

THE LIES WE KEEP #4



**SWEET  
ANARCHY**

A DARK REVERSE HAREM ROMANCE

**STEPH MACCA**

# **Sweet Anarchy**

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Steph Macca

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Thanks for Reading!

Coming Soon - The Deadly Sinners Collection

The Smutalogue of Steph Macca

# Hunt the Author Down

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# Triggers & Warnings

Oh, you like torture, don't you? Back again for book four...

I can only assume, and hope, that to be here you have read the first three books. That means you know what type of fuckery lies ahead. Nevertheless, please take note of the potential triggers in Sweet Anarchy:

~ Murder

~ Death

~ Violence

~ Weapons

~ Graphic sex scenes including DVP, DP and twin sandwiches

~ Somnophilia

~ Cancer

~ Pregnancy complications/miscarriage mentions

~ Use of the word 'cunt' for all non-Aussie readers



~ Sensory play and hunting

Enjoy and thanks for reading!

Steph



*To all my pretty little smut savages who need maps to work out  
the logistics of gang bangs (much like the mental stress I had  
writing this)... this is for you.*

*Enjoy the mental images and good luck.*

# Prologue

## Rylee

I remember the first time I drove a car after the accident. It took months of pep talks and sitting in my bedroom with a dinner plate, pretending it was a steering wheel. The worst part was even though I was staring at my wall, all I could see was the ground, covered in shattered glass and blood.

I woke up one morning after a restless sleep, full of nightmares and thought '*fuck it*'. The sun had barely risen but the roads were quiet, so I grabbed Mom's keys and snuck downstairs to her small sedan. Oh, how the times have changed. Mom wouldn't be caught dead in a sedan now. The irony.

I knew I couldn't stay living in fear forever. I needed the freedom of driving to escape, to get away from Mom's grief. I couldn't handle seeing her broken anymore, it was like she had completely forgotten I existed in those moments. If I'm being honest, I'm fairly certain a few times she looked at me with such anguish that she no longer saw me as her daughter - just

part of the reason her husband and high school sweetheart was no longer alive.

When I pulled out of the driveway, my vision was so obstructed by blurry tears and my body was shaking so violently that I hit the gas too hard. The wheels screeched on the road, making my heart race. The sound sent me into a panic, and for a second, I forgot where I was again. I was teleported back to the crash, the echoes of warping, crumpling metal bouncing around my brain.

A horn blasted from somewhere and I hit the brakes too soon, the car jolting to a stop just over the line of a give way intersection. An angry driver in some piece of shit green car, gave me the finger, his mouth silently cursing me.

I had flung forward from the sudden stop, my chest bashing the steering column. I couldn't even manage to move the car off the side of the road. I just sat inside the car, bawling my eyes out.

That was when a leather clad angel came to my rescue.

I never heard the roar of the bike pulling up behind me, or the faint footsteps outside the car of steel-toe boots hitting the asphalt. It was the tiny tap of knuckles on my window that finally pulled me back to reality.

My neck turned so quickly that it cracked, but through tears and sobs, I found a face staring back at me.

“You alright there, love?” he asked, opening the door slowly.

Wiping my tears away aggressively, I nodded. "Fine, thanks. Sorry, I'll move the car."

A tattooed hand slammed onto the top of my door, stopping me. "Here - let me, kiddo. You're in no state to drive."

I paused, looking at him gingerly. Despite being warned of stranger danger - particularly from random bikers - I never once felt afraid of him.

"Here, you can even hold my keys as collateral," he offered, holding the silver bundle out towards me.

Shaking my head, I hopped out of the car. "I trust you," I said honestly. "Thank you."

He gave me a curt nod, before slipping into the driver's seat, steering Mom's car off the road. A few passing motorists gave me weird looks but I ignored them.

"There you go," he said, handing me back the keys. "Are you doing okay?"

"No," I murmured. "Not really."

He nodded in understanding. "Look, I have to get to a... *business* meeting, but you're welcome to tag along. It's just at a quiet, closed bar down the road. Then, I'll help get your car home. Or if you need a cell to call a friend, you can use mine."

"A bar?" I asked. "It's 6am."

He laughed deeply. "Best time for mischief. There's no booze, just have to drop something off to a friend."

“On your bike?” I look at the quiet beast still in the middle of the road.

“Well, I’m sure as fuck not walking there.”

Nodding, I turned and locked the car. “I’ll come. My name’s Rylee, by the way.”

He holds out his large ink-covered hand for me to shake. “Nice to meet you, Rylee. I’m Butch.”

# Chapter 1

## Rylee

My heart stops, my body frozen as my eyes follow the pool of blood.

It's coming from him. And he's not moving.

*It's Chuck's blood.*

I can't breathe, my lungs feeling like they are being crushed by steel. Or that I'm drowning in a pit of ice cold water.

"Chuck?" I cry out, shaking his lifeless body. "Chuck?!"

There's a mixture of groans of agony and yells from around the room as injured people writhe in pain and call out to each other. The dark, peeling walls and furniture are splattered in blood, the metallic smell burning my senses.

I'm covered in blood too, drops dripping down my pale skin. Shakily, I press my fingers to Chuck's neck, searching for a pulse. I have no idea how to feel for one, so when I can't find it, a sob bubbles out of my mouth.

"Lee!"



I glance up as Vito stumbles past some overturned tables, his eyes wide as he looks around the room. He rushes over to me, grabbing my arm.

“Are you hurt?” he asks, voice hoarse.

I shake my head. “Chuck... he’s hurt. We need to help him.”

Vito leans down, pressing two fingers to Chuck’s neck. “Help is coming. It’s going to be okay.” He rips his hand away and pulls me up. “Come on, I need to get you to the back room.”

“Is Chuck alive?” I ask, on the verge of hysterics.

“Just come with me, Lee,” he says sternly, pulling me over fallen bodies.

Tears pour down my face and from my standing position, I look around as I’m pulled towards the back room. There’s so much wet leather, blood and debris that I’m unable to distinguish patrons. My eyes search urgently for familiar people.

“Where’s Butch? And Volts?” I yell out.

I hear a groan from behind the bar and I rip my arm out of Vito’s grip, slamming into the bar as I lean over to look. Volts is curled up in the corner, holding his ribs.

“Ry,” he croaks out. “Thank God, you’re okay.”

I jump over the bar, my knees getting cut up by broken glass. I ignore the pain, rushing over to Volts.

“Are you hit?” I ask, grabbing his hands and pulling them away from his torso. Blood runs down his shirt and skin and I quickly cover the wound with my hand, pressing firmly. Blood spills in between my fingers and I choke on a sob.

“It’s fine,” Volts says weakly. “I think the bleeding is slowing down.”

His voice is so feeble, almost a whisper that it sends panic down my spine. “You’re going to be okay,” I tell him, looking around for something to press against the wound. “Just don’t move.”

I grab a bar rag and roll it up, shoving it awkwardly into him. He groans in pain, his hand wrapping over mine as he holds it.

“Get out of here in case they come back,” he says in a low voice.

“I’m not going anywhere,” I mutter, my voice cracking. “I’m going to get help. Don’t move!”

I fling open the bar flap, moving away from the bar when I spot Vito hunched in the corner. Behind him, I spot a familiar bald head.

“Butch!” I yell, slipping over blood and spilled alcohol as I drop to my knees next to Vito.

He’s leaning against the wall, breathing raggedly. The left side of his face is coated in blood - in fact, his entire body seems to be covered in so much blood, I can’t even pinpoint where he’s injured.

“Lee,” he murmurs, giving me a smile. “You’re okay.”

“Where are you hurt?” I ask, looking over him as I go to reach for him. “Let me help.”

Butch reaches out, grabbing my arm to stop me. “I’m fine, kiddo.”

“You’re not fine!” I argue. “You’re hurt. And Volts is hurt... and Chuck... no one is fine!”

Vito grabs a bottle of beer from the ground that appears to have survived. He takes a swig before handing it to Butch, who drinks it so casually, you wouldn’t know he was bleeding out on the floor.

“Rylee,” Butch says sternly, using my full name for emphasis. “Listen to me. You need to be strong, just for a little bit. You can do it.” His voice softens as he nods at me encouragingly.

I hold his gaze, nodding slowly. “Okay.”

Vito looks over his shoulder towards the door. “Sirens. Paramedics and cops will be here any second. Lee, it’s important you don’t say anything to them.”

I look over at the door. “I understand. I need to go back to Chuck. I need them to go to him first.”

Before either of them can respond, I’m on my feet, rushing back towards him on the other side of the bar. I hope and pray that when I get there, he’ll have moved or be sitting up... or something. Anything.

But when I get back to him, he’s still motionless. I drop down next to him, my legs soaked in blood as I grab his hand

and squeeze it.

“Chuck, don’t you dare die on me,” I whisper urgently. “You’re not allowed to fucking leave me. You’re not allowed to leave me!”

