”

Relief fills me and it makes me feel like a giant fucking asshole.

I should not be relieved that Saoirse isn't happy out in California.

But maybe it'll make this next part easier. Because she won't be going back there if I have anything to say about it. If she insists, I'll be going with her. There's no way I can have this much distance between us.

Not anymore.

“Thanks for having her back.” Those are the words that come out instead of telling him to go and grab her and bring her home right fucking now.

Tomorrow is soon enough. Maybe.

“Always. She's the princess of the family and that means something. I'm honored Declan, and you, trusted me to watch over her.”

“Safe travels,” I extend before I hang up.

Tomorrow he'll be coming home along with Saoirse. He doesn't have a woman in his life. He's devoted all of himself to the job since we brought him in. Just like me, he was a fighter and that's how he got on our radar. He proved himself in the ring.

Maybe that's why I was able to trust him to watch over the most precious person in the world to me. He would fight until his last breath to protect her. I'm glad nothing has happened, but if it did, I know he'd be ready.

I swear I've aged so fucking much in the last few months with her so far away. I wanted to call her so many fucking times. I never did.

I put too much distance between us. I know it's on me, but it's not like I ever really wanted to. She was too fucking young when I noticed the way she would look at me.

I couldn't think of her as anything other than Declan's sister.

Then everything changed and now I can't think of her as anything other than mine.

It's going to be difficult not to run to her the moment she gets home. Declan is going to pick her up, but going with him would raise some big red

fucking flags. Declan noticed I put some space between us, even though he never said anything, and he'd notice if I was an eager fucking puppy to see her again.

He probably already has his suspicions. I've been difficult as fuck to be around since she left.

How do you go on day after day when there's no more sunshine in your life? I didn't realize she was mine and then she was gone. I have zero doubt that I'm partly to blame for her choosing to go so far away.

"Tomorrow," I murmur in the darkness of my room.

I probably won't sleep tonight and if I do, I'm sure my dreams will be filled with my woman. She's almost close enough to touch and this time I'm not going to let anything stop me from taking what's mine.

Declan will probably be pissed, but he won't have any choice but to get over it. I'm not walking away from her again. She's my sweet ruin and I'll gladly crumble at her feet.



CHAPTER 3

SAOIRSE

As I step out of the airport, I'm instantly assaulted by the cold air. A year ago, it would have been an annoyance, but right now I welcome it. Maybe it was a mistake to not come home for Thanksgiving. I wouldn't feel so emotional right now if this weren't the first time coming home since I left before the school year started.

It's just that the break was so short, and Isla was kind enough to invite me to her family's house for the holiday. I didn't want to travel during such a busy time when it would only be for a few days.

I also wanted to really be sure about my decision to leave California. I had already applied for transfers, but I just wanted a few days away from everything. It worked too. I decided, and I was even happier I went home with Isla since I'd be leaving her before the New Year.

Now I'm back home and it feels like I never left while also feeling like it's been about ten lifetimes since I've been here.

How is that possible?

I take a deep breath and barely stop myself from spinning in a giddy circle. That would not be a good look. Especially if, heaven forbid, Conor came with Declan to pick me up. Yes, fine, that's mostly wishful thinking on my part, but can you blame me?

The man dug a giant divide between us which widened right around the time I turned 18. It hasn't even been a year and I can count on one hand the number of times I've seen him since my birthday. Hell, the number of words we've spoken to each other is even less.

A pang of sadness washes through me at the reminder. We used to talk. Not that stupid and simple 'how was your day' crap, either, although we did have those conversations as well. We would talk about life, and he always seemed so interested in my hopes and dreams.

Then it just kind of stopped.

It broke my heart, and I was even more determined to go through with my plan of heading as far away from Boston as I could get.

It really was for the best. Now I know I never want to live in California again. It's a nice place to visit, don't get me wrong. But living there?

No thanks.

I need the cold and rain. I even missed the dirty city. I know where everything is in Boston. I know its secrets and its hidden gems.

It's home.

"Saoirse," is shouted from a little way away and I look up to find Declan parked, out of his car, and striding toward me.

I can't help but smile at my brother. I've missed him. When he gets to me, he wraps me up in a huge hug, the kind of hug that helps you breathe again when you are on the verge of losing the last remnants of your sanity or your heart.

He grounds me with something so simple. I don't think he understands how much he means to me, and how much I appreciate how he put a lot of his life on hold to take care of me. And he did it while taking over for our father as the head of the McCarthy empire.

It must have been no small task for him as a young man who was also grieving.

He never made me feel like a burden. He never made me feel like I was holding him back from something greater. He provided me with a stable environment and then allowed me certain freedoms.

Did I push the boundaries when I was a teenager? Of course, but isn't that half the fun?

"I missed you," my voice cracks a little bit as I wrap my arms around his torso and hug him back with as much strength as I can muster.

He pulls back from me, even though I don't want to let him go even a little bit. "I missed *you*." He kisses my forehead and then let's go of me to grab my bag and lead me to the car. "We should get in the car before someone gives

me a ticket,” he jokes and winks at me.

I roll my eyes because I doubt anyone would give him a ticket. Is he parked where he shouldn't be? Of course. But everyone knows Declan in this city. The power he holds speaks for itself.

“You wouldn't pay it anyway,” I sass him.

Declan throws his head back and laughs before grinning at me. Seeing him now, there's something different about his smile. He's always been a good man to me, a good brother, but there has always been a darkness surrounding him. I figured it was because of his power and position, but now I'm not so sure.

The last time I spoke with him, he told me he met someone. He didn't give me a lot of details; not like I really wanted any—gross—but him mentioning a woman to me was certainly new.

I have no doubt he dated, or whatever, while I was growing up, but he never brought his flings around me. They were never allowed in our home. I never thought about it until he mentioned Roisin for the first time.

As we approach the car, a beautiful woman steps out of the passenger seat. She doesn't look much older than me. That should probably ruffle my feathers, but I don't really care. There's a hesitant and shy smile on her face which is at odds with the kind of woman I would expect my brother to attract. It might be based on a lot of assumptions, but power means something to a certain type of woman.

That's not the person I'm standing in front of right now.

Roisin is dressed in leggings and a sweater with a big chunky scarf wrapped around her neck. It's weather appropriate, for sure, but there's something cozy and easy going about it which puts me at ease. It's something I would wear and the fact that she's not dressed to show as much skin as possible is refreshing.

“Hi,” her voice is soft and the smile on her face gets a little brighter and a little surer, “I'm Roisin.”

She sticks her hand out in the space between us and I glance over at Declan to see so much love shining in his eyes. It's a little gross, but it also

gives me a sense of relief I don't think I can put into words.

The look on my brother's face, the one that screams how much this woman means to him, has me knocking Roisin's hand away. Her face falls for a split second but then I engulf her in a hug, and she giggles. I find myself laughing right along with her.

It's a genuine laugh, not the forced sound I've been using for months.

Maybe it's the relief of being home. Maybe it's knowing that Conor is much closer. Maybe it's knowing my brother is going to get the future he always deserved even though he had to put a few things on hold to take care of me.

It feels good to laugh again; I didn't even realize how much I missed it.

"It's clear how much you mean to my brother," I admit softly. "I can see it all over his face when he looks at you. That means we're family."

Roisin gives me a squeeze and then steps back, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. I'm a little surprised to find I'm misting up as well.

Yeah, I'm going to say it's because I'm finally home and not because I'm turning into a romantic sap.

"It's so good to finally meet you. Declan talks about you all the time. He's so proud of you." She beams at me, and it makes me feel good, but it's also kind of a punch to the gut.

She would have no idea it is, though, so I keep the smile on my face. There must be something in my eyes because she arches an eyebrow. What she doesn't do is push me to spill everything right here and now.

Is this what it feels like to have a female friend? I've never been that great with female friendships, Isla being the closest one I've had. I never knew why they wanted to be my friend, and then there are those out there who are just catty bitches. I don't do catty. Life's too short for that kind of shit.

I've been raised mostly around men who don't take shit from anyone and can smell bullshit a mile away. It's taught me well, but it hasn't exactly made me soft and cuddly.

That's not a bad thing, it's just how it is.

“It’ll be good to have another woman around. I’m sure you’ve noticed the level of testosterone surrounding my brother.”

She laughs and nods solemnly. “It’s been quite eye opening. At least Declan puts the toilet seat down. Could I really ask for anything more?”

“I do more than that,” my brother growls and wraps an arm around his woman, subtly pulling her away from me and back into his chest. I scrunch up my nose which makes him roll his eyes at me. But seriously? Ew. “Come on you two, the car is packed up and ready to go.”

I slide into the backseat, knowing full well that Declan would prefer Roisin in the front with him. It’s almost cute the way he reaches over and puts his hand on her knee the moment they’re buckled up and he’s ready to pull into the flow of traffic. It certainly doesn’t make me jealous at all.

Nope. That would make me the kind of person I don’t want to be.

But if I were to be jealous, it’s only because I know who I wish would reach for me the same way. I also know he never will.

Conor made it clear how he feels about me over the last few years. Maybe I wasn’t very good at hiding my crush on him, but should I really apologize for it? It’s not like I thought anything was going to happen. Not when I was underage.

Then the distance between us only got worse once I turned 18. That was his choice, not mine.

If only it didn’t hurt so damn much.

“So,” I lean forward a little bit, “Declan told me he already moved you into the house.”

Roisin laughs and shoots my brother a look, one full of the same love he clearly has for her. I’m happy for him, for them. I don’t need to know everything about the woman to get a sense of her. She’s not putting on airs or playing a part. She’s genuine and that’s gotta be worth something in this day and age. Especially considering who my brother is.

“He did,” there’s amusement in her voice. “He didn’t waste any time.”

Declan’s voice is a soft growl, “Are you complaining, *mo rós beag?*”

“Oh, busting out the Irish endearments,” I tease my brother, “hmmm? If that doesn’t scream serious, I don’t know what does. The whole moving her into the house says a lot too.”

He grips her hand and holds it up for me to see the rock she’s sporting, and if I were the type of woman to squeal, I would. Instead, a loud gasp comes out of me, and I whisper, “Holy shit.”

“Saoirse,” Declan growls in warning.

He’s never liked when I curse. Which is kind of hilarious considering he’s where I heard most of the curse words I know. My first one came from him. I think he doesn’t like it when I say anything like that because part of him still thinks of me as the little girl he had to raise.

It wouldn’t have been ladylike, or whatever, but I’m not that little girl anymore. I’m my own person and I learned from the absolute best when it comes to throwing a swear word around when appropriate and sometimes just because.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

I bite my lip to stop myself from saying it out loud just to rile him up.

It would be far too easy.

“Did you just warn her not to use the word ‘shit’?” Roisin blinks over at him with the cutest befuddled look on her face.

“Maybe,” Declan grumbles and shifts in his seat slightly.

“It’s okay,” I assure her, “he hates it when I use swear words. But, fuck, I enjoy using them.”

“Damn it,” he mumbles under his breath.

“You don’t have an issue when I swear.” Roisin’s eyebrows pull together, and she cocks her head to the side as she looks over at Declan. “Is this a parental figure thing? Because she’s an adult now.”

“She can’t legally drink,” he points out as if it means something.

Roisin covers her mouth with her free hand, I’m sure to stop herself from laughing in his face. He looks both pouty and resigned. I’m happy he’s not

brooding like he's been known to do.

It got worse over the last few years. I was never sure if it was because I was growing up, issues with business, or some other reason. I guess he just needed the love of the right woman.

"Anyway," I chirp and reach for Roisin's hand which Declan is still holding up. "It's a beautiful ring," I gush.

"Thank you," Roisin whispers and Declan moves her hand back to her thigh, but he doesn't let go.

Adorably gross.

Unable to help myself and needing to give my brother a hard time, I pout, "Why didn't you tell me you got engaged?"

"I wanted to surprise you," he shoots back easily, not at all bothered by my pouting.

Probably because he knows that as long as he's happy then I'm happy. It's always been that way with us. We've been a team for so long. Us against the world.

I suppose our world just got a little bigger. I'm not upset about it. It's clear Roisin is good for him and, by the way she's glowing, I'd say the same is true for her.

"Are you going to make me an aunt any time soon?"

Declan smirks and shrugs one shoulder. "Maybe."

"Anyway," Roisin's cheeks are pink as she blushes, "are you excited to be home for the break?"

"Yes," I try and keep my voice even, but Declan's eyes lift to mine in the rearview mirror as if he heard something in one word that I don't really want him to hear. At least not yet. "As much as the sun in California was nice, I can't imagine the holidays anywhere but in Boston. Seeing Christmas decorations and lights while people aren't even wearing light jackets is kind of surreal."

"I bet," Roisin giggles. "I grew up in Boston, so I completely get it. I can't imagine living anywhere else. I'd like to travel a little, but then I want to

come home.”

“You’re not moving anywhere,” Declan growls, his tone possessive and final.

“Oh my,” I chastise him, “don’t get bent out of shape. She just said she wouldn’t move somewhere else.” I roll my eyes and Declan shoots me a look through the mirror, but I just shrug. “I’m going to need to do some Christmas shopping. Can we make a day of it, Roisin?”

“That sounds like fun,” she agrees instantly.

I sit back in my seat for the rest of the drive, chatting with my brother and someone who already feels like a sister. I’ve never had one before, obviously, but it’s nice. If this is all life has to offer me because I know who my heart and soul belong to, I’ll be okay.

Now, I just need to find the right time to tell Declan I’m not going back to California next semester. Yeah, piece of cake...or, since it’s Christmastime, fruit cake.