Daylight floods the bar as the door flings open. I glance up, my heart pausing at the look of disbelief and despair on the first paramedic’s face as he takes in the scene. In the light, the color red seems so much more visible... so much more everything in general. It’s like a massacre... except, I guess *it is*.

There’s yelling and commands from the paramedics before they all start rushing in, clutching their bags as they spread out around the room.

“Over here!” I cry out to an older man when I catch his eye. “Please help him.”

He doesn’t hesitate, making a beeline for us. His blue gloves feel Chuck’s neck before he turns and waves to another paramedic. “I need some help to flip this guy over!”

Another male barrels over to us, ignoring me at first as they turn Chuck onto his back. I stare at Chuck’s face, his eyes closed peacefully. You’d almost believe he was asleep, if it wasn’t for the blood and dirt molded and embedded to his perfect skin and stubble.

“He’s bradycardic, weak pulse,” the first paramedic mutters to the other as they start ripping open their bags. “I need gauze and saline. GSW to the chest, abdomen and thigh. We need to

stabilize him for transport ASAP. Tell the hospital to have bags of O blood ready. They are going to need it.”

“Roger that,” the second paramedic replies, handing him gauze. They quickly pack it onto the wounds, grabbing a cannula and shoving it into the top of Chuck’s hand.

“Is he alive?” I cry out, a small flicker of hope pulling inside me.

A latex hand grabs my shoulder, startling me.

“Miss? I need to check you,” a younger male paramedic says. “Can you tell me if you have been shot anywhere?”

I shake my head. “I need to stay with him!” I argue, violently shrugging off his helping hand.

“I think you’ve been hit,” he fires back, pressing his finger into the top of my arm.

I look over, noticing little gashes on my skin. I can’t feel anything though - at least not physically.

“I’m fine,” I growl, grabbing Chuck’s jacket, just so I can be touching him.

Vito pushes past the commotion and flurry of paramedics and injured bikers, lifting me off the ground.

“Come on, Lee. You need to move back,” he says sternly, dragging me towards the door.

I struggle against him, hurt and in disbelief that he’s pulling me away from Chuck.

“V! Let me go!”

“I’m sorry, Lee. You need help and so does Chuck. It’s for the best. I promise it’s going to be okay, but you need to trust me,” he murmurs, pulling me outside the bar into the parking lot.

The parking lot is full of ambulances and paramedics, scattered in the middle of bikes. Police are pulling in too, their sirens blaring as their wheels kick up gravel.

There’s already news reporters on the road side, filming the scene. I notice a few of them look at me, talking amongst themselves. They look like they are about to walk over but Vito drags me to the end of a rig, pushing me towards a lingering paramedic.

“Check her, please,” he says, folding his arms and blocking my pathway back to the bar.

“I’m fine!” I spit out, weakly trying to push away hands as they search me over.

“It looks like you’ve been hit by shrapnel. There’s shards of metal and glass in your wounds,” a female paramedic scolds, forcing me to sit down on a chair at the back of the ambulance.

I pause, looking down. She presses her finger to a wound in my shoulder, and for the first time, pain registers in me. I hiss, jolting away.

“We need to get you to the hospital. I’m going to start an IV. Keep still - this may sting for a moment,” she says, tapping my wrist before sliding a needle through the skin.

“Ow!” I complain.

The door of the bar is wedged open and I look up when I see the paramedics that were working on Chuck fly out. They're pulling a gurney with Chuck on it.

I stand up quickly, my feet wobbling as I try to rush over. The female paramedic lets out a yell of frustration and Vito grabs me, holding me in place.

"Let him go, Lee. They are doing everything they can. He needs to get to the hospital," he says softly.

"I want to go with him," I argue weakly.

Vito sighs. "I know you do, but you can't. He would want you to be safe, Lee. He would want you to be looked after."

My body freezes, tensing up at first, before I just collapse against Vito in a flood of tears. He wraps his arms around me in a hug, hushing me and repeating comforting words in my ear.

Eventually, I let him walk me backwards to the chair again, the paramedic continuing her work before she mutters something to Vito about taking me to the hospital.

I think I hear the words 'sedative' but everything is going too quickly for my mind to register. The sirens, flashing lights and chatter is making me feel like I'm drunk.

I feel something cool enter the IV and I glance down at my hand. Vito kneels in front of me, his hand on my knee.

"It's going to be okay. I'm going to be right behind you, and I'm going to call them. Just take deep breaths."

*Them.*

The thought oddly calms me, even if only a little.

“Okay,” I mutter, surprised to find my voice is a little slurred.

Suddenly, the flood of voices slow down in my head, the flashing lights no longer making my heart rush.

I think it’s okay.

Maybe a little.

I’m not sure...

“The sedative is kicking in,” a voice says around me. “She might pass out briefly. We’re going to transport her now. If she has family, let them know.”

“I’m calling them now,” a deep voice responds. “Look after her, please.”

It’s a little dark, and it takes me longer than it should to realize I’ve closed my eyes at some point. My body sways as I’m moved, positioned on my back on the world’s most uncomfortable bed.

I hear a bang and the noises die down, followed by a rev of an engine. My fingers grip something metal next to me as I feel my surroundings shift.

I might take a nap. I’m feeling a little tired.

And in my head as I start to fall asleep, I can hear my Dad singing lullabies to me, his sweet voice calming me as I start to forget that I’m covered in blood.



# Chapter 2

## Asher

“You’re oddly calm.”

I glance up from my phone at Zayn. We’re sitting downstairs in my mancave, having some brotherly bonding time while Rylee is out with her *friends*.

Friends.

It’s been a difficult concept for me to grasp. It took all of my willpower and control to get over the jealousy I had seeing Rylee with my brothers. But now I’ve had to face the ultimate test. I need to learn to trust Rylee. I mean, I do trust her. I trust her wholly. But I want her with me all the time, so I can protect her.

After the car accident, that instinct was greater than ever. But I can’t smother her. A woman like Rylee needs to be free. She’s not someone who can be owned or controlled. God knows I tried. I admit I’ve been difficult. But it’s only because I love her so much.

I've come to realize that loving someone means letting them be themselves. And Rylee... she's always been a free spirit. Someone who does what she wants, when she wants.

So, when I decided to come up with this idea to arrange for her to see her friends, there was no surprise that Zayn and Blake were on board.

"How else am I supposed to be?" I grumble back at Zayn.

Blake peers up from his book, the three of us sitting almost in a circle on the couches.

"Like a psychotic mouse on acid," Blake mumbles to himself.

Zayn laughs and I resist the urge to throw something at him. I'll always be the temperamental brother to them.

I swallow, giving myself a brief moment before I answer. "Rylee's a grown woman. She can handle herself."

Zayn nods. "So, you're not jealous or freaking out at all?"

I scoff. "Nope."

Lie.

A huge fucking lie.

But I'll never admit to my brothers that they are correct. They can kiss my ass.

"You're full of shit," Blake says, putting his book down in his lap. "But points for trying."

"As if you're not feeling the same," I snap.

Blake shrugs. “You’d be surprised, Ash. I know you don’t understand it, nor do you want to, but clubs are like family. And Rylee has been one of them for ages, whether you like it or not. They protect their own. She’s safe with them.” He pauses, raising an eyebrow. “Or is this about Chuck? You worried he’s going to steal our girl?”

He says it so casually, like the thought doesn’t bother him at all. I bet it does. Blake has always been a protective douche, the one who used to get me out of trouble or step in. He can’t resist being the hero, even if he acts like he has a stick wedged in his asshole most of the time.

I snort. “I’m not worried. Rylee loves me.”

Zayn taps his temple. “And she loves me. And Blake... and Chuck.”

“Shut up!” I snap at him, annoyed that they are ganging up on me.

He laughs. “Don’t stress, Ash. It will be fine. She’ll be back.”

I stand up, making my way over to the mini-fridge in the corner to grab a beer. “I know she will,” I answer softly. “Then, I’m going to drag her to my bed so she remembers exactly who I am.”

“Possessive shit,” Blake murmurs under his breath.

I ignore him, grabbing a beer and walking back over to the couch. I’ve barely sat down when my phone starts ringing next

to me. I glance at the screen, the unsaved number somewhat familiar.

“Are you going to answer that?” Blake asks, annoyed when I don’t reach for it straight away.

Picking up the phone, I hit answer before it can go to voicemail. “Hello?”

Immediately, there’s a lot of background noise. I can’t place anything and at first, there’s no one on the other end. I wait a few more seconds, ready to curse whoever is on the other end but then a deep voice travels down the line.

“Asher, this is Vito.”

I stiffen, pressing the phone closer to my ear. “What’s up?”

I don’t know why, but I’m on edge. Rylee hasn’t been gone long, so I’m concerned at why one of the Rebels would be calling. Blake and Zayn notice the change in my demeanor, pausing what they are doing to watch my cellular interaction.

“You need to get to the hospital. There’s been an incident,” Vito says smoothly. He’s so calm that it terrifies me. Why the fuck would he be so calm after using the word ‘incident’?