CHAPTER 4

CONOR

I've been pacing my living room for a while. It's as if time doesn't have any true meaning now that I know Saoirse is back in Boston. Her plane's landed and I'm sure Declan was there to pick her up along with Roisin.

I wonder how they're going to get along. Saoirse has always been protective of Declan, and the opposite is true as well. Which you'd expect considering he was more than her big brother growing up. Still, Saoirse has never had to share her brother's affection and attention.

Saoirse might be an adult now, but that doesn't mean it'll be smooth sailing to introduce the new woman in Declan's life to her.

Hell, I'm not even fully sure how I feel about how everything went down with Roisin. Once Declan had me look into her and the truth of her family came to light, I had a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. Not only did her presence put the business in jeopardy, but my best friend's safety and his heart were in danger as well.

Not that I should be thinking about how to protect his damn heart, but still. I wasn't looking forward to the prospect of working for the man if Roisin was a snake in the grass and he was fooled.

Once she came clean and the truth of how she was put in the position she was in was out in the open, I can admit I softened toward her. Would it have been better if she was upfront about everything right from the start? Maybe, but would anyone have listened to her? If Declan wasn't instantly enamored with the woman, would the whole thing have looked different?

If it weren't for Roisin, Declan would have killed her father, brother, and that asshole Cillian Murphy when everything came out and they had the balls to show up at a false buy. All in the name of Northern Irish independence.

It's one thing to have a passion and an opinion, it's another to scheme and try to take down the most powerful man in the city because of it. Doesn't sound like a smart move to me.

The only reason those men are alive is because Declan loves his woman. Now, they've been warned and if they step out of line again, I have zero doubt they'll find out how ruthless Declan can be.

It's the only time in the ten years since I started working for Declan that I saw him show any type of mercy. I don't even know if it was mercy or not. Really, I think he didn't want to have to look Roisin in the eye and tell her that her father and brother were dead.

Even though they were bastards and treated her like shit, Roisin is a kind woman and probably would be devastated at the news. She's not cold hearted, even if she might understand that the rules don't always apply in our world.

I don't know if I would have made the same decision, but it wasn't up to me. I followed Declan's lead because that is where my loyalty lies.

I hope no one thinks that sparing those men has made Declan soft, especially when it comes to Roisin. They would be sorely mistaken and quickly find out my boss is still just as ruthless as ever. He just happens to want to protect his woman any way he can.

I'm still shocked Declan found a woman at all. I thought for sure he would be single forever. It's the same fate I resigned myself to before Saoirse pulled up stakes and traveled across the country. Having my heart feel like it's a million miles away and, somehow, still beating in my chest, is not a feeling I'd wish on my worst enemy.

I was worried about how a woman would be protected considering the business we do. If Declan is sure he can protect Roisin, why can't I do the same for Saoirse? Why can't I have the kind of love he's opened himself up to?

I know Saoirse is the one for me. I've known it for a long damn time.

I'm not sure how Declan is going to react, but I can't worry about that right now.

The first step is to get Saoirse alone and to talk to her. If she's moved on or if she no longer wants me it's going to make the whole thing a lot more difficult. I still won't give up. I need her, and I have a feeling she needs me just as much. It'll just make everything harder.

You should never fight a war on two fronts and having to convince Saoirse that I'm hers just as much as she is mine while getting Declan on our side would feel nearly impossible. I'd find a way, but things will be a little easier if I don't have to battle my woman.

She's strong-willed though, and I have no doubt she's going to give me hell for the distance I've put between us. She'll be right to do it. I'll make it up to her.

Hopefully making it up to her will involve her naked and writhing with my tongue buried in her pretty cunt. My cock throbs at the thought, and I'm tempted as hell to sit down and jerk off to thoughts of my pretty little redheaded princess.

Fuck, she was beautiful before she left, and I know the pictures I've seen won't do her justice.

When my phone rings, I stop pacing and stand in the middle of my living room. Has my place always felt this empty? Or have I only noticed since my woman has been gone? Was it always so damn quiet?

The shrill sound of my phone has me shaking my head as I answer. "Jamie," my voice is curt because I'm right on the fucking edge here. I need to see Saoirse.

"We've landed and she's headed home with Declan. I assume the woman he introduced Saoirse to is Roisin," he gets right to the point, which I appreciate.

I'm supposed to be the one who is always cool under pressure, but right now I feel like I'm about to lose my fucking mind. I can't keep this up.

"Good. Thank you," I clip.

I don't need to know anything else and I'm sure Jamie is eager to go to his place and not be on duty for a little while. When Saoirse goes back to California, he'll be going with her, but he hasn't been home for months. No one is waiting for him there, but he's still earned the downtime. I hope he likes the bottle of Hammond Whiskey I left for him as a thank you.

The moment I hang up, I'm uncertain about what I should do next. Everything inside of me is screaming to go to Declan's house. It wouldn't be

unusual for me to be there, but not while Saoirse is there. At least not in the last few years.

I'm antsy as fuck. It's the same feeling I get right before I step into the ring—a mix of adrenaline and knowing exactly what to do. The dichotomy of it rankles my fucking nerves. How can I be so sure and yet so keyed up at the same time?

“Fuck it,” I mutter and grab my keys before slipping on my jacket and practically bolting out my door.

I don't live in the same fancy neighborhood Declan lives in, but it's not far and my home wasn't cheap by any means. It's the first place I've owned which means something to me. It's mine, a sanctuary from the shit we deal with daily. Within my walls I'm not the right-hand man of the most powerful man in the city. I'm just me, a scrappy kid who grew up and made something more of himself.

I'm trying to tuck all the nervousness away as I pull up to Declan's home. He went to pick up Saoirse himself and did not take his driver. It just goes to show you how special his sister is to him.

I'm the guy who is going to be dirtying her up if I get my way. If Declan knew what was in my fantasies about her, he would lock her away and throw away the key. He sure as hell wouldn't let me into his home with open arms.

But that's exactly what he's going to do because I'm a coward and didn't tell him months ago that Saoirse is mine.

Now I'm paying for it on all fronts and I'm losing this war.

When I get to the front door, I knock and step back to wait. There was a time when I wouldn't knock at all, but I'll be damned if I walk in on Declan and Roisin going at it. I couldn't blame them since they're in their own home, but I still don't want to see it.

Then there's the other matter about me valuing my life. Declan will kill anyone who sees Roisin with passion written on her face. He doesn't have to say it for me to know because I'll be the same way with Saoirse.

Declan is the one to open the door and by the smirk on his face and his raised eyebrow, he's not at all surprised to see me today. “To what do I owe

this pleasure?”

Fuck. First rule when going somewhere you haven't been invited, make sure you have an excuse ready to go. It'll help you with an awkward as hell conversation. Like this one. Because I do not have an excuse.

“I didn't realize I needed a reason to come and see you,” I keep my voice light, but by the way he arches an eyebrow at me, he's not buying it. I shrug one shoulder as if what I'm about to say is no big deal. “I figured it would be good for me to stop by and make sure Saoirse got in okay.”

As if I don't already know.

As if every cell in my body isn't aware my woman is inside this house right now. She might as well still be in California with how much distance is between us.

I'm going to fix it. I have to.

Something flashes across Declan's face, but it's gone before I can figure out what it is. He steps back and opens the door a little wider for me. “Of course, you're like a brother to her.”

I try not to wince as I walk past him. I'm not her fucking brother. Sure, there was a time when it was true, but it hasn't been for a long time now.

When I walk into the living room, the sight that greets me has the breath stalling in my lungs. Saoirse is there on the couch with her legs tucked underneath her in a way I've seen a thousand times before.

Her hair is the most beautiful red color I've ever seen. It looks like it might have gotten longer since she's been gone, but right now it's braided and hanging over her shoulder. She's smiling at something Roisin is saying to her, and my heart feels lighter because I'm seeing her in person for the first time in far too fucking long.

I'm not close enough to see her eyes, yet, but I know they're a beautiful blue which have always seemed to see right to the heart of me. I shouldn't have denied myself for so long. Looking at her now, I realize just how dark the world around me has been since she left.

I shouldn't have let her leave.

I should have faced my feelings and our future instead of being a coward.

Even though it might make me look like a creep, I take a moment and watch her. She looks happy on the outside, but I can't help but feel a little sadness coming from her. Is it my fault? Did I wait too long? Is California where she wants to be?

When her eyes lift to mine, they widen slightly in surprise. I swear they start to sparkle as well.

Fuck me. I've been denying both of us what we need in our lives for far too long. But it ends now.

"Hi, Saoirse," my voice comes out deeper and gruffer than I intend, and I can only hope that Declan doesn't notice. "I'm glad you're home."

The surprise on my beautiful woman's face is quickly shuttered behind a neutral mask I hate. "Nice to see you again, Conor," there's an icy quality to her voice.

It's okay. I know I put it there. She's trying to shield and protect herself. With the distance that I've put between us, I wouldn't expect anything less from her. I just need a chance to break through her walls and prove to her I'm not going anywhere. Not only that, but I won't let her run from me, from us, again.

She might have my entire world crumbling down around me with how much I want her, but it's time I embrace the destruction. We'll rebuild—better and stronger—toward a future I crave with everything inside of me.

Saoirse is mine, she just doesn't know it yet.



CHAPTER 5

SAOIRSE

It's damn good to be home. I've never been obsessed with shopping, but being in Back Bay and shopping is so different from the trips Isla talked me into while we were at school. I might be bundled up in my jacket with my scarf and gloves, but this is the way I love to shop. I know this place and it's bringing back the holiday spirit I was missing while at school.

I guess I needed the cold and biting wind to make it feel like the holidays are right around the corner. Who knew?

The lights and window displays are gorgeous, and I find the stress and frustration of not feeling settled for the last few months melting away. This is what I've been looking for. This is what I've missed.

I hook my arm through Roisin's as we're walking down the street to our next destination. I don't think I could have chosen a better person for my brother to fall in love with. It's clear she doesn't care about my brother's power and isn't using him. I'm so damn happy for them.

They filled me in last night about how they got together and while it was kind of a rocky start, they've found their footing. I'm glad Roisin is now safe from her family. I was a little surprised to find out she was sent in to spy on him and find out secrets for her father and another man loyal to the cause of Northern Irish independence.

A fury I've rarely felt before filled me and I pointed a finger at my brother. "You better have made sure they won't touch her again."

Declan's eyes softened and his mouth turned up with a hint of amusement as he held up his hands in surrender. "Of course. I wouldn't let anything happen to her," he assured me. "They got the message."

I nodded, happy to have at least that much.

Declan has never shared much about his business with me, and I never pushed. Plausible deniability is a thing and I'm a big believer in it. I would

never want to be used against my brother in any capacity.

Now I'm in my city, with my soon-to-be sister at my side, and we're enjoying a day of shopping. I've already found a gift for Declan. I'm going to need to be sneaky to find the right gift for Roisin, but I'll figure it out when I find it.

I'm not going to lie; I've done a little shopping for myself while we've been out. The stores just hit differently here, I guess. I was never able to find much when Isla dragged me out for one of her shopping adventures.

I'm trying to ignore the shadow behind us as we're walking, but it's difficult. I was not prepared for Conor to show up at the house last night. With how much he's been avoiding me for so long, I thought for sure he would continue the status quo. Hell, I was convinced I wouldn't see him until next year, and maybe not even then.

The way he looked at me last night, his seafoam green eyes so fucking expressive, it was almost like he missed me. But that couldn't be right. Could it?

How could he have missed me? He was out of my life long before I went off to school. It was his choice, not mine.

I would have kept him close if it had been up to me. I would have even buried my feelings for him. It wouldn't have been easy, but I would have found a way.

I didn't really get the chance. Almost as soon as I realized I had feelings far beyond Conor being like a brother to me, he became like mist on a foggy morning. It was frustrating and hurt me deeply.

I thought maybe his disappearance from my life was part of the reason why I couldn't resolve my feelings, like his absence made my heart grow fonder. I've realized that's not the case.

Now I can almost feel the way he's breathing down my neck while his gaze sears into my skin through layers of winter clothing. I almost want to tell him to stop looking at me, but a part of me likes and craves it.

"This is fun," Roisin's voice pulls me away from thoughts of Conor as she points toward another shop, and I nod. "I never really had a lot of female

friends while growing up. Not close ones anyway.”

“Me either,” I admit. When she gives me a look of surprise, I shrug one shoulder. “It’s not easy growing up surrounded by the men in my life. I never knew why people wanted to be close to me, especially as I got older. Were guys nice to me because of me or did they want some sort of introduction to Declan? I know some of the girls who were my friends were only interested in getting close to him.”

We both scrunch our noses up in disgust and I can’t help but laugh.

“I know, right? It didn’t even matter to them that they were underage. They thought he was so hot,” the disgust is evident in my voice.

“I’m biased,” she grins at me, “but he is hot. I just can’t imagine some high school girl trying to go after him. I have major secondhand embarrassment at even the thought.”

“They never got the chance to throw themselves at him,” I assure her.

“Probably for the best,” she muses as we step inside the store, Conor following behind us like a dutiful bodyguard even though the position is far below his paygrade. “I can’t imagine he would have been kind if they had tried.”

I bark out a laugh and shake my head. “No, the man who makes grown men pee their pants would not have been nice about it.”

Roisin’s eyes sparkle. “He’s a teddy bear when it comes to me.” I arch an eyebrow and she shrugs, her cheeks heating with a blush and not from the cold wind we’ve been walking through. “Well, for the most part.”