“What the fuck do you mean an incident?” I near yell down the phone.

Before he can respond, Blake rips the phone out of my hands.

“Who’s this?” he asks, listening intently. His brow creases and his jaw ticks as Vito fills him in on whatever happened. I

lunge at him to grab the phone back but he dodges out of the way, turning to Zayn. The two of them share a look, Zayn's face dropping as he grabs his car keys from his pocket.

"I'll drive," Zayn says, heading for the stairs.

Blake hangs up the phone, throwing it back to me before taking off after Zayn.

"Blake! What the fuck happened?" I yell, my heavy footsteps making the stairs creak as I charge up them.

"I'll explain in the car," he says, giving me nothing.

I follow them to the Jeep, wasting no time getting in. Zayn revs the engine, peeling out of the driveway.

"What the fuck happened?" I ask again when we are on the main road.

Blake sighs, choosing his words carefully. "We were wrong about the Norsemen. Rylee's fine. But... we were wrong."

"We need to call Bill," Zayn adds as he weaves in and out of traffic.

I fling around the backseat, not at all bothered that my brother is driving like a fucking maniac.

"Rylee's okay?" I ask, my voice stern with a warning for him not to fuck with me right now.

He nods, turning to look back at me. "She's fine, Ash. Don't stress."

How the actual fuck can I not stress about this? No one is telling me shit!

When Zayn pulls into the hospital parking lot, I throw myself out of the Jeep before anyone else can finish unclipping their seatbelts. I charge into the entrance, heading straight for the information desk.

“Rylee Selwood. Where is she?” I snap at the startled nurse.

“I beg your pardon,” she says heatedly. “You don’t speak to me like that.”

I open my mouth to argue but Blake puts a hand on my shoulder, squeezing it.

“Our girlfriend, Rylee Selwood, was just brought in by ambulance,” he says to the nurse calmly. “Where can we find her?”

“Oh, from the shooting?” the nurse answers, typing something on the keyboard.

“The shooting?!” I yell.

Zayn hushes me while people walking by look at me terrified. “Keep your voice down, Ash.”

If looks could kill, my dear brother would have departed us. “Don’t you dare tell me to be calm or quiet right now,” I warn him. “No one is telling me anything.”

The nurse ignores me, standing up to chat to Blake. “If you go through those doors to your left, there’s a nurses’ station half way down. Rylee Selwood is in bed four. They will be able to take you to her and update you.”

I shove past my twin brothers, not waiting for them. I can hear their footsteps behind me as I approach the nurses' station. A male doctor at the station pauses as he watches us approach, his eyebrows shooting up in surprise.

“Can I help you?” he asks, not flinching when I stop mere inches from him.

“Rylee Selwood,” I say through clenched teeth. “Where is she?”

He looks down at the chart in his hand before pointing to the bed behind us. The curtain is pulled shut, so I rip it open, revealing Rylee.

“Asher!” she says, almost cheerfully. The tone throws me off as she gives me a smile.

I look over her as she sits in the bed, her shoulder patched up with gauze and an IV hooked up to her hand. My eyes widen as I spot the blood all over her.

“Rylee,” I breathe out, running to her side. “Are you okay?”

“I'm fine,” she says, waving me off. She spots Zayn and Blake behind me, giving them a wave.

The two of them appear surprised too at her behaviour, until the doctor leans in to whisper in Zayn's ear.

“Ms. Selwood has been sedated. She's a little out of it at the moment.”

Rylee doesn't hear him, her head just moving from side to side as if she's hearing music. Blake moves to the other side of

Rylee's bed, gripping her hand.

“What happened?” he asks, but I can tell his question is directed to the doctor.

The doctor looks at us, surprised. “There was a shooting at a bar just outside town. Your friend here has a few minor injuries from shrapnel but we've just finished cleaning her wounds. She's completely fine, luckily.”

His use of the word ‘luckily’ doesn't sit right, and it's at this moment, I look around the room. All the beds are full with bikers, their wounds being tended to by doctors and nurses. The computer board against the wall is full with names, color coded by triage. A few medical staff are running around urgently, heading through doors that read ‘operating theatres’.

“How bad is it?” I finally ask in a low voice.

“There's mass casualties,” he says. “Apparently your friend here was quite distraught because another friend was injured quite severely.”

Blake clears his throat. “She's our girlfriend. Who was injured?”

“I'm not at liberty to say, unfortunately,” the doctor answers, giving us a sympathetic smile. “Perhaps Ms. Selwood will be able to talk to you about it. If she feels up to it, that is.”

Rylee looks over at the doctor at the sound of her name. “What happened?”

The doctor pats Zayn's back before heading back to the desk, leaving us alone with Rylee.



Blake squeezes her hand. “Who got hurt, babe?”

Rylee thinks for a moment, her face falling as she remembers. “Chuck,” she whispers. “Oh, God. I think he’s dead.”

I now understand why they needed sedatives, her face contorting in pain as she remembers. The drugs seem to keep her somewhat settled – or at least, as settled as she can be.

She pulls on Blake’s hand, leaning over towards him. “You need to find out where Chuck is. Please.”

My heart breaks at the sound of her begging, her voice breaking slightly. Blake nods, brushing her hair away from her forehead before he gently kisses it. “I will,” he promises. “I’ll go find out.”

I watch as Rylee struggles to let go of Blake’s hand, torn at letting him find out the information she badly craves, and at the same time, scared for any of us to leave her. I grab her other hand, rubbing my thumb over her skin.

“We’re right here, Ry. It’s okay.”

She nods, looking a little more relieved when Zayn takes Blake’s spot on her other side. She stares off into space, her chin quivering every so often.

Neither of us say anything, just giving her time to digest the situation.

“There was so much blood,” she whispers. “I don’t understand what happened. Everything was fine one minute,

then the next... the next there were bullets flying into the bar from every direction.”

“What happened then?” Zayn asks.

Rylee looks at him slowly, a single tear slipping down her cheek. “Chuck pushed me out of the way and protected me.”

Zayn glances up and over to me, his eyes hardening. I don’t have to be a mind reader to know what he’s thinking. Chuck saved Rylee... he risked his own life to save our girl. If I didn’t respect him before, I fucking did now.

“I’m sure it will be okay,” Zayn soothes, stroking her cheek.

Rylee shakes her head, a few more tears falling out. “He wasn’t moving, Zayn. He got hit multiple times. His blood was all over the floor. I think... I think he’s...” she trails off, unable to bring herself to finish the sentence.

“Sshh. Don’t think about it,” I say, grabbing her head and pulling it against my stomach. “The doctors here are so good.”

A bed rolls past pushed by nurses and suddenly Rylee sits up straighter.

“Volts!” she yells.

I follow her line of vision, finding a pink-haired guy on the bed.

“Ry,” he croaks back, giving her a thumbs up. “I’m alive.”

The nurses don’t stop moving and he disappears from view, heading towards the operating theatres.

“Please... you need to find out if Butch is okay,” Rylee says to me, pleading.

I nod. “Okay,” I answer. “Anything for you.”

I give Zayn a quick nod, heading off to find the doctor from before who has vanished. I could try to read the patient board, but I have no idea what I’m looking for. Eventually, I just head over to a nurse at the desk. Blake is nowhere to be seen, confusing me.

“I need to check if someone is here,” I say to the nurse, doing my best to describe Butch. I mean, I don’t know his full name but surely there’s not a whole lot of people with his description and first name.

“Are you a relative?” she asks coolly.

I twitch. “He is my girlfriend’s... uncle. She’s over in bed four.”

The nurse glances over at Rylee, who’s chatting to Zayn heatedly – probably panicking or begging for answers. I don’t blame her... the amount of trauma that poor girl has been through is ridiculous.

I’m going to fucking end this. Somehow. Even if it means packing up and moving to damn Rosevale to keep her safe. Hell, I’ll even take her to the Ranch if I have to. I’m sure that will go down well with our parents, but anything is better than the current situation.

“There’s a guy matching that description in the OR at the moment,” she says. “But I can’t give any more information,

I'm sorry."

Fucking confidentiality rules.

"Thanks," I grumble, heading back to Rylee.

She pauses her conversation with Zayn, looking at me with pleading eyes. "Well?"

"Butch is in the OR," I tell her sharply. "I think he's fine."

Relief washes over her face, but it's short lived as Blake appears suddenly, his face tight.

"Rylee," he says slowly. "I found Chuck."

# Chapter 3

## Rylee

I stiffen, coherent thoughts returning to my mind suddenly.

“Where is he? Is he okay?” I ask, trying to get a read on Blake’s face.

Blake walks over to me, gesturing for Zayn to scoot out of the way. Tears well in my eyes as I brace for the news.

“He’s been rushed into surgery but he lost a lot of blood. He’s critical at the moment, but they said there’s a chance he might not make it. I’m so sorry.”

“But he’s alive?” I press urgently. “Right now... at this very second, he’s alive?”

Blake nods sharply. I clench my jaw, shaking my head.

“Chuck is strong. He’s a fighter. He will pull through. He has to pull through. I want to see him,” I exclaim, throwing the blanket off me.

The three of them simultaneously scold me, grabbing the blanket and my legs.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Asher growls. “You need to rest!”

I swat his hand away. “I’m fine, Asher... because of *him*. I won’t forgive myself if something happens to him because of me.”

“Pretty girl,” Zayn murmurs, grabbing my attention. “There’s nothing you can do right now. He’s in surgery, in the hands of the best doctors. I’m sure when he’s out of surgery, we can take you to see him. But for now, there’s nothing any of us can do.”

I fall back against the bed, defeated. Zayn moves the blanket, motioning for me to shuffle closer to Asher. I comply, watching as he climbs onto the bed, pulling me into his arms. I lay my head on his chest, resting my hand on his shoulder. It’s awkward with the IV, but it soothes me.

“The doctor also mentioned you’re free to go in an hour or two. They just want to continue watching you and then they will come and remove your cannula,” Blake adds.

“I don’t want to go anywhere while my friends are in here fighting for their lives,” I whisper softly. “I don’t get to go home and pretend nothing happened. This happened because of me.”

Zayn strokes my back. “This wasn’t you. We’ve told you before, Ry. You cannot be held responsible for the actions of the Norsemen. This war extends well beyond some stupid poker game. They have been planning attacks for a long time. Just none of the other clubs thought they were serious.”

“I know... territory wars,” I answer sadly. “But still... Chuck saved me. Butch and Volts are injured. Lots of their club family are dead.”

“The Norsemen will pay,” Blake warns angrily. “No club will let this slide now. They have officially started a war.”

I feel Asher tense up next to me, so I turn to look at him. His grey eyes are hard, emotions threatening to explode at any given minute. He’s the innocent one in all this. I never thought I’d say it. Asher Taylor has been a pain in the ass – the golden child. I used to think he was the bane of my existence. But in the war of biker clubs, he’s the only one who didn’t ask for this.

I made friends with the Rebels long before I fell in love with Asher. I knew the risk, the danger of being involved. And Blake and Zayn... they have been club members for years. We all willingly involved ourselves.

Except for Asher.

He never once wanted a part of it. And now he’s in the firing line too. He’s always hated clubs, but he somewhat accepted it... for the love of me and his brothers.

“Ash...” I start, reaching for him. “Come here.”

He moves as close to the bed as he can, his knees hitting the mattress. I pull him down, forcing him to lay on my other side.

We must look a sight... the three of us balancing on a tiny hospital bed. I’m fairly certain Asher and Zayn each have a

butt cheek hanging off the bed, but right now, we need each other more than ever.

I tilt my head onto Asher's shoulder, holding his hand.

"I won't lose you," Asher says, whispering into my hair. "I don't care what I have to do to protect you."

"I'm not going anywhere," I comfort him. "You couldn't keep me away, Asher Taylor."

He gives me a small smile, but it doesn't reach his eyes.

Blake stands to the side, watching the three of us. I feel like he's missing out, and it must read on my face because he shakes his head.

"I'll get my turn later," he says, offering me a soft smile.

"You bet your ass, you will," I confirm, giving the other two a little squeeze.



"Put some pressure on your hand for a few minutes," the nurse instructs after removing my cannula.

I hold down the cotton ball on the hole until she puts a white circular Band-Aid on it. I press down again, shifting so my legs hang off the side of the bed.

I've been given the clearance to leave, but like I told the guys earlier, I won't leave the hospital until I see Chuck.



Blake has been a wonderful connection, going back and forth for updates for me. Finally, what seemed like hours later, he was out of surgery and I was given the okay to go see him in the recovery ward.

“Do you need a wheelchair?” Asher asks, fretting over me as I stand.

“Of course not. I’m perfectly fine,” I scold.

He huffs at me in reply but links his arm through mine for support.

I make sure I’ve grabbed everything before I follow Blake down the corridor, past the information desk to another corridor that leads down to recovery. I assume the theatres are in the middle of the area I was in and the recovery section. I brace myself for a potential argument, but when the nurse at the recovery station desk spots Blake, she smiles and points him to the back corner.

Asher grumbles when I pick up speed, near dragging his sorry ass behind me as I make a beeline for the bed.

The door is closed and I push it open, my heart beating irregularly when I spot Chuck in the bed.

He’s hooked up to machines, a breathing tube down his throat. Bags of clear fluid and blood hang on either side of him, and I can’t help but notice how helpless and pale he looks.

“Oh, Chuck,” I mumble, my voice breaking as I slowly approach the bed.

He's unconscious, the only sounds being the heart monitor next to him, beating in time to his rhythm. I sit down in the chair next to the bed, reaching for his hand.

"I hope you can hear me," I say to him, squeezing his hand. "I'm right here. You have to pull through. I need you, Chuck."

Part of me prays that he will respond or open his eyes, but nothing happens. I can sense the three guys lingering behind me near the door, keeping a close eye on me but giving me space.

"Lee."

I turn around to look at the door, spotting Vito standing in the doorway. The guys move out of the way so he can step inside.

"V, how's Butch?" I ask.

Vito walks over to me, putting his hands on my shoulders. "He's doing fine. He's awake and talking, more annoyed about being stuck in bed. But they have him on some good painkillers."

"And Volts?"

"You couldn't keep that kid down long with all his energy," Vito laughs. "He's nearby, listening to music and playing Wordle on his phone. He's also on good drugs."

I laugh, a moment of relief flooding through me. It's short-lived though when I turn my attention back to Chuck.

"Do we know how many died?" I ask, dreading the answer.

Vito sighs sadly. “They aren’t sure at this stage. From what I’ve been told, there’s about a dozen.”

“Your friends?”

He nods once, looking at Chuck. “Those cunts are going to pay.”

I can’t help the fresh wave of tears, and I do my best to hide them, but a sniffle breaks loose. He squeezes my shoulders.

“Chuck’s a strong guy, Lee. If anyone can pull through, it’s him.”

“We need to call his brother,” I say. “His family should know.”

Vito lets go of my shoulders and goes round to the other side of the bed. “I’ll see what I can do. But Lee, you should go home and get some rest soon.”

“I don’t want to leave him.”

Zayn heads over, crouching down next to me. “We can always come back tomorrow, babe.”

I go to argue but Blake interjects.

“We’ll stay with you here. One of us can go back to the house and grab you some new clothes. And we can get food.”

My heart swells at Blake’s suggestion. “You’d do that for me?”

He nods. “Of course we would. If that’s what you want, then we will all do that.”

I don't know why, but my gaze automatically drifts to Asher, waiting for his input. I expect him to argue but he just nods as well.

“I'll go get you some fresh clothes from home. Do you want anything to eat as well?”

“No,” I reply softly. “I'm not hungry.”

Asher grabs the keys from Zayn. “I'm getting food anyway. You need to eat.”

There's the stubborn Asher I was waiting for.

I just nod, too tired to argue. Mainly it's because I know he's right. But I'll never admit it.



Asher returns about an hour later with a backpack that looks ready to explode, hanging from his shoulders, and three boxes of pizza in his hands.

I have to admit, despite not feeling hungry, the smell of the pizza makes my stomach clench and rumble.

Asher sets the bag down on a spare chair. While he was gone, the twins went and borrowed chairs from other rooms so we could all sit.

“I grabbed clothes for all of us,” Asher says, digging around to pull out a pair of shorts and a shirt for me. “I wasn't sure if

you wanted lingerie but I picked some lacy purple ones or a thong.”

He holds both up and I charge over, snatching them.

“Ash! Don’t flash my underwear in the hospital,” I scold, shoving the lacy briefs back into the bag.

He rolls his eyes. “They see genitals every day. Your clean underwear isn’t going to shock anyone.”

“Still,” I mumble. “It’s private.”

Blake stands from his chair and heads over to the bag, grabbing some clothes too.

“I’ll come with you to the shower,” he offers.

“Thanks,” I answer, shoving the thong inside the shorts. “I don’t know where they are.”

Blake leads us out of the room, and I glance at Chuck once more to check if he’s awake. He’s still out cold, making my heart drop. But at the moment, as long as his heart is still beating, there’s hope.

We head to the back of the recovery ward and I’m surprised to find there’s a shower in one of the restrooms. It seems to be the only one, so we both head into the room, locking the door behind us.

I place my clothes on the metal tray attached to the wall, slowly pulling off my shirt and pants which are covered in dried blood.

Blake reaches over, turning the faucet on for me, before moving away from the stream to get undressed.

“I’ve always hated hospital showers,” I admit. “I feel like the ground is dirty, and the shower pressure is always terrible.”

He lets out a small laugh. “I’m sure it’s clean. I can’t help the shower pressure though.”