“Caveman would be more like it, I’m sure,” my voice goes high and a little prissy which only makes Roisin’s smile grow.

She looks around the boutique we’ve just walked into with a little nervousness in her eyes. She shakes her head and confesses, “I never would have stepped foot in a store like this before. So much has changed for me lately and it’s not easy to process.” She bites her lip and looks away as her eyes fill with sadness. “I never want Declan to think I’m with him for his money.”

“He’s the one who handed you his card and told you to enjoy the day,” I

point out. I saw him do it this morning as we enjoyed breakfast together. My jaw was on the floor. There were times when I practically had to pry that card from his fingers, but he just handed it over to Roisin while telling her about how he ordered cards in her name, and they'd be in soon. "He knows you aren't with him for any of that. It's obvious," I assure her.

She blows out a breath of relief, "Good. I never want anyone to think his power or money has anything to do with it. I love him for who he is." She tilts her head to the side. "Does that make sense?"

I give her hand a squeeze, "It does." I glance around the boutique, ignoring the way Conor's eyes bore into me. "You could find some good things here. At some point you'll need a nice dress for your wedding rehearsal dinner," I remind her with a wink.

Her fingers squeeze mine a little tighter, "I hope you'll help me plan the wedding. I really don't know what I'm doing, and I won't have—," her voice cracks a little as she cuts herself off and shakes her head, but I know what she's going to say.

She won't have her mom there or any family. I get it.

"I understand. If one day I find a man to love me for me, the same way you love my brother, I won't have my mom there either. It's not for the same reason, but that doesn't change the result. I think it might be worse for you only because it was her choice not to be the mother you needed and that's on her. It's not on you. Mine never even had the chance."

"I'm so sorry for your loss," Roisin's voice is soft and full of so much sincerity that it has tears welling up in my eyes.

"I didn't bring it up for that," I assure her and shoot her a small smile, hoping she knows how much I appreciate the sentiment anyway. "I was damn lucky that Declan didn't even blink about taking care of me. It could have gone differently, but he stepped up. He's always meant the world to me because of how he didn't even blink. He was so young, but it didn't matter to him. He was there for me in every way I needed."

"He loves you very much," she assures me.

"I know," I sass and flip my hair over my shoulder, the tension and the sadness breaking around us. "The best thing to do is to live your best fucking

life. It'll be your revenge and your happiness all at one time."

Roisin surprises me by throwing her arms around my shoulders and giving me a hug. She's a few inches taller than me, but we're pretty evenly matched. Even through the layers we're wearing, the warmth of her affection and acceptance seeps into me.

It could bother me that she's only a few years older than me, but it doesn't. With the way she grew up, there are times when she seems much older than she is. I get it, in a lot of ways I had to grow up quickly because of my brother's world. It never touched me, but I still learned to navigate it at an early age.

"Let's browse," I prompt her as she pulls away and she nods eagerly. I pull my jacket off and fold it over my arm because the store is warm enough without it. "Oh, look for something for the yearly Christmas party. It's one of the few times everyone lets their hair down and celebrates like the family we are, unconventional as it might be to most."

"Declan told me about the party," she confirms excitedly. "I'll keep my eyes open for the right dress."

I nod and we start to look through the racks while going our separate ways. This is one of the best things about shopping with Roisin today. We've talked about a lot of things, but we don't need to be glued to each other's sides the entire time either. Isla always wanted us to look at every piece of clothing together and I hated it.

No, thank you, sometimes I just need a moment to breathe.

I find a dress I think will be perfect for the holiday party, it's red and flirty, with short fluttery sleeves and looks like it'll hit right above my knees. I grab it and head toward the fitting room, very aware of the man who hasn't said more than a few words all day following closely behind me.

I'm about to close the door, but Conor is right there. Right there. He's taking up so much damn room it's hard for me to concentrate on anything other than the way his broad shoulders fill the doorway.

Conor has always been the most handsome man I've ever seen. There's something rugged about him, which I'm sure is helped along by his strong jawline and his slightly crooked nose. I know he's spent some time in the

boxing ring. It's how Declan and Conor met; it's a story I've heard many times over the years.

His hair isn't red like mine, it's more of a strawberry blonde and he always keeps his beard immaculately groomed. It's a turn on and the subtle hint of the cedarwood smell from the beard oil he uses, the same one I bought for him as a Christmas gift years ago, has me remembering better times. Times when the chasm between us wasn't so vast.

Anger floods me—anger at him and myself—and I snap at him, “What do you want, Conor?”

He steps forward and I step back farther into the dressing room. I shouldn't have chosen the last one, it's a little more secluded here than I would like with the way his seafoam green eyes flash with lust and something else which looks a lot like regret.

“You haven't looked at me all day, Saoirse,” his voice is a husky rasp which goes straight to my traitorous clit. The hussy. “I don't like it.”

My lip curls and the laugh that comes out of me is derisive as fuck. “You don't like it?” He closes the door behind him and leans back against it, crossing his arms across his chest like he doesn't have a care in the fucking world. It does not help the anger flowing through my veins. Like a broken record, I repeat, “You don't like it?”

“No, I don't.”

I step closer to him and can't help but poke him in the middle of his chest. I shouldn't touch him, I know this, but I'm not thinking straight. “I'm not the one who put so much distance between us that I don't even know who you are anymore, Conor,” I sneer his name.

He catches my wrist in his large hand and pulls me flush against his chest. “I love your sass, *mo bhanphrionsa*,” he purrs.

My princess.

I suck in a sharp breath and the jacket draped over my arm falls to the floor in a heap. He hasn't called me princess for so damn long and, somehow, this time it sounds very different. His hands slide up my arms and then down my sides, barely touching my ribcage. His touch doesn't have to be heavy or

rough, it doesn't even need to be against my skin, to feel like fire.

I try and keep hold of my anger, but it's hard with the way he's looking down at me. "Don't call me that," I whisper.

Conor buries his face in my neck and takes a deep breath, like he's trying to breathe me in. His fingers go down to the edge of the long tunic I'm wearing and then up underneath until he gets to the waistband of my leggings.

"Then I'll just call you mine," he murmurs against my skin, kissing my neck in a way that makes me wonder if I'm just dreaming.

My voice is unsteady, "What are you doing?"

"I realize that I fucked up, Saoirse. I've known it for a while, but then you left Boston. Having you so far away felt like a part of my soul was missing," he confesses.

Yup, I'm totally dreaming.

When his fingers push past the waistband of my leggings and panties, I gasp as he runs a finger up and down the seam of my pussy. My knees go weak, and I cling to his shoulders to keep myself upright.

If I'm dreaming, I don't want to wake up.

He kisses right below my ear, his breath hot as it washes over my skin, "I can't continue to lie to myself about what you mean to me. I need you. You're mine. I'm not going to stop until you believe it with everything in you. Until I prove it to you."

He finds my clit with his thumb as a finger probes my entrance. He doesn't push inside, and I whimper, "Conor, please."

"I've got you," he assures me. "I'll never let you go. I'm not pushing you away anymore."

I should be pissed. He's taking liberties I haven't given him consent to take, but my mind blanks as my body melts against him. This is everything I've wanted for so long. The words. The actions.

I start to pant and bite my lip to stop myself from moaning. When a whimper of need escapes, Conor pulls back and stares into my eyes for a

moment. Pleasure curls in my belly and my hips start to move, chasing the orgasm that is right there. One that Conor O'Brien is giving me.

I want to close my eyes and savor it, but I'm afraid he'll disappear.

"So wet for me," he growls right before he slams his mouth down on mine.

Just fucking in time as he swallows a moan that rips from my chest. When he fills my pussy with one of his fingers and his thumb presses down on my clit with the perfect amount of pressure, I come all over his hand.

I'm a shaking mess in his arms and a feeling of euphoria I'm afraid to trust fills me. He kisses me with a passion I have wished on shooting stars to feel.

Is he for real or is this how he breaks me completely?

I know with one kiss and one orgasm, I'm already ruined.

"I've got you, *mo bhanphrionsa*," he murmurs against my lips. "I'm never letting you go again. I'll earn your trust and your love. You'll see," his words are a promise I have to guard my heart against.

I sag against him as he pulls his fingers from my clothes and licks his fingers clean with a grunt of satisfaction.

There's a little flicker of hope in my heart that this is for real. I'm still pissed because of how he's treated me, and I won't forget about it quite yet. But I'm already destroyed, is there any harm in seeing what happens next?



CHAPTER 6

CONOR

There are some benefits to being so close to Declan. I'm using one of them right now to get into his house without anyone knowing. Of course, it's late and I shouldn't be doing this, but I can't help myself.

I can still feel the way Saoirse clenched around my finger in the dressing room earlier today. It's been haunting me. So has the fire and the anger in her eyes.

There was no way I was going to allow her to tell me no earlier and I hope she heard the sincerity in my words. She is mine and I'm not backing down from that now. I can't. I knew it before I made her come, but now there's no denying it.

She's my obsession, my sweet relief, my prize for living this life.

I won't be able to let her go.

I go in the backdoor of Declan's home, turning off the alarm as I enter. If my best friend knew what I was up to right now, he wouldn't hesitate to kill me.

I don't want to keep how I feel about Saoirse a secret, but I need to get everything right with her before I say anything to Declan. I want us solid, and for her to trust me and what I want from her. Then I'll deal with her brother.

I can't imagine he can think of another man who would be better for her. He already trusts me with his life and the family business. I've stood at his side for ten years.

I'll always protect his sister and put her first. That must count for something. Right?

As I make my way to Saoirse's room, I'm grateful as fuck that she's far away from Declan. Their rooms were closer, but when she became a teenager, she got a new room for the new stage in her life.

When she was moving, I asked Declan, “Why now? She’s been right next door to you for so long. It’s not like you bring anyone home or anything,” I pointed out.

He gave me a weighted look. “She’s getting older. She needs her own space and privacy. She doesn’t need her brother breathing down her neck all the time. I hover enough, I can’t help it, but I can give her some room here at home.”

In the long run, I think they both benefited from the space. It’s not like he stopped being overprotective. I was too, but then everything changed. Now I’m possessive as fuck when it comes to my woman.

The thought of another man touching her or even looking at her, has my blood boiling. I won’t tolerate that shit and they’ll learn quickly who Saoirse belongs to.

When I get to my woman’s door, I don’t hesitate to open it and slip inside. I force myself to take a deep breath and let it out slowly. We’re alone and I know this is it. We didn’t get the chance to have it out fully earlier today, but now we can. We will.

I need to see acceptance and the love she used to have for me in her eyes. I saw it peeking through in the fitting room, but she tucked it away far too quickly. I know I fucked up, but I just need the chance to make it right. I’ll spend the rest of my life making it up to her.

When I approach her bed, she’s curled up with her comforter pulled up to her chin. She looks so peaceful and serene while she’s sleeping. I almost don’t want to wake her, but I know I need to. We need to have a talk, a real one, and making it so she can’t get away from me is the only way it’s going to happen.

“*Mo bhanphrionsa*,” I call softly as I reach up and run my fingers through her hair. “Saoirse,” my voice is a little more insistent and her eyelashes start to flutter.

Her eyebrows pull together as she whispers, “Conor?”

“Yeah, it’s me. We need to talk.”

She shoots up in bed quickly and I barely stop myself from toppling

backward onto my ass. I stand up and look down at her. Her eyes are big and round as she looks around her room, but I have no idea what she's searching for.

“Is everything okay? Is Declan okay?” Her voice goes up an octave, to that place where panic lives, “What is going on? Why are you in my room?”

“Shh,” I soothe her as I perch on the edge of her bed and face her. “I'm sorry to wake you, but we need to talk, and I know you'll try and run from me if I don't do it now.”

She looks around again and then scowls at me. I know it shouldn't be, but it's fucking adorable. “You want to talk? Now?” Her tone is full of scornful incredulity, “You have got to be fucking kidding me.”

“I've wanted to talk to you for a long time, Saoirse,” I admit and flash her a small smile.

“But you didn't,” she bites out. She makes a motion with her hand between us. “You've been distant and have barely even looked at me in years, but suddenly, you want to talk? You want me? Now? After I spent so much time trying to move on?”

Saoirse's eyes widen and she slaps her hands over her mouth like she didn't want to say the last part. But I heard her.

My heart starts to crack open at the idea of her trying to move on, but she had every right to do it. I'm the one who pulled away without any explanation. I practically shoved her hard enough to send her across the country.

That's on me.

I cup my woman's face with one hand and pull her hands gently from her mouth with the other. “I'm sorry,” I murmur softly, hoping she knows how much I feel it. “I know those are just words. I know nothing can take away the things I did and the choices I made. They hurt you and I feel like a fucking idiot and an asshole. I hate that I hurt you.”

She narrows her eyes at me and hisses, “You didn't hurt me, Conor.” I open my mouth, but she's not done. Her shoulders slump and the mask of anger makes way for so much hurt on her face that she might as well take a

knife to my gut. “You destroyed me. I had no idea what I did wrong. I had no idea what was going on. You were there and such a big presence in my life and then you were just,” her voice cracks, “gone.”

I wrap her up in my arms and pull her against my chest. The way she straddles my lap is distracting as fuck, but first I need to set some things straight. Then I can claim my woman.

“I’m so fucking sorry, *mo bhanphrionsa*,” I whisper against the shell of her ear. “I wish I could take it back, but I can’t. I saw the way you looked at me and I knew you had a crush. I thought putting some distance between us would be better than breaking your heart. I didn’t consider how those actions would hurt you just as much, if not more. I was stupid and you were too young.”