I check the temperature before stepping under the stream of hot water, letting it run down my head. The water at my feet turns a transparent red, which I do my best to ignore. Blake steps into the stream next to me, reaching for some soap that’s in a dispenser attached to the wall.

“Turn around,” he says.

I face my back towards him, letting my eyes close when he starts washing my back with his hand. He takes his time, washing my body, then my hair before reaching for the soap to do himself.

“I want to do it,” I offer, pumping some soap into my hand.

Blake doesn’t argue. He watches me closely as I step in, rubbing my hands together to lather up the soap. I start at his shoulders, working my way down his chest, then run my hands over his stomach and down his legs, enjoying the feeling of being helpful.

There’s not much I can do to help Chuck, but at least I can help the guys and vice versa.

“Turn around,” I direct, doing his back. His muscles twitch under my fingertips as I massage his back. When I’m finished,

I press myself against him, hugging him from behind.

He leans back into me, placing his hands over mine on his stomach.

“We should put some music on,” he says. “When we go back to the room.”

I nod, leaning my forehead against his back. “I’d like that.”

We stay in the shower for a few more minutes, letting the water clean us of the soap before Blake turns the shower off.

There’s some clean, neatly stacked towels on a rack up high, and we dry ourselves off before slipping into the fresh clothes.

“Why did you shower?” I ask as we leave the restroom. “You probably didn’t need one.”

“Because I knew you needed someone with you right now. And that’s what you do for the person you love. Now, come eat and sit with Chuck. That’s also what you do for someone you love.”

# Chapter 4

## Rylee

The four of us stay in Chuck's room overnight, questioning every doctor and nurse that comes in to check on him. Everything is stable, but still the same. I refuse to give up hope though. Our story is just at the beginning, I'm not ready to let it be the end.

I feel utterly exhausted when the sun breaks because hospitals are not designed for sleeping. The beds and chairs are uncomfortable, machines make noise all night, but for me, I was terrified to drift off. I couldn't handle any nightmares or miss watching Chuck. I needed to make sure I didn't miss anything at all.

My eyes are practically hanging out of their sockets when the doctor makes rounds around 7am. He checks Chuck's observations and notes, pausing briefly to chat to me. I'm told that since he made it through the night, that's a good sign and to remain optimistic.



Asher is still passed out in his chair, head tilted back, lightly snoring. Zayn has gone to fetch coffee while Blake is next to me, holding my hand and letting me rest my tired head on his arm.

“You should go back to sleep,” he murmurs quietly.

“I’m fine.”

He doesn’t argue, which I’m thankful for. It’s too early for that.

I hear footsteps approaching but I don’t glance over, assuming it’s Zayn back with coffee.

“Oh my gosh.”

The unfamiliar voice startles me. My head whips towards the door and for a second, I try to figure out where I know the man from until it dawns on me.

“Tyson,” I breathe out, standing up.

Chuck’s brother steps into the room, a horrified look on his face as he stares at his brother.

His blue eyes shift to me reluctantly. “Rylee, right?” he asks quietly.

I nod, stepping over to him. It’s been a hot minute since we met at the college bar, and even though I told Vito we need to tell Chuck’s family what had happened, I never expected his brother to show up so quickly.

“What the heck happened?”

I think back to the conversation I had with Chuck the night I met his brother. None of his family knew about his involvement in the club, information I assume is still accurate.

“We were at a bar when some bikers fired shots into it,” I say carefully. Tyson tenses up, looking at me wildly.

“Bikers?”

I sigh. “It’s not my place to talk about any of Chuck’s business, but he covered me to protect me from the bullets.”

Tyson goes quiet for a moment. He’s a smart man from what Chuck has told me, so it’s no surprise that he goes from A to B in record time.

“Charles is involved with the bikers, isn’t he? I should have known. He was always such a rebellious little shit against Mom.”

It never even occurred to me that Chuck had a proper first name, the use of it slapping me in the face like a wet salmon.

“They are good people, Ty. They are like a second family for Chuck. And me too. He’s still your brother.”

Tyson glances at me with a blank face. “Rylee, I appreciate you looking out for my brother and trying to defuse the situation. But I’m not mad. In fact, I’m not even surprised, really. I’m not sure if he’s filled you in on our upbringing, but let’s just say it was less than desirable. He’s still my brother, and I love him no matter what choices he makes.”

Asher shifts in his chair and I look over, realizing he’s been awake and listening. I turn my attention back to Tyson.

“I’m glad to hear you say that. Because at the end of the day, family is everything, isn’t it? That’s what Chuck is to me. I’m really happy you’re here. He’d love that.”

Tyson nods, moving to stand next to Chuck. “You better wake up shithead. I didn’t fly 500 miles just to watch you sleep.”

I walk over to Asher, sitting down on his knee. I feel like I’m invading a personal moment being in the room now.

“What time is it?” Ash asks, wrapping his arms around my waist.

“Around half past seven,” I answer, locking eyes with Blake.

More footsteps approach, and this time, it is Zayn, a tray of coffees in his hands.

“Hi there,” he greets Tyson.

Tyson nods in acknowledgement. “Hey. I’m Tyson, Chuck’s brother.”

“Oh, bet. I didn’t realize he had a brother,” Zayn replies lightly.

Tyson pauses for a moment, looking at Zayn, then Blake. “Jesus, that’s trippy.”

I laugh, welcoming the change in atmosphere. “You get used to it.”

Zayn hands me one of the coffees from the tray which I gaze at appreciatively. Asher grabs one as well while Blake declines.

“I don’t understand how you don’t like coffee,” Zayn grimaces. “Weirdo. Would you like it?” he offers Tyson.

Tyson smiles. “That’s really kind, man. Thanks,” he says, taking the last coffee.

We all sit in silence for a few minutes watching Chuck, until I lean back to whisper in Asher’s ear.

“I feel like Ty should have some alone time with Chuck.”

Asher nods in understanding. “Why don’t we go home for a bit and rest? Did you manage to sleep at all?”

“No,” I admit. “It’s okay though.”

The twins pick up on our conversation, gathering our stuff together.

“We’ll leave you in peace for a bit,” Blake says to Tyson. “The nurses have my number, so they can call if need be. Otherwise, let us know if you need anything.”

Tyson nods. “I appreciate that. And Rylee?”

I pause. “Yeah?”

“Charles is lucky to have you.”



“You always take your bed for granted until you have to sleep somewhere else,” I moan, falling onto the mattress.

“Technically, it’s my bed,” Asher says, kicking off his shoes and dumping his shirt on the ground. “But I’m happy to share any time.”

“I bet you are,” I say into the blanket, muffling my voice.

Zayn and Blake have gone to their bedrooms too for a rest. I don’t know why I headed straight for Asher’s room. It always seems to be my go to place.

“Maybe I should push my bed into here and create one large bed for all of us.”

Asher looks at me, nose wrinkling up. “You want me to share a bed with my brothers.”

“I’d be in the piggy in the middle. It’s just a nice thought. Plus... room for activities,” I laugh, quoting *Stepbrothers*.

Oh, the irony.

He taps the pillow next to him with his hand, signalling me to lay down. I pull off my shirt and shorts, and crawl under the blankets, positioning myself against him so I’m on my side, curved around his body. He wraps his arm around me, holding me close.

“Do you reckon there’s any more hidden cameras in here?” I snort, my filter long gone as I start to fight sleep.

“There better fucking not be. It doesn’t matter anyway,” Asher responds.

He’s right... the situation with Jenny is done and we’ve all moved on. God, it seems like so long ago that all that

happened. Time feels like it's flying by, but at the same time... it's paralyzed.

I don't have the energy to muster up a reply. All I can do is just lay there, curled up in Asher's arms and drift off to sleep, hoping that when I wake up, Chuck will be back with us.



“Oh, my God!”

The voice cuts through my sleep like a knife. I bolt up in the bed, still half asleep, wondering if I'm having some vivid nightmare or lucid dream.

In fact, judging by my mother's horrified face at the foot of the bed, I pray to fucking God it's a nightmare.

“Mom?!” I yelp, accidentally kicking Asher in the calf as I scramble up. I grab the sheet, ripping it up to cover my half naked body.

Charlotte Taylor rarely doesn't look composed. Sure, she gets frustrated a lot at me... but she looks utterly mortified right now. Behind her, Gareth watches us, an angry look on his face. I can just imagine what it must look like, the two of us curled up together in bed, barely dressed.

Asher sits up, rubbing his calf. “You're back,” he says dryly.

“Yes,” Gareth answers slowly. “We travelled through the night after receiving a very distressing call yesterday.”

I freeze, as does Asher.

“What call?” I ask, already knowing the answer.

Mom huffs, eyeing off my bandaged wounds. “The hospital called us and said you had been in an accident. But apparently, you were discharged before we could arrive.”

“Why did the hospital call you?” I splutter out.

Her perfect eyebrows raise. “Because you’re my daughter, Rylee. Why wouldn’t they contact me?”