“Conor,” her voice trembles and she tucks her head against my chest.

I slide my fingers into her hair and pull until she’s looking up at me again. “Don’t hide from me,” I implore her, “please.”

She bites her lip and nods. “You knew? You knew I had a crush on you?”

I arch an eyebrow. “Had?”

The little huff she lets out as she rolls her eyes has me smiling. There might be residual scars which need to be dealt with, but we’re going to be okay. My heart starts beating again; when was the last time it did that? It feels like it’s been so damn long.

“Whatever,” she mumbles and tries to duck her head again.

The grip I have on her hair won’t let her get far. Just the way I want her. My cock is so fucking hard, I’m sure she’s noticed it. It really can’t be helped with how close her pussy is to my dick.

Everything in me screams to roll us over and take what’s mine.

“Do you think you can forgive me? I want this. I want you. All I had was time while you were away—time to miss you, time to think about you, time to beat myself up over my own stupidity. I need you, Saoirse. I’m sorry it took so long for me to realize it. I’m sorry I hurt you because of my own fears.”

She blinks at me a few times and I can practically see the wheels in her brilliant brain spinning. “What were you afraid of?”

I huff out a small laugh and shake my head. “That you’re far too good for me. That I won’t be enough for you. That I’ll let myself feel everything I know is right there in my soul for you and then I’ll be broken when you figure out you could have so much better.”

She tries not to smile at my words, but I see it all the same. There’s a teasing lilt in her voice, “You weren’t afraid of Declan?”

I shrug and look down into her eyes, wishing the lighting was better because she has the most beautiful blue eyes I’ve ever seen. “I’m sure Declan will have an issue with it, but it’s not going to stop me. I was worried about his reaction. He loves you so much and is so protective of you, but he also gave you the freedom to go far away for school. Maybe he can accept us together too.”

She nods slowly as her hands slide up my arms and around my shoulders. “So, that’s what you want? For us to be together?”

“I’m just as much yours as you are mine.”

The words are barely out of my mouth before her lips are capturing mine. I kiss her back, tasting her sweetness and her light, swallowing it down and making it part of me. Maybe it’ll be enough to wash the darkness from my soul. Maybe not.

It doesn’t matter because I’ll always fight—for her, for myself, for us. If anyone tries to harm her, they’ll find out I won’t hesitate to spill blood in her name. Always in her name.

I move us until she’s flat on her back in the middle of her bed and I’m hovering over her. She feels so much smaller than me as I cage her in. The way her legs are wrapped around my waist as she grinds her sweet pussy against my hard length is distracting as fuck.

My hands are shaking as I start to remove our clothing, each piece tantalizing and humbling. There’s no hesitation in the way she touches me, the way she kisses me. She wants this just as much as I do.

When we’re naked, my entire being sighs when our skin touches. “This is

what I've been missing my entire life," I whisper against her neck as I pepper kisses along the column of her throat.

"Conor," she pleads, "please."

"You want me?" Saoirse lets out the sweetest whimper as she nods to answer my question. "I'm going to need the words, *mo bhanphrionsa*. I need you to tell me exactly what you want."

"I need you inside me. Fuck me, Conor," she whimpers, her soaking wet pussy sliding up and down the length of my shaft, "please."

While I kiss and lick down her neck and towards her delicious tits, I whisper against her skin. Words of apology and praise. I want her to know I'll always put her first. From now on. No matter what.

The way her back arches when I suck her nipple into my mouth has me grinning. She's so fucking responsive to me. Is there anything better?

She pleads and moans with every suck of my mouth on her nipple. "Oh, fuck, Conor. Need you now," she babbles.

I pull my hips back and shift my weight so I can grip the base of my cock to position myself at her entrance. As I start to sink inside of her, she's so wet and hot. I almost can't stand it. It feels so fucking good. I freeze in place when I realize why.

"Fuck, Saoirse," I growl, and she blinks up at me, her eyes glazed over with lust. "I forgot a condom. I don't know if I have the strength to pull out of you right now and I'm not even all the way inside your sweet cunt."

"I'm on birth control," she assures me. She sucks in a deep breath and lets it out slowly, her eyes clearing a little bit as she does. "If you're good, then so am I."

I narrow my eyes and clench my jaw. "I would never put you in danger," I grit out through my teeth.

Her small hands grip the back of my neck, and she pulls me to her lips. "I know," she murmurs softly before kissing me.

It's all I need, the need I have to take her, to claim her, pushing every other thought out of my mind. I punch my hips forward and fill her the rest of

the way. The moan I swallow down is just on the edge of painfilled, but I can't stop now. I won't stop now.

I should.

But then her legs tighten around my hips and her nails dig into my scalp and I'm fucking lost. I start to move, pumping in and out of my woman, loving the way she writhes underneath me. Her hips meet mine, encouraging and pleading with me without words for more. More.

Fucking more.

It's everything I imagined and then some.

"So tight," I growl and nip at her bottom lip.

"Harder," she gasps, and her wish is my command.

I power into her, again and again, my mind ripping to shreds as my soul twines with hers.

It's almost too much and far too soon her walls start to tighten as my balls draw up. "Can't last much longer, need you to cover my cock in your sweet cream," I grunt against her lips.

She nods and moans, her lips pulling away from mine as she arches her back and presses her tits against my chest.

"Say it," I demand as her eyes meet mine.

"I'm yours," she moans.

Our bodies tighten and then it all uncoils in a rush. Her pussy pulses around my length just as the first jet of my cum fills her up. My vision blurs with the pleasure of finally, fucking finally, having everything I want and need in my arms.

She wraps herself around me, her body quivering as she pants for air. I'm right there with her. It's overwhelming, but perfect at the same time.

I know I won't be able to hold her all night, but I roll us anyway and drape her across my chest as we float on our pleasure and our acceptance together. She's perfect in my arms.

I kiss her forehead and mutter, "You're everything to me, *mo*

bhanphrionsa. I'll show you."

When she doesn't say anything, I look down at my woman to find her eyes closed and her forehead smoothed out. The fact that she trusts me enough to sleep on my chest makes me feel rebuilt in the rubble of my ruin.



CHAPTER 7

SAOIRSE

Declan's office is decked out with holiday decorations to the point that it looks like a normal Christmas party. I guess, for the most part, it is. Except for the shadows in the corners of my brother's business you don't want to look at too closely.

It's been so damn good to be home. I've bonded with Roisin and feel close to her. Seeing my brother so happy has lifted a weight from my shoulders that I didn't even realize was there.

Then there's what has been going on with Conor. Being with him, as a couple, is everything I could have dreamed of. He's snuck into my room late at night for the last few days and we've held each other while talking, sometimes before he's rocked my fucking world and sometimes after.

I almost can't believe it's real. I swear I'm about to wake up to find it's all been a dream.

Last night he was holding me and murmured, "I wish I could take you to the party tomorrow night, but I'll meet you there." He looked down at me, his eyes so fucking earnest, "Will that be okay, *mo bhanphrionsa?*"

I stroked my fingers along his beard and nodded. "I get it. It's not a problem." I arched an eyebrow, and teased him, "I'll be wearing the dress I was going to try on when you followed me into the fitting room the other day."

He groaned and then the next thing I knew I was underneath him and he was making me see stars. Can it get any better than that? I don't fucking think so.

Declan has been watching me very closely the last few days. I wonder if it's because he suspects something is going on with Conor or if it's something else. I've been keeping secrets, a lot of them. I've never been good at keeping secrets when it comes to my brother.

He always knew when I was up to no good. I don't think that's changed.

Christmas is only a few days away and I'm looking forward to it since I've gotten my holiday sparkle back. I guess the place you are really does matter. I ran so far, and I thought I did it for the right reasons, but I was wrong.

But, then again, I don't know if Conor would have gotten his head out of his ass if I didn't go across the country for school. Maybe he would have, eventually. Not that it matters, I'm glad he did.

I smile at Ronan, who has been in my life even longer than Conor. Declan and Ronan grew up together and Ronan's father worked for my dad. He's always been around, and he runs security for Declan now. It's the same position his father had, and I swear you can feel the pride coming off the man.

There are two sides to Ronan. Normally he's lighthearted and quick to make a joke, but then there are other times when you can see the monster in his eyes. The one that does the dirty work Declan needs him to do.

Ronan's voice is teasing, "Can you believe he finally found a woman willing to put up with him?"

I laugh and feel eyes burning against my skin, starting at my legs, and moving up my body slowly. Conor and I have been dancing around each other all night and it's turning me on. It's almost too much to handle.

"I'm glad he found someone normal. Roisin is good for him. I really like her," I lower my voice a little, not wanting to show too much vulnerability to everyone.

I can with Ronan though, he really is like my big brother. He was there the first time I scraped my knee and wouldn't stop crying. While Declan cleaned off my knee, Ronan was the one making funny faces and trying to get me to smile.

I glance around the room, knowing Conor is part of the crowd right now, and freeze. I cock my head to the side as I take in a guy across the room. He looks familiar and not just because he works for my brother. It's something else.

Something right there at the edge of my memory. I try and grasp it, but it's

like it disappears between my fingers like vapor.

I look at Ronan who is keeping his face blank. Odd. I nod toward the guy and ask out of the side of my mouth, “Who is that guy? He looks familiar to me, but I can’t place him.”

“Oh, that’s Jamie,” Ronan’s voice is smooth. “You probably recognize him from last year’s party. He hasn’t been with us for long, but he’s good at his job.”

It takes everything in me to not ask what his job is. I learned a long time ago asking questions like that isn’t appropriate. Not with this crowd at least.

I make a humming sound and push away the feeling that I’ve seen Jamie before, and it wasn’t at the Christmas party last year. He looks right at home here, but I know I saw him somewhere else. The more I try and figure it out, the farther away the answer seems.

Ronan leans a little closer and my attention snaps to him. He wiggles his eyebrows at me, and I can’t help but smile at his antics. “Be honest, how many broken hearts did you leave in Cali?”

I gasp in mock outrage and shake my head at him. “None.” He arches an eyebrow like he doesn’t believe me, and I sigh. “There was one guy who seemed interested in me, but the feeling was not mutual. I don’t know, I just,” my words trail off because I’m not entirely sure what to say.

Ronan whispers, “You were just pining for a certain someone, huh?”

This time my gasp is not in jest at all. My eyes widen as I look up at him and start to shake my head slowly. “I’ve never pined in my life,” I force the words past my lips, and they taste as deceitful as they are.

Ronan throws his head back and laughs before patting my shoulder. “You’re a shit liar, Saoirse, which is a refreshing as hell trait considering the business done around here.” He tilts his head to the side as he studies me. “Something happened though, didn’t it?”

I breathe out, “What?”

“Between you and Conor,” he states like it is common knowledge. It isn’t. “The man has been giving me death glares since the moment I started talking to you and every time he looks at you, you start blushing.”

“I don’t blush,” my voice is close to an incredulous shriek which is not unbecoming at all.

Okay, it totally is.

“You’re also practically glowing,” he points out, not taking my hint to let the whole thing drop.

“I’m just glad to be home.” I wave my hand dismissively as I try and brush off his words.

“Uh huh, sure,” he holds the word out. He leans into me again, almost too close for comfort. “Don’t worry, I won’t say anything, but don’t keep hiding it. If Declan finds out without one of you telling him, the fallout will be worse.”

I nod mutely because I know what he’s saying is true. I sigh and smile. Ronan’s advice is coming from a good place. He’s trying to protect me and Declan.

“I’ll keep that in mind, hypothetically, of course,” I sass him.

Ronan laughs again and then before I know what’s going on, he’s got me wrapped up in his arms. He’s always given great hugs.

“I’m glad you’re home,” he whispers against the crown of my head, where he places a kiss before releasing me. “Looks like I need a refill,” he shakes his beer bottle at me and winks, “we’ll catch up more later.”

I roll my eyes and barely stop myself from sticking my tongue out at him. “Maybe you’ve had enough. It must be why you’re seeing things that aren’t there.”

“We can go with that if you’d prefer,” he throws over his shoulder as he heads toward the bar set-up on the other side of the room. He even gives Conor a jaunty as fuck little wave as he walks, all while sporting a huge fucking smile.

The man must have a death wish. Ronan has always been a little unhinged, but this is a whole new look for him. Conor’s glaring at the man and if he could eviscerate him with his mind, I have no doubt Ronan’s guts would be dancing across the floor.

I glance around again and don't notice the guy, Jamie, I saw earlier. It's right there, but I know if I force it then it'll never come. Maybe it doesn't matter, and my mind is just playing tricks on me.

Declan is talking with a few people, Roisin tucked into his side, and I find myself smiling. His face is serious, which isn't new considering he's around people who work for him, but there's a lightness in his eyes I've never seen before.

Love did that for him.

I slip away from the party and head toward the bathroom, needing a moment to myself after my conversation with Ronan. Is it so obvious that something has happened? It's not like the man has stopped looking at me all night. He's not subtle at all.

Was everyone aware I had a crush on Conor? That's embarrassing as hell. I thought I had kept it to myself, but Conor saw it and so did Ronan. Did Declan?

I'm about to enter the private bathroom near Declan and Conor's offices, when I'm gently pushed from behind into the room. I spin around so fast I nearly trip over my own feet as my heart pounds in my chest. Knowing you're in a room full of people you're safe with doesn't stop the flight or fight response in my body.