I glance over at Asher, the two of us sharing the same thought. The hospital didn’t contact anyone when I was in the car accident. Maybe that’s because the guys travelled with me to the hospital. My best guess is some nurse took it upon herself to contact my emergency contact when I arrived solo in the ambulance yesterday. I think I need to update my emergency contact details.

“I’m fine,” I say weakly. “You didn’t need to come home.”

“Fine? You’re fine?” she repeats. “There’s news reports all over Facebook that that bar you go to was shot up! Is that why you are injured?”

I groan, covering my face. “Please stop yelling. My head hurts.”

“Do not tell me what to do Rylee Selwood. I am your Mother.”

“Well, you’re not a very good one!” I snap back, instantly regretting the words leaving my mouth. I’m tired, stressed, and

not in the mood for any of this.

Mom steps back into Gareth, shock on her face. “I’m so disappointed in you, Rylee. I don’t know what’s worse – that you are out with the bikers again, or that I find you in bed with your stepbrother.”

I fling back the blankets, grabbing my clothes from the ground. I quickly pull them on with my back turned to our parents, ignoring them.

“Asher, get dressed as well. We are going to be having a discussion about this,” I hear Gareth say.

Asher sighs in frustration and I hear him move behind me, probably getting dressed too.

I go to walk past Mom but she steps in front of me.

“Oh, no. You’re not just walking away right now. You head straight to your room.”

“I’m not a child,” I say through clenched teeth.

Mom scoffs. “Then stop acting like one!”

I barge past her, kicking open my bedroom door with force as I walk in. She’s hot on my trail a few seconds later, closing the door behind her.

“I have absolutely no idea what has gotten into you these days. I raised you better than that,” she starts.

I whip around, staring at her incredulously. “You haven’t raised me for a long time. That’s the God honest truth, Mom. And Asher and I weren’t doing anything! We were just taking



a nap. In case you haven't noticed, I'm a bit beat up and sore right now. I just wanted a little rest."

She raises an eyebrow at my words. In the hallway, I can hear Asher and Gareth walk past, heated words flowing between them as well.

"You nap in your own bed, Rylee. Not in your brother's bed, in your underwear!"

She says the last part with such disgust that it makes my eyes tear up.

"He's not my brother," I argue. "We're not blood related."

We go into a stare-off, our identical colored eyes glaring at the other.

"Are you having sex with him?" she asks finally, her voice hostile and crisp.

I shrug, looking away. "So what if I am? You can't help who you fall in love with."

# Chapter 5

## Rylee

I hold my breath as I wait for her reply, hoping that maybe she'll see reason. If she knows it's not just some reckless fling, maybe it will make it easier for her.

"You can pack your stuff and get out," she whispers, turning around to head towards the door.

"What?!" I yell. "You're kicking me out? Your own daughter, who has just been through Hell?"

Mom pauses without looking back at me.

"You're not my daughter anymore, Rylee. I don't know who you are these days. But until you grow up, I'm not going to have you destroy this family with your impulsive behavior."

She swings open the door, storming out before I can respond.

I'm not going down without a fight though. I'm not going to be made to be the bad person right now, when she can't even be bothered to discuss it civilly.

As I step into the hallway, I collide with a body, Zayn motioning for me to stop and stay quiet. I look down the hallway and find it empty, other than Blake standing in his doorway, arms folded, listening.

Downstairs, voices are travelling up the stairs as Gareth and Asher argue loudly in the living room.

I side-step Zayn, powering down the stairs before he can stop me. I hear him groan, following me as I torpedo my way into the living room.

Asher and Gareth are facing off at either end, the two of them looking incredibly angry. Mom's lingering in the corner with her arms folded as well, shooting me an angry look when I come into view.

Both men look at me at the same time, Asher's expression softening slightly. Gareth is the first to speak though, his tone short.

"Rylee, this doesn't concern you."

"The fuck it doesn't," I snap.

Mom steps towards me. "Rylee!"

I hear footsteps behind me and glance over my shoulder as Zayn and Blake stand in the doorway, watching the exchange.

"Did you pair know about this?" Gareth shoots at them.

My stomach clenches. This is either going to go bad or down right fucking disastrous.

"Yes," Blake answers casually.

You could hear a pin drop in the room, everyone falling into tense silence. Gareth recovers quickly.

“And you didn’t think to stop it? You two are the older ones. You are meant to be responsible.”

Zayn bursts out laughing, making me twitch. Trust him to be the one to find this hilarious.

“Us responsible? We’re literally the two who took off to join a motorcycle club? But I digress... the point is we didn’t feel the need to put a stop to it because we’re also dating Rylee.”

Okay, I was wrong. If I thought it was quiet and awkward before, it’s worse now.

Mom looks at me, her mouth open with shock. Her eyes are glaring at me accusingly, daring me to deny it. I look away, glancing at Asher quickly, who also looks on edge.

“What?” Gareth breathes out.

“Aw, Dad. It’s not that complicated, I promise,” Zayn says, sitting on the arm of the chair closest to him. “The three of us all love Rylee. So, we’re all dating her.”

Mom puts her head into her hands, pacing slightly. “I can’t believe this. We should have never gone to the Ranch.”

For once, Gareth appears stunned and speechless. He looks at his three sons, shaking his head.

Blake sighs, finally entering the conversation. “So, if you’re going to kick Rylee out, then you need to kick us all out. Because if she goes, we go.”

Mom slaps her hands down dramatically, looking at Gareth in bewilderment.

“I love that the take away from all this is I’m a whore... not that I was in the hospital,” I grumble.

Gareth looks at me, his eyebrows furrowing. “We came home because we were worried about that. That’s not the issue right now.”

“It never is, is it?” I sigh. “The issue is I don’t fit into some convoluted little box. Is it so hard to just love me for me?” I direct to Mom. “Dad loved that I was different, even though I acted exactly how you wanted me to before he died. I was the perfect little cheerleader. But I grew out of that. I stopped living *your* dream.”

Mom recoils. “You loved cheerleading.”

“I did, for a while,” I admit. “But I got sick of the pressure and trying to be someone I wasn’t. Then when Dad died, I had to figure out how to survive. I’m not meant to be normal. I’m just meant to be... Rylee.”

Zayn gives me a smile, his eyes watching me carefully. It’s the reassurance I need right now, the strength to hold on and not break down at this clusterfuck of a situation.

“You’re allowed to be yourself, Rylee. But these are your stepbrothers,” Gareth argues.

“Hold up,” Asher interjects. “You’re not pinning this all on Rylee. We’re all equally guilty here, but she’s the only one copping shit for it.”

Gareth shoots a look at Asher. “You’re in trouble too, Asher. Don’t think you aren’t.”

Asher rolls his eyes. “Right. Because I haven’t always gotten special treatment, while Rylee got made out to be some stranger in our house. We’re not doing anything wrong. Just because it doesn’t fit your ideologies, doesn’t mean it’s wrong. It’s not incest or anything.”

“What will people say though?” Mom says weakly.

“Who gives a fuck?” Both Asher and I answer at the same time.

Blake holds his hand up. “Look, at the end of the day, these are our circumstances. You don’t have to agree, but you don’t get a say in it. Like I said, if you want us out, we’re all going. Otherwise, you’re just going to have to get over it. We have other pressing matters to deal with.”

Mom’s eyes light up, suddenly remembering my injuries again. “Yes, Rylee... care to explain why you ended up in the hospital?”

“Yeah, I was at the bar,” I snipe. “I was with my other boyfriend and my friends. And right now, he’s lying unconscious somewhere while my friends are hurt.”

The thought of Chuck hits me hard, the emotions of the whole conversation suddenly weighing down on me like a ton of bricks. I don’t even have time to process it or stop it, before a sob rips from my throat and I start crying loudly.

The tension in the room shifts almost instantly. Mom and Gareth watch in shock at my unusual meltdown, while Asher, Zayn and Blake rush over to me.

“It’s okay,” Zayn murmurs quietly. “It’s all okay.”

“Look what you did!” Asher snaps towards our parents.

It’s so ridiculous that I let out a random laugh before returning back to crying. I think I’ve officially lost my mind.

Blake walks over to his Dad, muttering something to him. I don’t catch what he says, but Gareth hesitates for a moment before motioning to Mom to follow him and the two of them leave the room. When they have disappeared fully, Blake walks over, kneeling down in front of me.

“Hey... are you okay?” he asks.

I suck in a shaky breath, wiping my eyes. “I think so...”

Asher is squeezing my hand on one side, while Zayn sits on the other, his hand perched on my leg. I can feel Asher almost trembling and I look over to check on him.

His face is so tense, his jawline hardened as he stares forward.

“Asher?”

He relaxes, looking at me. “I’m just really mad. I’m fine.”

I nod. “Okay.”

Zayn leans back, his fingers tightening around my leg. “Well, this was not on my bingo card today. At least it’s all out in the open now.”

“That’s not a good thing,” I mumble.

He gives me the side-eye, grinning. “Of course it is. One less problem to solve down the track. We’re just going through them, one by one.”