"Conor," I gasp and press a hand to my chest when I register the man that I've always loved is looming above me with fire in his eyes and possession screaming from the way he's holding himself. "What are you doing?"

He leans back against the door, the pose screaming casual even though nothing else about him is. There's nothing putting me at ease with the way he's looking at me.

I find myself backing up and he barks, "Don't move."

My entire body freezes with his command and my eyes widen even further. He starts to stalk toward me slowly, using the small space in the room to his full advantage. I want to step back, but I can't.

"I've been watching you all night, *mo bhanphrionsa*," his voice is rough and sends a shiver down my spine.

“I know.” I lick my lips and try to rid myself of my suddenly dry mouth. “I’ve felt your eyes on me all night.”

“Then you know I was watching as you joked and laughed with Ronan. It looked very cozy between you two,” he growls.

My mouth falls open as he stands toe to toe with me, and my feet can finally move. I take a step back, but he matches me until I’m pressed back against the wall.

“You can’t be serious,” I admonish him. “I’ve known Ronan my entire life. You know how he is. He’s a jokester unless he isn’t.”

“Don’t care,” Conor snarls.

I’m not sure if I *should* be scared, but I’m not. I know Conor would never hurt me. He’d rather die.

The way he’s looking at me, like I’m his prey, has my thighs squeezing together to try and alleviate some of the ache. No one has ever looked at me the way Conor is looking at me right now.

His hand shoots out and he buries his fingers in the hair at the nape of my neck. “I don’t like another man that close to you, Saoirse. I don’t give a fuck who he is or how long you’ve known him.” His eyes skate down my body and then back up. “You look fucking delectable tonight and there is no fucking way I’m the only one who has noticed. I’ve been dying to sink my teeth into you.”

“You want a nibble?” I taunt him, unable to help myself.

With a growl, Conor slams his mouth down on mine, the grip he has of my hair allowing him to move my head right where he wants me. I moan into his mouth, my tongue dueling with his. It’s a fight I know I won’t win. I don’t really want to.

I melt against him as his hand slides up my leg and under my dress. When he gets to the lace barely covering my pussy, the groan that comes from his chest borders on primal. I feel the sting of the fabric against my hips as he rips it away from my body.

“Conor,” I gasp, but he swallows it down.

I'm not really mad. I'm too fucking wet and needy to be mad.

When he grips my hips, my back arches and he pulls back from my mouth. I can feel his eyes on my body, touching me with his gaze and turning me on even more.

I need him right now.

Conor lifts me up, pressing my back against the wall as he deftly undoes his pants. He looks right into my eyes, the seafoam color dark and full of delicious promises. "Who do you belong to, Saoirse?"

"You," I moan as my legs wrap around his waist and the head of his cock hits my clit.

"That's fucking right," he chuckles darkly as he fills me with one, hard stroke.

My nails dig into his shoulders even though I'm sure he can't feel the bite of them through the dress shirt and vest he's wearing. Doesn't matter, I hold onto him as he starts to fuck me hard and fast.

"Should be treating you better than a fast fuck in the bathroom," he growls. He buries his face in my neck and kisses softly, the action completely opposite of his brutal thrusts which have me on the edge already. "Fuck if I can stop myself. Need to show you who you belong to."

"I'm not complaining," I pant and try to move my hips to meet his thrusts, but he tightens his fingers on my body and holds me in place.

Being at his mercy has my pussy squeezing around his cock. It spurs him on, and he moves faster, the pounding he's giving me bordering on painful. I welcome it with open arms.

"Gonna have you leaking my cum to let everyone know you are off limits," his words are gritted out through his teeth.

"Yes, fill me up," I encourage him.

"Who owns you, *mo bhanphrionsa*?"

"You do, Conor," I'm barely able to get the words out as I moan and whimper, trying to not be too loud and attract unwanted attention.

“Just as much as you own me,” he whispers, his voice loving. I cling to him harder, my belly coiling and knotting, the peak of my pleasure right fucking there. “Now, milk my cock with your cunt,” he demands.

His words send me right over the edge and warmth spreads through me as he fucks into me a few more times before filling me to the hilt, his cock jerking inside of me. I find myself smiling up at him and from the way his eyes soften, I’m sure it’s dopey as fuck.

I can’t really walk out there with his cum sliding down my thighs, but I’ll deal with that in a few minutes. For right now I soak up the feeling of being right where I want to be.



CHAPTER 8

CONOR

Adrenaline courses through me. It always does when I'm about to step into the ring and fight. Tonight feels even bigger. Maybe it's because I have Saoirse to go to when I'm done with the fight tonight. She's the prize and what happens in the ring has nothing to do with it.

I've lost track of how many times I've fought in the ring underneath Emerald, one of the legitimate businesses Declan's empire runs. It's one of the finer establishments and the underground fighting ring brings in a lot of people.

All walks of life want the opportunity to come down here where the action happens. Some are interested in fighting and proving themselves, others just want to watch the carnage. I've always been more about action. Getting into the ring and going a few rounds is how I made sure I could get out of the slums.

I brought my brother up with me, but it didn't turn out so well for him. I shake my head and clear those thoughts because I didn't fail my brother. He failed *me*. When he had the opportunity to be loyal and to make a better life for himself, he chose greed without a second thought for me or the position he put me in.

It's why I never held a grudge against Declan or Elio Agosti. Both men, full of power and violence, had a reason to want him dead.

I'm glad, at the end of the day, the only person who was lost in all that bullshit was Patrick. It would have been a shame if Elio's woman didn't make it. She did, but she'll have scars—both physical and mental—because of him.

I should have known my brother didn't have the spine for this life and would only look out for himself. He was never willing to step into a fight to help us out and was more than happy to be on the sidelines. I was blinded by thinking blood meant something.

Now I know blood has nothing to do with family.

Declan's a better brother to me than Patrick ever was.

Tomorrow is Christmas Eve and the thoughts of how fucking good Saoirse looked in her dress two nights ago is making it hard to concentrate as I leave the locker room and head out for my fight. I don't fight as often as I used to, but lately it's felt like the only outlet I had to burn off my frustration. I only had myself to blame for Saoirse going to school so far away and I knew it.

I welcomed a little bit of physical pain because I was putting myself through a shit ton of mental pain as it was. Every day with her thousands of miles away was pure fucking torture.

Now, I think I'll be able to stop fighting again and only do it when I want to blow off a little steam or have a good time.

Boxing is as close as I've ever gotten to meditating. There's something about the movement of it, the dance, and the way you need to read your opponent and get into their head. Then there's the brute strength that goes along with it.

I slide between the ropes and soak up the way the crowd is already cheering for me. I'm not the crowd's favorite, but they know I'll put on a good show. The lights aren't so bright in the room that I can't see some of the people assembled to watch.

It's a good-sized crowd tonight, even with how close it is to the holiday. This will be the last fight until after the New Year and it looks like people want to soak up a little violence before playing nice with their families or trudging through the holidays on their own.

When I turn toward the VIP section Declan has carved out for himself, I'm not expecting to see my Saoirse sitting there along with Roisin and Declan. Her eyes are wide and filled with a little fear when our gazes lock. I had no fucking idea she was going to be here tonight.

I'm not sure if I should strut around like a fucking peacock or go over there, throw her over my shoulder, and take her into the back room so I can spank her ass. What the fuck does she think she's doing here?

The dress code for Emerald is clear and the women who make it down to

the fights aren't the exception to the rules. I know I've never seen the gorgeous navy dress my woman has on, but even with her sitting I can tell that it hugs all her curves just fucking right. Then there's the slit that goes way too far up considering it's exposing her crossed legs.

Far too much of her skin is on display and my fists clench at my sides causing the tape wrapped around them to strain. My ears are fucking ringing with seeing my woman out in the crowd. I'm shocked as hell her brother would allow her to be here tonight.

I force myself to look at Declan to find him scowling at me. I swear something like knowing flashes in his eyes. He gives one curt shake of his head that, for the first time in the ten years I've known the man, I don't know how to interpret.

Roisin is beaming while looking between Saoirse and me. I wish I could be mad at her because I bet that she's the one who mentioned the fight. If both his woman and his sister ganged up on Declan to convince Saoirse to come with them, he never stood a damn chance.

I force myself into my corner when my opponent comes sauntering into the ring like he's not going to stumble out of it soon, while bleeding. The ringing in my ears only gets louder and it's difficult as fuck to not focus on Saoirse. Men are looking at her; she's too beautiful to not get some attention.

They probably won't approach her considering she's sitting with Declan, but that is hardly a comfort.

The moment the bell rings, all I can think about is Saoirse and muscle memory takes over. The fight is a blur as I throw punches, channeling my frustration because men are looking at what's mine. I have no doubt they're thinking about those legs of hers wrapped around their waist as they plow into her. They'll never have a fucking chance with her.

I hit my opponent with a combo which has him stumbling back, but I'm not done, not nearly done. I step right into his personal space and batter his midsection before throwing an uppercut right to his jaw. I swear the fucker spins once before thundering to the ground like a damn redwood.

I blink down at him, my chest heaving and the buzzing in my head making it hard to concentrate.

They're looking at her.

I can't have them looking at my woman.

I'm through the ropes and jumping down to the floor before the ref can even declare me the winner. I'm sweating and my chest is heaving as I step right into the VIP area, grip Saoirse's hips and pull her over my shoulder.

"Conor," she gasps, her fingers digging into my lower back, "what the hell are you doing?"

I make sure to keep my hand right underneath her ass to support her as Declan stands and barks, "Conor."

Roisin covers her mouth with her hand, but I can still hear her muffled, "I knew it!"

Declan turns his eyes to her, his expression incredulous as hell as he snarls, "Not helping."

I don't need to hear anything else. I turn on my heel and stride through the crowd like I didn't just throw the McCarthy mob princess over my shoulder like I fucking own her. Because I do own her.

Men who were leering at her just moments ago, thinking of how they could entice her to bed, are now staring at me like I'm the one who has lost my mind. Maybe I have, but it's all Saoirse's fault. All her fucking fault.

I was once a sane man, one who wouldn't have chosen a woman over anything or anyone else. Now look at me.

I slam through the door of the room I always use, the one that is only mine, and shut it behind me, flipping the lock and stomping over to the table I was sitting on while my hands were being taped. I sit my Saoirse down on it and she lets out an oomph.

She uses her arm to sweep her hair up and out of her face since it tumbled in front while I was carrying her. Her blue eyes are like an inferno when I look at her, blue flames fueled by lust and more than a little anger.

She seethes, "What the fuck was that?"

"I'd like to know the same fucking thing, Saoirse," my voice is a rough growl. "What the hell are you doing here?"

She ducks her head slightly, but I need to look into her eyes. I grip her chin with my thumb and forefinger and tilt her head upward. When our gazes lock, I take a deep breath. Her eyes should make it feel like I'm drowning, but they don't. They make me feel like I can breathe again.

She huffs and rolls her eyes as if I'm the one annoying her right now. Maybe I am, but I don't really care. "Roisin mentioned she was coming here. I've never been because Declan always said I was too young. We kind of, you know, wore him down together," there's a self-satisfied tone to her words which almost has me smiling.

"You just decided to come to an underground fight?"

Saoirse narrows her eyes at me. I know I should probably take it as a warning. I'm going to blame adrenaline on not giving a single fuck that she looks like she's about to put me firmly in my place.

"I tried to call you. I even texted you." She shrugs her shoulder as if it's no big deal, but I know better. "I didn't get a response. I wasn't hiding it from you," her words hold weight, "and I had no idea you were going to be here let alone be getting in that ring and beating the fuck out of someone."

My lips quirk into a smirk and my voice goes husky, "I did beat the fuck out of him, didn't I?" She rolls her eyes again and I let go of her chin to bury my fingers in her hair. I lean into her and whisper, our lips almost touching, "I'm going to be honest; I don't remember a fucking thing about the fight just now. All I could see is how sexy as fuck you are. All I could think about was the fact that every man in the room wanted to have you and your luscious body."

"Conor don't be ridiculous," she starts, but I don't need to hear another fucking word.

When my lips meet hers, the buzzing in my head and the thoughts of the men in the room, the ones who wanted what's mine, stop completely.

I lift her off the table and then stand her in front of it as I use my fingers to gather up the skirt of her dress. The color is fucking stunning on her, and the fabric is like a dream against my calloused hands, but it's nowhere near as soft as her skin. When I have her dress hiked up around her waist, I grip her hips, not letting the fabric go, and sit her back down on the table, my lips

never leaving hers the entire time.

When I pull back and look down into her eyes, they're half mast and full of need. Need I can satisfy.

"I'm sorry I didn't respond to you. Before I fight, I have tunnel vision and don't even hear it," I tell her honestly.

She nods and wraps her arms around my neck to try and pull me back to her, but I have other ideas. I grip her wrists and bring her hands down to the tabletop. I curl her fingers around the edge, loving the curious expression on her face.

"Don't let go of the table," I command as I drop to my knees in front of her.

"Conor," there's a warning in her voice and I'm not sure if it's because of where we are or because I just hauled her over my shoulder like a fucking caveman in front of her brother.

Not that it really matters. I would do it again. With fucking pleasure.

"Shh," I coo and grip her knees, my hands moving up until I grip her thighs and spread her legs, "I'm really fucking hungry, and I think I deserve my reward after winning my fight."

"Declan knows," she protests, but it's half-hearted at best.

I wink up at her and trail kisses up the inside of her thigh as I drape one of her legs over my shoulder. Her fingers tighten on the edge of the table as she keeps herself upright.

"I'm not worried about him right now. All I can think about is having the taste of your sweet cunt on my tongue." She moans as I nip high up on her thigh and then put her other leg over my shoulder, spreading her open for me to feast. When I look between her legs, it's clear she's not wearing any fucking panties and I growl, "Oh, dirty *bhanphrionsa*. I'm going to devour you."

That's the last thing I say before I bury my face between her legs. With the first taste of her, I start to snarl as I lick and suck on her flesh, using my tongue to swipe up her arousal. She's already wet for me, and her pleasure is the sweetest fucking thing I've ever had on my tongue.

When I feel her fingers in my hair, I slap the side of her thigh and nip at her clit, causing her to yelp, but then her touch disappears. “Good girl,” I growl, having no idea if she can hear me with my mouth buried between her legs.

I suck her clit between my lips and use my tongue until her thighs are shaking. Only then do I let go of one of her thighs and plunge two fingers inside of her, crooking my fingers in the way that will send her fucking wild as she floats amongst the stars which welcome her home.

“Conor,” she moans, the sound languid and loud even with the way her legs have trapped my head.

I lap up everything she gushes as she comes while I consider making her come again, just so I can have more of her.

“Please, so sensitive,” she whimpers, and I gentle my tongue and fingers as I help her float down from her high.

My cock is painfully hard, but there will be time for me to bury myself inside of her later. I’m not fucking my woman in some backroom of an underground fighting ring. Not tonight, at least.

Then there’s knowing we’re going to have to face Declan the moment I open the door. When I stand up, my woman’s eyes glassy with pleasure that makes me feel like a fucking king, I kiss her softly, wanting her to feel just how much she means to me.

“Come on, let’s put you to rights,” I murmur softly.

Her voice wavers, and I fucking hate it, “You know he’s going to be waiting right outside, don’t you?”

“We’ll deal with him,” I promise her. “Together.”

The way she melts against me tells me everything I need to know. She trusts me to stand at her side and to have her back. She has no idea the gift she’s given me, but I’ll make sure to never take it for granted.



CHAPTER 9

SAOIRSE

The thought of walking out of the room Conor carried me into has me nervous as hell. I know the thunderous face of my brother is right on the other side. He's going to be pissed. Hell, he has a right to be pissed.

We've been sneaking around behind his back and it's not like I have anyone to blame but myself. I should have known it would come out in the worst way. I've never had good luck with secrets.

I'm surprised I've kept the whole school thing under wraps for this long. Maybe I can soften the blow of the whole Conor situation by bringing up my decision to not go back to California for school. Or would that make things worse?

It's hard to tell right now.

Conor's hand squeezes mine just as he reaches for the door. He's dressed in normal clothes after taking a quick shower. He asked me to join him, but it would have been a recipe for disaster, and we already have one on our hands. There's no reason to compound it by adding more infractions to the long list Declan has had time to work up.

I won't be adding to it with wet hair. It's bad enough that his best friend, the man he trusts most in the world, gave me an earth-shattering orgasm with his mouth. Yeah, I won't be mentioning that either.

When Conor opens the door, Declan is leaning against the opposite wall in the small hallway. His stance is relaxed, but nothing about his face is. Roisin is looking up at him, her back to us, and I have no doubt she's trying to talk some sense into him.

When my brother's gaze snaps up to us and his eyes narrow, I know she couldn't get through to him. It's a lost cause and he's pissed.

I try not to recoil under the glare he's sending my way, but then Conor's back is filling my gaze and his voice rumbles, "You won't be reading her the

fucking riot act here.”

“No,” Declan intones, “I won’t. We’ll be dealing with this at home.”

How can only a few words feel so big and threatening? It’s a power Declan has always had. It’s one of the reasons men follow him, even into the gray areas of life where most wouldn’t venture. It also had me spilling the truth long before I was ready.

I guess some things never change.

I peek around Conor’s body to find Roisin looking at me with a reassuring smile on her face. “Well,” she claps her hands, “looks like the show’s over for the night.” The yawn she lets out is so exaggerated I almost laugh. She grabs Declan’s hand and starts to pull him away. “See you both at home,” she calls out over her shoulder.

If Declan didn’t want to go, he would have planted his feet and stayed right where he was. I can only hope Roisin will soften his edges by the time we all reconvene. I do not want to think about how she’ll go about doing that.

With Conor leading me, his hand on the small of my back, I zone out. I know he’s got me, and I can’t help but think about how bad this is. In my experience, Declan doesn’t go to violence first, but I’ve never seen him in a situation like this.

The only time I dated was a few months before I turned 16, right before I realized I was in love with Conor. That’s when I lost my virginity, which was a small miracle because my brother did his best to scare off the guy I was seeing.

I ended things when I was hit with the knowledge that I could never love the boy, or anyone else, because my heart was already spoken for. I wonder how long after that I made moon eyes at Conor, and he realized I had feelings for him. The distance he put between us is a bad memory, one he’s almost completely wiped away.

When Conor opens the passenger door to his car, he grips my shoulders and pulls me into his strong chest. I realize I have my coat on again. When did that even happen? I need to fucking focus, but it’s hard when it feels like everything is falling to ruin around you.

“It’s going to be okay, *mo bhanphrionsa*,” he murmurs against the top of my head, “I promise.”

I nod mutely and then slide into his car, my leg bouncing the entire time we’re driving to Declan’s house. It used to be my house too and while I feel just as welcome, it’s not the same as it used to be. I need to look for an apartment since I’m not going back to the West coast for school. I need to take control of my own life here in Boston.

I hope my brother is going to be included in that life and this doesn’t blow everything up.

When we pull up to Declan’s house, we park down the street and I take a big breath as I prepare to get out of the car. Before I can, Conor’s hand lands on my knee and my eyes snap up to meet his. His eyes. They’re such a beautiful seafoam green color. I know it might be dramatic, but I hope this isn’t the last time I get to look into his eyes.

“Saoirse,” his voice is a gruff command, “I can see you’re freaking out, but there’s no reason to. Your brother loves you and he only wants what is best for you. He wants you to be happy.”

“You make me happy,” the words slip from my lips without me even needing to think about them because they’re true.

Conor smiles at me and my racing heart starts to settle. “Good, *mo bhanphrionsa*,” he purrs, “I only want to ever make you happy.”

He gives me a pointed look before getting out of the car, coming around to my side, and helping me out. The frigid air seems to pull me out of the depth of my worry. Or maybe it’s the strong, solid force of the man at my side that does it. Either way, I’m grateful.

Declan didn’t raise me to be meek and to let life knock me down. I’m not going to allow him to do it either. There have been countless times over the years when I’ve had to fight him so he would listen to me and give me the freedom I needed and craved.

Is this really any different?

When I let us in the front door, the hushed voices in the living room immediately stop and I swallow hard to get it past the lump forming in my

throat. Conor doesn't waver as he leads me right into the room.

Declan's gaze immediately goes to the way Conor's hand is resting on my back and he arches an eyebrow. My feet are killing me, and I desperately want to get my pajamas on, but there's no way I'm leaving the room until this is resolved. I follow Conor's lead until we're sitting on a small loveseat together and I clasp my hands on my lap.

When Conor's large hand covers mine, the warmth of him, the steadiness, seeps into me and gives me the boost I need. I'm not going to wait for the attack, I'm going to lob one of my own.

"I've been in love with Conor for a long time," I start, my voice shaky until I get it under control. Now is not the time to lean into my fear, I need to harness my fierceness. "I realize I was far too young for anything to happen between us which is why I tried to hide my feelings. He saw it anyway and put distance between us, both physically and emotionally. The distance broke my heart and is one of the reasons I wanted to go so far away for school."

"*Mo bhanphrionsa,*" Conor's voice is a pained whisper, but I can't look at him right now. I keep my gaze fixed on my brother.

"I want you to know that what I tell you next has nothing to do with what has happened between us while I've been home. And, let me assure you, nothing happened before now." I take a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I'm not going back to California for school. I figured out quickly that it wasn't the right place for me. I missed home for a lot of reasons, and I realized I was running when I had nothing to run from. I made the decision a while ago and went ahead and applied to a few schools here as a transfer student. I've been accepted and will start next semester."

I don't think I've ever seen my brother genuinely surprised before, but right now it's written all over his face. He studies me for a long time before looking at Conor. I wish I knew what Declan is thinking as Roisin reaches over and laces her fingers with his.

"As far as realizing she had a crush on me, that's true," Conor begins and gives my hands a squeeze. I'm tempted to look at him, but I stop myself. Barely. "I noticed the way she looked at me, but she was too young, and I didn't see her in that way. Then it changed when she turned 18 and I saw, really saw, the woman she's grown into. I felt like I was torn between my

loyalty to you and the woman I know is part of my soul. I could have closed the distance I had put between us, but I was afraid to do it.”

“Afraid,” Declan scoffs softly and I glare at my brother. I’ve never felt ashamed of him before, but right now a sliver of that emotion works its way into my heart.

“I never thought she would go to the other side of the country for school. I should have.” Conor shakes his head and looks down at me and I feel his gaze caress my body. “You’ve raised her to be a strong woman, one who knows her worth. I know I’m not worthy of her; I don’t think anyone truly could be, but I can promise you I will strive to be the man who deserves her. I love Saoirse,” Conor’s tone doesn’t hold any room for argument.

I gasp and my eyes fill with tears as I look up at him, the rest of the room fading away, including my brother. I whisper, “You love me?”

Conor cups my cheek with his large hand, and I lean into his touch. His seafoam green eyes are alight with affection and, yes, now that he’s said it, I can see the love he has for me there as well. “You love me?”

“Of course,” I blurt. My eyes widen slightly, and I bite my lip before giving him a sheepish smile. “I probably should have told you that for the first time without an audience, huh?”

“We’re even,” he teases me, and I can tell by the look on his face he wants to kiss me, but he’s holding himself back.

Declan clears his throat. “If you’re both done,” there’s a note of resignation in his voice which has me turning back to him, even though I do it reluctantly.

Roisin has a huge grin on her face, and I can’t help but give her a small smile in return. I can’t celebrate a victory, not yet at least.

Declan levels his intense stare at Conor. “You should have come to me when you realized you had feelings for my sister. I could have given you my blessing. Maybe.”

I squeak, “Maybe? Your blessing?” I growl the second question as my temper flares. Of all the caveman bullshit I’ve heard in my life, all in the name of protecting me, this has got to be the most insufferable.

Conor covering my hands, which are now balled up into fists, calms me slightly. Not much, but the action does prevent me from leaping at my brother and trying to claw his face off.

“I needed to make things right with Saoirse before I spoke with you,” Conor explains, and I try not to fume over two men speaking about me while I’m sitting right fucking here. “I knew I hurt her with how I behaved. I also knew, if I got the chance, I would stop at nothing to make it up to her.”

Declan sighs and then he turns his intense focus onto me. “You’re moving back home?”

“I’m moving back to Boston,” I clarify. “I know you’d welcome me back here with open arms, but this is your house now,” I motion between the two of them, “and I think living here would cramp your style.” I shrug one shoulder. “I figured I could find a nice little apartment,” Declan’s scowl gets deeper, and I quickly add on, “with impeccable security, of course.”

Conor scoffs, “There’s no reason to find an apartment. You’ll be moving in with me.”

“How about we table that for right now,” Roisin interjects. “That sounds like a conversation the two of you should have in private.”

I almost roll my eyes, not because Roisin isn’t correct, but because of Conor’s assumption about where I’ll be living.

Do I want to move in with the man I love? Of course. Am I a little afraid we’ll be moving too fast? I look at Roisin and Declan and I’m not so sure.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were unhappy at school?” There’s an edge of hurt in Declan’s voice that has my heart clenching.

“I didn’t want you to worry about me. It’s a decision I needed to make for me.” I soften my voice, “You’ve always put me first, Declan, and given me room to grow. I know you’re proud of me and I didn’t want you to be disappointed that I was moving home, especially after I made such a big deal about moving away.”

“I love you, Saoirse, and I could never be disappointed in you for making the right decision for your happiness.”

I arch an eyebrow at my brother, the challenge clear. “Then that means

you'll accept and respect the relationship I have with Conor."

An even bigger and longer sigh leaves my brother. "It seems I don't really have much of a choice." He glances at Roisin and mutters, "Especially since I'm out numbered."

I look at the woman who has quickly become like a sister to me and she winks at me. "I can be very persuasive, and I have the right weapons at my disposal," her words are full of amusement.

As much as I don't want to think about what those weapons are, I'm damn glad she's on my side.

"Well," Roisin stands up and offers her hand to Declan, "it seems the family meeting is over, and all parties are walking away happy. I for one am dying to get these shoes off." Declan takes her hand but stands without her helping him. "Oh, I almost forgot," she exclaims and looks at Conor, "congratulations on winning your fight."

Conor gives her a nod of acknowledgement and she tries to pull Declan away. This time he's not budging, and she lets out a huff of annoyance. My brother points at Conor, "You might be my best friend and a man I rely on, but if you hurt her then your body will never be found."

"If it comes to that," Conor's voice is solemn, "I know the perfect spot."

With a chin lift, Declan turns and leads Roisin out of the room. I can hear her voice cooing at him as they walk away, and I find myself smiling as my heart tries to beat right out of my chest. That went better than it could have gone, by far.

I turn to look at Conor and he's already looking down at me. "Come to my place. Let me show it to you before we talk about where you're going to be living next semester."

As much as I should fight him on it, I do want to see his place and I do want to live with him.

I give him a cheeky smile as I nod. "So, you love me?"