“Stop being so optimistic. It’s giving me a headache,” I taunt.

He leans over, kissing my cheek. “Chill, pretty girl,” he says playfully.

Blake glares at him casually. “He’s right. We need to focus on other things at the moment, and at least we don’t have to worry about hiding anything. It was bound to come out sooner or later.”

“Later would have been better,” Asher groans. “They have the worst timing.”

“I’m so tired,” I complain, my body slumping.

Blake nods. “Why don’t you go back to bed then? Take a little nap.”

I shake my head. “I wouldn’t be able to fall asleep now. I’m too worked up.”

Zayn lets go of my leg, standing up. “I’ll go make us some food. Comfort food makes everything better.”

He disappears out of the room and Blake takes his spot, wrapping his arm around my shoulders and pulling me against him. “Don’t stress, they will get over it. If Dad can forgive us



for what we did, and put up with Asher who is a shithead, this will blow over too.”

Asher swings his head towards Blake, glaring. “Fuck you.”

“I’d rather fuck Rylee,” he says, tilting my chin up to face him and planting a gentle kiss against my lips. “But not today. You need to rest. I think I have some melatonin in my room. Why don’t you eat then take one? It’s no good staying awake like this.”

“Okay,” I mutter in defeat.

Zayn cooks us some cheese and bacon loaded fries which the four of us demolish quickly. The food, along with the melatonin, make me sleepy and I curl up in my bed alone afterwards. I sleep better with one of them with me, but I’m not ready to rock the boat yet. Mom and Gareth are still floating around the house somewhere, hiding. They are probably avoiding us as they try to process things or work out how to get me out of the house.

Surprisingly, I fall asleep quite easily, my mind equally as exhausted as my body. I must sleep for a few hours because when I wake, it’s late afternoon and my phone is ringing next to me.

I glance at the unknown number, hesitant to answer. I hit the answer button, waiting a few seconds before I say anything to try to listen for any suspicious background noises.

“Hello?”

“Rylee, it’s Tyson.”

I sit up in my bed, suddenly wide awake. “Hey... how are you? How’s Chuck?” I ask quickly. I’m already in a mild state of panic, clinging to a possible update of Chuck.

“I got your number from Connor, I hope you don’t mind,” he says quietly. “I just wanted to give you a call to let you know Charles is awake. He’s asking for you.”

# Chapter 6

## Chuck

Everything is on fire.

I can't even explain it. It's like someone has doused my body in gasoline and set me alight.

It's all dark, but slowly, the pain brings me further and further into awareness. I try to push through the pain, trying to remember what happened last.

The first thing that pops into my mind is Rylee, her blue eyes wavering as she stares at me at Wheels.

I'm finally about to tell her how I feel. I should have done this ages ago, made more of an effort. I wasn't ready to hurt her again, the fear of being sent away still fresh. Now that I was back, I planned to stay back. So, against my better judgement, I decided to do what I wanted for once.

My memories are tainted as loud banging sounds play through my mind. Suddenly, I remember...

I remember the sound of gunshots cutting off my speech. All I could think about was protecting her, when suddenly it was all black after that.

*Rylee...*

Fuck, where is she? Is she hurt?

The pain blinds me but I fight it, forcing my body to move as I try to get a grip.

“Whoa, easy there,” comes a familiar voice.

Light stuns me, blurriness making everything appear out of focus as I blink rapidly. Slowly, things come into view properly.

“Ty?” I groan, staring at my brother.

Relief washes over his face, his frown lines loosening.

“Fuck, brother... I thought you had gone to the big man in the sky. Mom would have been jealous.”

I laugh, trying to sit up. Tyson helps me, propping a pillow behind my back.

Looking around, I find myself in a hospital room, machines hooked up to my body.

“Fuck, it hurts,” I complain, resting my head against the pillow.

“I’m not surprised. You were shot. Luckily a hot nurse removed the tube from your throat about an hour ago when they noticed your vitals increasing. Do you want some water?”

I nod, watching as he quickly pops his head out the door, motioning to someone before grabbing a cup and filling it from a jug on the hospital table.

“Rylee... where is she?” I ask, my heart dropping at her absence.

Oh fuck... what if she’s hurt?

“She left a few hours ago to rest. Poor girl was a mess, but she’s fine,” Tyson answers, holding the cup under my chin and lining the straw up to my mouth.

I take a sip, feeling relief as my parched throat is soothed by the liquid. The door opens and I swing my head in hope, disappointed to find it’s a nurse.

“How’s your pain, Charles?” she asks, checking the screen of the machine to my right.

“Fucking hurts a lot,” I grumble.

The nurse nods, her black hair bouncing. “I’ll get you some pain medication. You gave us quite a scare.”

I’m thankful for the concern, but right now, all I can think about is Rylee. I need to see her.

“Ty, I want Rylee. Can you call her? Is my cell here somewhere?”

Tyson looks over at the nurse, who’s pushing something through my IV drip – hopefully some strong ass drugs.

“I don’t recall a phone coming in,” she says, giving me a sympathetic smile.

I think back, sighing at remembering I left it on the poker table before I headed to the bar at Wheels. Tyson senses my frustration, pulling out his own cell.

“I’ll contact Connor. He’s friends with her, right?”

I nod, my lips twitching into a smile as I remember the night we all met up at the college bar. He taps away at his cell and I relax into the bed, the pain starting to dull.

I’m relieved to know she’s okay. It means all this pain is worth it.

Tyson stands up, heading outside the room as he holds the cell to his ear. I turn my attention to the nurse, watching as she checks a few more things on the machines.

“Would you like an update?” she asks.

“Sure,” I answer, unfazed. I suppose they want to make sure people aren’t too fucked up before they lay the bad news on them.

The nurse nods, grabbing my chart from the end of the bed. “You suffered gunshot wounds to your chest, abdomen and thigh. Thankfully, it missed your vital organs and bones. The doctors removed the bullets and were able to repair the damaged tissue, however you did suffer a significant amount of blood loss. You had a few blood transfusions and your iron and red blood cells are still quite low, but that’s expected. All in all, you were very lucky to have survived.”

“You can’t keep me down,” I joke, groaning as I move my right leg.

The nurse pulls back the blanket, looking at the gauze. “Your dressings look good. I’ll change them later so we can check on the wound to make sure there’s no signs of infection. I would recommend not moving too much in the meantime.”

“I had planned to go running, but I’ll take your advice.”

She gives me a playful scolding look, pulling the blanket back over my leg. “Let me know if the pain is still bad.”

Tyson comes back into the room as the nurse exits, cell in his hand. “I spoke to Rylee. She’s on her way.”

“Good,” I mutter, allowing myself to fully relax for a moment. I’ll see my girl soon and that’s all I needed.



A crash and bang jolts me awake.

I hadn’t realized I had fallen back asleep. I only closed my eyes for a second to relax. I’m annoyed at myself because I’ve clearly done enough sleeping since the shooting.

I also should have realized that Rylee would make a grand entrance. That girl never does anything quietly.

Through the glass door, I spot blonde hair stumbling as she apologizes to a nurse before barging through the door.

“Chuck!” Rylee says loudly, her eyes wide as she takes a moment to look me over. I can see the relief in her eyes.

“What on Earth did you do?” I ask, watching her three stepbrothers outside the glass lean down to help a nurse.

She looks back, a sheepish, guilty grin on her face. “I accidentally knocked over a tray. My turning radius isn’t great at the moment.”

I shake my head, laughing silently. Rylee moves to my side, nearly barrelling poor Tyson out of the way to get to me.

“I’m fine,” I reassure her, laughing again when she frowns at me.

“Don’t play games with me right now,” she murmurs, clutching my hand. “I was worried sick.”

Tyson snorts, covering his mouth to muffle it as he moves out of the way. He gives a nod to Asher, Blake and Zayn as they finally come through the door.

I’m not surprised to see them here – I knew they would be close behind her. But I *am* surprised to find they also look relieved to see me awake.

“You brought your posse with you, babe,” I tease, giving a warm nod to them.

Rylee blinks and I can tell her eyes are a little watery, but she’s fighting back whatever emotion she’s feeling right now.

I’m relieved to find she’s in one piece. Well, almost...

I reach out, touching her shoulder where a piece of gauze sits. “Did you get hurt?” I ask sadly.



She shakes her head. “Not badly. Just a few shrapnel cuts and grazes.”

“Good,” I mutter. “I did my job then.”

I feel some tension from the guys behind her, my eyes automatically shifting to them as my body goes on alert. But it’s short lived when I find no one is glaring at me. If anything, the worst of it is Asher. He looks worse for wear, his face tight as he fights off obvious exhaustion.

“I told you I’d protect her,” I direct to him.

Rylee looks at me before glancing back at Asher. He nods briskly in response.

“I know,” he answers in a short tone. Surprisingly, there’s no resentment or hostility. He does genuinely seem okay with me. I was expecting a lecture or outburst from him about me putting Rylee in danger, but it doesn’t come.