Conor's eyes soften as he looks down at me. "You love me?"

"More than I could ever say," I murmur, his eyes darting between mine

and my lips.

He doesn't answer me in words, he kisses me like I'm the last breath he's ever going to take. It speaks volumes.

But then he whispers against my lips, "I love you, *mo bhanphrionsa*. Thank you for giving me a chance."



CHAPTER 10

CONOR

I should have known Saoirse would be up extra early this morning. It's Christmas after all and my woman's favorite time of year. I didn't think we'd be up just as the sun started to rise, but it's not like early mornings are foreign to me. In my line of work, late nights and early mornings are the norm.

Can't say I wasn't looking forward to a lazy and late morning in my bed with my woman though.

Yes, my bed.

After our talk with Declan, I brought her to my place, and I haven't let her go back to her brother's except to grab some of her stuff. This is where she belongs and I'm fairly sure she agrees with me.

Finding out that she's not going back to California was a huge fucking relief. I was worried about the prospect of her going back and being so far away from me. I know Declan is probably relieved as well, and I bet Jamie will be thrilled to not have to go back and keep an eye on my woman.

I saw her at the party the other night looking at Jamie, but I don't think she recognized him. I wonder how pissed she'll be if she ever figures out that he was the one following her the last few months. At least I won't be the one in the hot seat on that one.

Sure, I might have used his assignment to keep tabs on my woman, and I'm not going to apologize for it, but I'm not the one who gave him the job. That shit storm will come down on Declan and Ronan. Though, she couldn't have really thought Declan would let her go all the way to the other side of the country without backup. Right?

I wrap my woman up in my arms and pull her into my lap. There's bits of paper and ribbon on the floor and the couple of gifts we got each other are piled onto the coffee table. It's perfect.

"Our first Christmas," she murmurs happily, and I can't help but smile

down at the woman who holds my heart.

“There is a lifetime of Christmases ahead of us, *mo bhanphrionsa*,” I whisper, my lips coming close to hers.

She’s the one to close the distance between us and I swear I can taste her contentment on my tongue. My hands slide over her body, memorizing her, taking it all in.

Everything has changed quickly, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. I knew that her coming back for the holidays was going to change everything and I was right. I was such a blind asshole to let her slip between my fingers, but I wasn’t going to let it stand.

She’s everything to me and now, with her in my arms, there’s a certain rightness that settles in my chest.

I could have lost her for good. If someone had swooped in and taken her from me, I would have had to go through life as a shell of a man. It would have been torture watching her with someone else while knowing I was the one who allowed it to happen through my own actions.

I don’t know if I’ve really earned her forgiveness yet, but I will. I’ll always put her first, even before Declan and the business. She’s it for me and I’ll make sure she never questions it.

Everything in me screams to make this woman mine completely, but there are certain things I need to wait on.

Yesterday, while Saoirse was gathering some of her things from the house, I sat down with Declan. His face was an unreadable mask, and I was nervous around the man for the first time since I met him. I knew he wasn’t happy with me, but what could really be done about it?

Before he could say anything, I knew I needed to put myself out there a little bit, not only because of our friendship, but to make sure everything was clear to him.

“I’m not sorry I didn’t come to you first and tell you about my intentions with Saoirse,” I told him honestly. “I fucked up with her and I needed to make it right. She is my top priority. I will always have your back and I’m devoted to the business, but my loyalty will always be to her first. She

deserves nothing less.”

He nodded slowly; a move I had seen him use on countless men. Lesser men. Men who would be intimidated by the show. I wasn't and I had to bite my tongue not to call him out on his bullshit. Instead, I sat there, calm and steady, as I held his gaze, and he assessed me.

I wasn't going to crack; the stakes were far too high for that.

When he let out a breath and his shoulders relaxed, it felt like a win, but I also knew it was too early to get cocky. “I can see she's happy with you,” he offered a bit reluctantly. The chuckle he let out was self-deprecating. “I'm not going to lie to you, Conor,” he leaned forward in his chair slightly and pinned me in place with a look, “I knew something was going on with you the last few months. Hell, the last few years, really.” He shook his head and shot me a weighted look. “I'm not blind or stupid. I had my suspicions, and I could see the distance you were putting between you and Saoirse. It really wasn't hard to figure out.”

“You never said anything,” there was a slight accusation in my voice.

He challenged me, “Why would I? You weren't talking to me about it. I figured you needed to get your shit together and I certainly wasn't going to push you closer to my sister. Not when I've had a hard enough time not looking at her and seeing the child I held in my arms while grieving the death of our parents.”

“I love her,” I assured him. “I can't tell you I'll always be the perfect man. I'll fuck up and piss her off, I'm sure, but I'll always love her. I'll always choose her. I lived in a world without her for far too long. I don't want to go back to that.”

“I hate to say it,” he gave me a disgusted look, “but I can't think of a better man for her to be with.” I tried to hide my smile, but I must not have done a good job of it because he groaned, “Don't make me regret saying that by looking all cocky right now.”

I ran a hand over my face, trying to get myself under control. “Of course not.”

“Now,” his face transformed back to deadly serious, “there is one thing I want to talk to you about and make very clear.” The only thing I could do

was nod. “I know you’re going to want to get your ring on her finger, make her your wife, and start your life with her. I know exactly what your impulses are screaming at you to do.”

“She will be my wife,” my voice left no room for argument.

“I’m not saying she won’t be, but I am asking you to not marry her until after she’s done with school. I know what comes after the ring, or even before, and I’m not ready to be an uncle quite yet. She wanted to go to college. She’s moving back to Boston to do it and I don’t want anything to get in the way of it.” He chuckled under his breath, “Not like she would let it anyway.”

As much as I hated to admit it, he had a point. “I won’t put an engagement ring on her finger until after she graduates, but then it’ll be full steam ahead. The only reason I’m agreeing to it now is because I know how important her education is to her and I will never be the reason she gives something up.”

“What if she hadn’t already made plans to transfer?” There was no judgement in his tone, only curiosity.

“We would have had to figure something out. I guess I’d be doing as much work as I could do for you remotely because there was no way I was going to let her go all the way across the country again without me,” I told him honestly, my face stoic because I knew I wouldn’t survive her being that far away from me again.

He nodded and then stood, and I followed his lead. He surprised the fuck out of me by giving me a quick hug. “I guess you’re officially family now.”

“I’ve always been your brother, Declan.”

He grinned at me as he stepped back and that was that. We had an understanding.

I told Declan I’m not going to put an engagement ring on my woman’s finger before she graduates, and I won’t, but I have a plan to make sure she knows exactly what my intentions are. I just need to wait for the right time.

Saoirse looks up at me, her beautiful blue eyes sparkling with so much love that it makes my chest feel tight. Her voice is a little unsure, which is so unlike her, “Will you come to Cali with me when I go to grab the rest of my

stuff?”

I kiss her lips softly and maneuver us so she's laying on the couch while I hover above her. When her legs wrap around my waist, she rotates her hips with her pussy pressed against my very eager cock.

“Oh, I'm going with you,” I assure her. I grin down at her and start to remove her clothing. “I've never seen the Pacific Ocean,” I confess, and my woman's eyes soften.

“We'll make it a vacation. Just for us,” she promises and starts to pull and tug at my t-shirt and sweatpants.

I take a moment to savor the feel of our bodies pressed together once I'm naked. The tip of my cock teases up and down the seam of her pussy, making her wiggle her hips in anticipation and the hope I'll fill her up. But not yet.

“When we come back to Boston, you'll move in here with me,” I don't ask because it's not a question.

Saoirse's hands come up and she cups my jaw, her eyes searching mine. I hope she finds what she's looking for.

There's a hopeful note in her voice, but she's tempering it, “Are you sure?”

“You belong here, with me. If you don't like the place, we can find a new one. I just want us together. My actions already cost us too much time and I don't want to do it anymore. I couldn't bear it,” I confess.

“I'll move in with you,” she whispers.

I want to shout from the rooftops as joy fills me. She's going to move in with me. She's mine.

The head of my cock notches at her entrance and I start to sink into her warm, tight heat slowly. I want to savor the feeling. I swear it gets better every single fucking time.

Saoirse moans and arches her back, pressing her hard nipples into my chest as I cage her in on the couch. My thrusts are slow and lazy at first as we stare into each other's eyes. I can see the future playing out in her blue depths.

The happiness.

The fights where fire blazes in her eyes.

The making up.

The highs.

The lows.

The life.

It's everything I've wanted but was too afraid to let myself hope for it. Now she's right here, underneath me and giving me the world. She has no idea how much she means to me. But I'll show her. Every day.

"Mo bhanphrionsa," I groan, my control snapping as I start to thrust into her harder and faster.

Our pleasure builds, feeding off each other and coiling through our bodies. It's almost a living and breathing thing between us, a monster of our own making, one we feed lovingly and with purpose. One we need to survive. It tears its claws through us, marking us.

When I kiss her, it's at odds with the brutal thrusts I can no longer contain or control. Our lips are soft and sweet, as she clings to me, her nails digging into my skin and encouraging me. We are our differences just as much as we are our similarities.

I revel in the way she feels underneath me, but I know her strength. I know her soul.

"I'm yours," she whimpers against my lips, and it does me in.

"Fuck," I grit out through my teeth, "your sweet cunt is milking my dick, Saoirse."

I try and hold off, but it's impossible. Her body is begging for my cum. Who am I to refuse her?

Being with her is the best thing that's ever happened to me. Meeting Declan changed the course of my life for the better, but Saoirse? She is the light which will always guide me home and she will wash away my sins. There is retribution in her touch and love in her eyes.

I know how fucking lucky I am. I vow to never squander the gift she has given me.

“I’m yours,” I whisper, knowing it’s the truth with every ruined and rebuilt piece of my heart and soul.



EPILOGUE

TWO WEEKS LATER ***SAOIRSE***

It feels a little strange to be wrapping up my time in California, but it also feels good. I know I'm making the right decision going home to Boston. It's where I belong and running away from my problems was never going to solve them.

Really, running away from Conor was never going to mend my broken heart.

But *he* has. He's stitched me back together by giving me everything I've ever wanted—his love, his devotion, his loyalty. He's the man I dreamed of since I knew what it meant to want to be with another person.

He's the other half of me and I couldn't be happier than I am right now.

I know we'll have to figure out some things along the way, but isn't that what life is all about? I'm looking forward to navigating our lives together.

I smile at Isla across the table from me as she pouts. I called her a few days before New Year's Eve, which was another amazing first holiday with my man, to let her know I would be traveling back to school early so I could collect my things.

I wasn't going to let her walk into our shared room to find all my stuff gone without an explanation. As soon as I told her my plans, she insisted on meeting me for coffee while I was here. I couldn't exactly say no. Knowing her, she'd show up in Boston with an axe to grind with me.

"I'm going to miss you," her voice is a little watery, as is the smile she gives me. She looks at Conor and threatens him, "You better take care of my friend."

"Always," he promises and looks at me with so much love in his eyes that it makes my heart clench.

“I guess now I know why you were always a little,” she pauses like she’s searching for the right word, “reserved?”

I laugh and smile at my friend. “I knew what I was leaving behind, but I’m not sorry I left home to go to school. It’s what I needed to show me I’ve always known where home is. I was just trying to run instead of facing what I needed to face.”

“I’m going to miss you,” she snuffles as her voice wobbles.

“You already said that,” I tease her, trying to get her to smile.

“Well, I mean it,” she huffs, and I can’t help but chuckle.

I stand up and head around the table, but she meets me halfway and gives me a fierce hug.

“I’m going to miss you too,” I whisper. “This doesn’t have to be goodbye for good. You’re always welcome to visit me in Boston and we’ll keep in touch.”

“Miles is going to be so disappointed,” she whisper-shouts, but it’s not soft enough considering the growl Conor lets out.

I giggle and shake my head in admonishment at my friend. “I got really lucky to have you as my roommate.”

“I know,” she sasses me as we smile at each other. “I think I’ll take you up on your offer to visit. Maybe for spring break.”

“Anytime,” I tell her honestly.

Isla is the first female friend I made in so damn long who I knew had no ulterior motives. I heard so many horror stories when it comes to the roommate lottery, but we clicked instantly. Even as I held part of myself back. She never let it get to her and just kept battering against the walls I built around myself.

She gives me another hug and a pointed look, one which promises consequences if we lose touch. “I’ll talk to you soon. Travel safely home.”

“Promise.”

She winks at me and waves at Conor before leaving the café where we met

up. Conor takes my hand, our fingers lacing together, and we follow just a few moments after her.

“She seems nice,” Conor muses.

“She is,” I admit and look up at him to find worry creasing his face. “I don’t regret the decision I made to go home. I made it early and easily. It’s the right thing for me. I did get lucky meeting Isla, but I have so much more waiting for me in Boston.”

Conor grins at me and stops me next to our rental car. I didn’t bring a whole lot with me when I came to school, but what I have is packed into the backseat and waiting to be loaded into the private plane Declan chartered for us tomorrow.

This trip has been fun, but I think it’s mostly because I’m spending it with the man I love. I don’t regret deciding I don’t belong here. For me, this place is the epitome of ‘nice place to visit but wouldn’t want to live here’.

I’m ready to go home and start my life, the one I was always meant to live.

Conor gives my hand a gentle squeeze and I focus back on him. I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of the way his seafoam green eyes take me in. I never really let myself believe that he could look at me like he is now—full of love and devotion—because I didn’t want to get my hopes up.

“Saoirse,” he begins, his voice cracking and causing him to clear his throat before he tries again, “I should take you somewhere romantic and do this, but I can’t wait.” My heart starts to pound in my chest as he cups my cheek with one of his large hands. It always makes me feel so cherished when he does it and I find myself leaning into his touch. “I made a promise to your brother that I wouldn’t put an engagement ring on your finger until after you finish school.”

My mouth drops open, and indignation fills me. “What?” I narrow my eyes at him and feel myself starting to seethe. “That is not something my brother,” I sneer the last two words, “gets to decide. It’s only up to us.”

“I agree with him,” his voice is gentle and soothing, but it batters against the fire in my veins. “Your education has always been important to you, and I want to support you. I also want you to know how much you mean to me and that I’m promising you that ring. One day.”

I open my mouth to say something. I don't even know what, but something. Before I can get myself together, Conor's mouth meets mine and I melt against him.

"I can't give you an engagement ring, but I can give you this," his words are spoken against my lips, his hot breath making me shudder and wishing we weren't out in public right now.

He smirks down at me before pulling something out of his pocket and holding it up for me to see. It's a beautiful Claddagh ring, one with small diamonds on the band and in the heart. I gasp as I look at it, knowing the deep meaning of it.

"This is my promise to you. One day I'll slide an engagement ring on your finger that fits with this one. Can I make this vow to you? Will you accept it?"

"Always," I murmur and hold up my left hand for him.

It's not an engagement ring, but he still slides the ring on with the heart facing inward and the symbolism isn't lost on me.

I wrap my hand around his neck and pull my man down to me, pouring everything he makes me feel into the kiss. Tomorrow, we go home, and our lives really begin.

In the rubble of our mistakes, we have found a solid foundation. I can't wait to see the life we build together.

**Want more Conor and Saoirse?
Get [Sweet Ruin's Bonus Epilogue](#)**

**Interested in Declan and Roisin's story?
Check out [Betrayal and Ruin \(Dark Reign Session 2 Series\)](#)**

**Curious about Elio and Zinnia?
Read [Blossom in Shadows \(Dark Reign Series\)](#)**

**You can find more mafia books on my [website](#).
Find out how they're connected to my larger
universe by checking out the book map [here](#).**



**Ready for more Sweet but Twisted Christmas?
[Sweet Savage](#) by Stormi Wilde is up next!
Check out the entire series [here](#).**



SWEET BUT TWISTED CHRISTMAS SERIES

Turn your Kindle library into Santa's naughty list this Christmas. Join some of your favorite authors for sweet, twisted, and taboo tales of forbidden romance.

From mob bosses to billionaires and age gaps to stalkers the Sweet but Twisted Christmas series will have you saying, "Sorry Santa, but being naughty just feels too nice."

Find the series [here](#).

[Twisted Santa](#) by Annie Charne
[Twisted Obsession](#) by Sofia Aves
[Twisted Surrender](#) by Carolina Jax
[Twisted Hitman](#) by Audrey Bell
[Twisted Temptation](#) by Wynter Ryan
[Sweet Persuasion](#) by Bonnie Poirier
[Sweet Desire](#) by Amy Stephens
[Twisted Savior](#) by Euryia Larsen
[Twisted Daddy](#) by Stella Bella
[Sweet Unknown](#) by Lia Preston
[Twisted Professor](#) by Vonne B

Sweet Ruin by Ember Davis
[Sweet Savage](#) by Stormi Wilde
[Sweet Sinner](#) by Zelda Knight

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

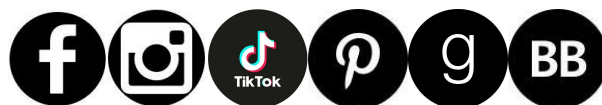


Ember Davis loves alpha heroes with a range of emotions, but a strong sense of how to take care of their women. She loves her heroines from all walks of life, just like her heroes, and she wants them to be real and relatable. Her heroines tend to be sassy, opinionated and smart.

Ember is a stay-at-home mom of two who recently refound her love of books and all things romance and is so glad that she did. She's always been creative but writing and creating stories that she would love to read satisfies dreams she had as a little girl. She loves butterflies, the color purple and enjoying time with her family.

Pssst...it's totally a pen name, but everything above is 100% true.

If you enjoyed this book, or even if you didn't, I'd really appreciate you leaving a review and/or a star rating on Amazon! This is a whole new world for me so any feedback you're open to giving, I'd love to have.



[Subscribe to my mailing list here!](#)

You get a free book when you do!

OTHER BOOKS BY EMBER



[On Campus Series:](#)

[On Stage](#)

[Banks Ink. Series:](#)

[Protecting His Home \(Banks Ink. Book 1\)](#)

[Accepting His Home \(Banks Ink. Book 2\)](#)

[Yearning for His Home \(Banks Ink. Book 3\)](#)

[Picturing Their Home \(Banks Ink. Book 4\)](#)

[Healing Her Home \(Banks Ink. Book 5\)](#)

[His Halloween Angel \(Halloween Steam Series\)*](#)

[A Very Pierced Christmas \(12 Days of Kissmas\)*](#)

[Kwanzaa by Chance \(Kwanzaa Kisses\)*](#)

[Faking Her Home \(Banks Ink. Book 6\)](#)

[Dating the Chef \(Matchmakers Inc Series\)*](#)

[Girl's Night Out \(Banks Ink. Book 7\)](#)

[Bedazzling the Jeweler \(The Pink Temp Agency Series\)*](#)

[Building His Home \(Banks Ink. Book 8\)](#)

[Kissed By My Roommate \(Shacked Up Love\)*](#)

[Bidding on Noelle \(Colorado Christmas Series\)*](#)

[Christmas in Denver Collection](#)

[Resolutions & Love \(New Year's Eve Besties Collection\)](#)

[Suburban Outcasts Series:](#)

[Once Upon His Star \(Suburban Outcasts Book 1\)](#)

[Catching His Falling Star \(Suburban Outcasts Book 2\)](#)

[Finding His Shooting Star \(Suburban Outcasts Book 3\)](#)

[Following His North Star \(Suburban Outcasts Book 4\)](#)

[All Bark, No Bite \(Love at First Bark Series\)*](#)

[Double Dog Dare \(Lassoed in Love Series\)*](#)

[Melinda's Manster \(Make A Manster Series\)*](#)

[Shipwrecked Curves \(Man of the Month Club Christmas in July\)*](#)

White Picket Fence Records:

- [Girl Dad's a Rising Star \(Girl Dad Series\)*](#)
- [When We Woke Up \(After I Do Series\)*](#)
- [Their Songbird \(Raining Love Series\)*](#)
- [Summer Muse \(Mountain Ridge Resort Series\)*](#)
- [Getting Back His Rhythm \(Rock My World Series\)*](#)
- [Mile High Rock Star \(Mile High Love Series\)*](#)
- [Journey's Peace \(Christmas Falls Series\)*](#)

[Higgins Security Series:](#)

- [Securing His Family \(Higgins Security Book 1\)](#)
- [Claiming His Family \(Higgins Security Book 2\)](#)
- [Earning His Family \(Higgins Security Book 3\)](#)
- [Forever His Family \(Higgins Security Book 4\)](#)
- [Built Dad Bod Tough \(Dad Bod Series - Men Built For Comfort\)*](#)
- [Revealing His Family \(Higgins Security Book 5\)](#)
- [Flames and Flowers**](#)
- [Beads on a Bombshell \(World's Greatest Party Series\)*](#)
- [Finding Luck Again \(Get Lucky Series\)*](#)
- [After the Rain \(Man of the Month Club\)*](#)
- [Securing His Heart \(Higgins Security Book 6\)](#)
- [Rock & Crank \(Dirty Sinners Series\)*](#)
- [Letters From Hometown USA \(Loving My Soldier Series\)*](#)
- [Scarred Beginnings \(Heart of a Wounded Hero Series\)*](#)
- [Another Notch on the Bartop \(Notchin' Boots Series\)*](#)
- [Popping Her Hood \(Good With His Hands Series\)*](#)

[Sweetwater Valley Series:](#)

- [Unexpected Love \(Sweetwater Valley Book 1\)](#)
- [Measured Love \(Sweetwater Valley Book 2\)](#)
- [Ask Me to Stay \(In Praise of Older Women\)*](#)
- [Getting Back His Rhythm \(Rock My World Series\)*](#)
- [Burning Love \(Cinnamon Roll Saviors Series\)*](#)
- [Celebrated Love \(A Country Christmas Series\)*](#)

[Wanderlust Series:](#)

[Lost Lust \(Wanderlust Book 1\)](#)

[Ellie's Stranger Shoot Series:](#)

[Off Limits \(Stranger Shoot Book 1\)](#)

[First Look \(Stranger Shoot Book 2\)](#)

[Hate to Love You \(Stranger Shoot Book 3\)](#)

[Blast From the Past \(Stranger Shoot Book 4\)](#)

[Timeless Connection \(Stranger Shoot Book 5\)](#)

[Less Than Strangers \(Stranger Shoot Book 6\)](#)

[Series Collection \(Novellas 1-6\)](#)

[Bred Under Contract \(Baby Breeder Series\)*](#)

[J&J Construction:](#)

[Grating on the Boss \(The Boss Series\)*](#)

[Dad Bod Foreman \(Dad Bod 2.0: Large And In Charge\)*](#)

[Off Field Drama \(Class in Session Series\)*](#)

[Changing Grades \(Back In The Day Series\)*](#)

[Denver Mustangs Series:](#)

[Flag on the Play \(Gridiron Love Series\)*](#)

[Sullivan Protection Series:](#)

[Room Three: They Like to Bite \(Club Sin Series\)*](#)

[Bites in Paradise \(Temptation in Paradise Series\)*](#)

[The Way Her SEAL Cares \(Real Hot SEAL Series\)*](#)

[Never Going to Care \(Sullivan Protection Book 1\)](#)

[The Puck Stops Here \(New York Storm Hockey Series\)*](#)

[Fudge Around and Find Out \(Merry Fudgin' Christmas Series\)*](#)

[Tied Up in Tinsel \(XXXmas Series\)*](#)

[Two Pink Lines for Christmas \(The Naughty List Series\)*](#)

[Torres Sisters Christmas Collection](#)

[Vibrant Ink Series:](#)

[His Wild Rebel \(May-December Romance Series\)*](#)

[Broken Road, Texas Series:](#)

[Broken Road Wishes \(Broken Road Texas Series\)](#)

[Dreams From Broken Road \(Everything's Bigger in Texas Series\)*](#)

Jasper Ridge Series:

[Mail Order Bride for the Scrooge \(Mistletoe Love Series\)*](#)

Screaming Woods:

[Knot Running From Fate \(Monster Between the Sheets Series\)*](#)

[Stalking From the Shadows \(Monster Between the Sheets: Season 2\)*](#)

[Monsters In The Woods](#)

Guidice Crime Family Series:

[Flames and Flowers**](#)

[Flowers and Moonlight \(Mardi Gras Menage Series\)*](#)

[Room Five: What You Can't See \(Club Sin: New Orleans Session 1\)*](#)

[Room Eight: Cinched Up Tight \(Club Sin: New Orleans Session 2\)*](#)

Devil's Saints Motorcycle Club:

New Orleans Chapter:

[Devil's Return \(Devil's Saints Motorcycle Club: New Orleans Chapter Book 1\)](#)

[Room Twenty: Owning Their Angel \(Club Sin: New Orleans Session 2\)*](#)

[New Tune, Old Vinyl \(Man of the Month Club '24 - Magnolia Point\)*](#)

Seattle Chapter:

[Biker \(KNK Matchmaking Agency Series\)*](#)

[Falling Feathers \(Dark and Twisted Tales Series\)*](#)

[Robbing From Mistletoe \(Mistletoe Creek Series\)*](#)

[Rough Riding \(Baby Breeder Session 2\)*](#)

[Lennon \(Wicked Temptation Key Party Series\)*](#)

Agosti Crime Family Series:

[Where Roses Lay \(Criminal Desires Series\)*](#)

[Room Six: Breathlessly Devoted to Them \(Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 1\)*](#)

[Lilies and Lies \(Endless Obsession Series\)*](#)

[Plucking His Daisy \(The Auction Series\)*](#)

[The Taste of Temperance \(Vices & Virtues Series\)*](#)

[Room Four: Wrong Guys, Right Praise \(Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session](#)

2)*

Blossom in Shadows (Dark Reign Series)*

King of Pain and Petals (Short Kings Series)*

Possessing Her Petals (Dark Hearts Mafia Series)*

Vows & Vendettas Mafia Anthology

McCarthy Irish Mob Series:

Betrayal and Ruin (Dark Reign Session 2 Series)*

Sweet Ruin (Sweet but Twisted Christmas)*

Orlov Bratva Series:

Snowed In With the Bratva Boss (Snowed In Series)*

Gilded Thorn (Dark Reign Series)*

Soiled Touch (Tendered Vows Series)*

Club Sin: Chicago Series:

Room Six: Breathlessly Devoted to Them (Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 1)*

Room Four: Wrong Guys, Right Praise (Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 2)*

Room Eighteen: My Pain, Their Pleasure (Club Sin: Chicago Series, Session 2)*

Chicago Collection

Other PNR Titles:

Bonded Beyond Lies (Fighting Fate Series)*

Bonded Beyond Belief (Mated to the Monster Series)*

*Book part of a multi-author series. May not be part of series it is listed under expressly but contains a character within that series.

**Companion to Beads on a Bombshell. May not be part of series it is listed under expressly but contains a character within that series.