Huh. Maybe he’s growing up after all. It was his idea for Rylee to go out. I think about that for a moment, realizing I haven’t read his reaction properly at all. I’m so used to angry, hostile Asher that I didn’t notice the actual expression in his eyes.

*Guilt.*

Does he feel guilty about Rylee going to the bar? Or me getting hurt protecting her?

I don’t bring it up right now, it’s not the time. Reunions should be happy, and right now, I have exactly what I need right with me, holding my hand.

“So, lay it on me,” I say, changing the subject. “How bad is it?”

Rylee’s face contorts for a brief second before she realizes what I’m asking.

“Butch, Vito and Volts are okay,” she answers softly. “There’s quite a few that didn’t make it though. I’m not sure who right now.”

I nod, swallowing. In a perfect world, she would smile and say everyone was okay and those assholes had piss poor aim. But we don’t live in one.

Some of my club brothers are dead – a reality of the situation. I guess I knew this deep down, coming into this life. You know the risk, but you never think it will actually happen. Especially since things have been mostly quiet and civil since I joined.

I take a moment to think of my fallen brothers, even though I don’t know who we’ve lost yet. The sadness is immediately overtaken by anger, my blood starting to burn as I silently plot the Norsemen’s demise. I’m sure I’m not the only one – no doubt the higher ups are out for blood. And judging by the expressions of Rylee’s Taylor-clan, they are also ready to go on the kill.

I’m sure there will be a meeting soon to discuss what happened and our plan of attack. We were fully prepared to go to war before... I have no doubts that everyone still feels the same. Especially now...

We will just have to bury our brothers first.

I shake my head, clearing my thoughts. If I linger on it for too long, I'll probably break down. I'm not too much of a man to admit it.

Giving Rylee another smile, I pull her towards me, wrapping my arm around her back.

"I'm so glad you're okay," I mutter to her.

She relaxes against me. "I'm so happy you're alive. I thought you weren't. It scared the hell out of me," she murmurs sadly.

"I'm not going anywhere," I reassure her.

Tyson walks over to the other side of the bed, touching my forearm. "I'm going to get going, brother. I'm staying in a motel nearby for a few days so I'll be back tomorrow. Don't worry... I'm not going to let Mom in on this. She'll go nuts."

I nod. "Best to keep it between us."

He looks over at Rylee, giving her a warm smile. I don't see her reaction but Tyson nods in approval, giving me a last pat goodbye before slipping out the door.

"So, what's next?" Rylee asks, pulling back slightly to look at me.

I reach up, stroking her cheek. "We find out when I can get the hell out of here. Then, it's time to show those fuckers that no one does revenge like the Rebels."

# Chapter 7

## Rylee

Since witnessing with my own eyes that Chuck is alive and... semi-well, I finally manage to feel a little more relaxed.

When I crawl into bed later that night, I fall asleep easily. Though, I'm itching to get back to him as soon as I can.

I tried to argue about sleeping at the hospital, but all four of them shot that idea down. Even the nurse scolded me saying both Chuck and I needed some rest, and I could come back tomorrow.

I'm not sure why, but when I fall asleep, I start having the most delicious dream. I'm not sure what it's about, other than it feels really... *pleasurable?*

I start tossing and turning, desperate to find some friction and mad that I insisted I sleep alone again. Mom and Gareth have been avoiding us still, and frankly, it's for the best. I can't look them in the eyes right now. I need to stay focused and take it one day at a time.

I need to stay relaxed and...

*Holy fuck... I think I'm coming.*

My eyes shoot open as my back arches off the bed, my body trembling as pleasure grips it, making my toes curl.

What the fuck?

Suddenly, the blanket starts moving and I gasp, throwing it back to find Zayn grinning up at me from between my legs.

“Damn, you sound so good when you come. Even when you’re asleep.”

“Zayn!”

He laughs, crawling up the bed, licking his lips. Or rather, cleaning them.

“Hmm,” he hums, leaning over my body to kiss me. I taste myself on him, kissing him back quickly before swatting at his chest.

“Did you really sneak in here and go down on me while I was asleep?” I ask, shocked.

Zayn grins, laying on his side, facing me. “Maybe.”

I look over at the door, relieved to find it closed. “What if you’d been caught? I can’t deal with that shit right now.”

“I’m just good at being sneaky,” he muses. “The only thing I forgot to take into account is how loud *you* are.”

My cheeks flush. “I was *asleep*.”

“And I was hungry. So, sue me.”

Shaking my head, I turn around so my back faces him. He takes the hint, wiggling closer to spoon me.

“I know you hate sleeping alone,” he whispers into my ear. “And I didn’t want you to.”

I smile at him softly. “I do hate it,” I admit. “I hate everything right now except for this. Right now, the only things that make sense in my life are you, Blake and Asher... and Chuck.”

His arm hangs over my waist, his fingers stroking my stomach. “It will be right again one day.”

I open my mouth to speak when my bedroom door creaks open. My heart halts, the two of us freezing as we lift our heads to peer into the dark.

The door closes again, footsteps heading towards the bed.

“I should have known you’d beat me here,” Asher groans from the end of the bed.

Zayn’s body jolts with silent laughter. “Have to be quicker than that, Ash.”

Asher grunts in reply, moving around to the side of the bed I’m facing. He peels back the blanket, slipping in.

Now that he’s close, I can see his face more clearly. I watch as he goes to reach for me, spotting Zayn’s hand laying across me. His eyebrow raises before he grabs his brother’s wrist, lifting it up and tossing it behind me, as if he’s throwing away a dirty used Kleenex.

Zayn snorts quietly behind me, unfazed. He shuffles closer, positioning his hand on my thigh instead.

Asher rests his hand in the dip of my waist, making sure we're covered by the blanket, even though it's not cold in here.

"I'm half-expecting Blake to sneak in at some point," I joke to the two of them.

Zayn nuzzles my neck. "He's gone to the clubhouse, actually. He wanted to wait until you were asleep so that you wouldn't realize he was gone."

I tense up, as does Asher. Clearly, he also had no idea this was happening.

"Is that safe right now?" I ask, concerned.

Zayn kisses my neck. "Completely. The Norsemen won't attack a clubhouse directly now. It would be an on the spot death sentence. Besides, they will probably be laying low at the moment. They know everyone will be after them."

I'm not convinced, but I do my best to try not to panic. Asher sighs, before leaning forward to kiss my lips.

"We just have to trust he knows what he's doing, Ry. It will be okay. Also, why can I taste your pussy on your lips?"

Zayn and I both burst out laughing, before quickly hushing ourselves. Asher glares over my shoulder at his brother.

"You?"

"Guilty," Zayn grins, looking very much like the cat who got the cream.

Asher scowls at him, running his hand down my body to feel between my legs. His finger slides over my slit, feeling that I am, indeed, wet.

“Bastard,” he breathes out.

I rest my hand on Asher’s chest. “Don’t be mad at him. He just didn’t want me to be alone.”

“Sure. I’m definitely convinced that that’s the whole reason.”

Asher scoffs under his breath, using his big hands to roll me around one-eighty so I’m facing Zayn. I look at Zayn concerned, worried that Asher is giving me the cold shoulder, until he lifts my leg up and I feel the head of his cock pressing against my entrance.

“Asher,” I say in a slight panic, turning my neck to look over my shoulder. I don’t get very far as Zayn stops me, pulling my face back towards him and kissing my lips to silence me.

At the same time, Asher slips inside me, his hard length filling me. I gasp into Zayn’s mouth, my fingers digging into his chest.

“We have to be quiet, remember?” Zayn mutters against my lips before kissing me again.

A non-verbal sound gets caught in my throat as I try to argue, words lost as Asher slowly rolls his hips into me. His cock slides in and out of my already wet pussy as his hand holds my waist for support.



Asher presses kisses to the top of my back, little wisps of breathy exhales making my skin shiver.

Zayn's hand slips down to my legs, his fingers curling against my clit as he strokes me slowly to match his brother's pace. I do my best to stay as quiet as possible, but it's difficult. Zayn captures the sounds with his mouth, his kisses getting more aggressive as he circles and pinches my clit.

I let out a gasp as Asher reaches over my shoulder, grabbing the front of my throat and forcing my head back as his fingers press against the sides.

"Is your shoulder okay?" he asks against my ear, his teeth nipping at my earlobe.

I nod slightly, pressed between the two of them. I can't feel anything right now except Asher's cock and their hands and their mouths.

"Fuck, I'm going to come," I moan against Zayn's lips.

"Then be a fucking good little girl and come for us," he says, forcing his tongue into my mouth.

Asher hears my words, hitting me deeper as he starts moving faster behind me. His fingers grip my waist so tight that it sends me over the edge, my orgasm ripping through me.

Zayn fists my hair, holding my head tight as he swallows my moans. When I start to quiet down, he pulls back slightly.

"Now, it's Asher's turn to come. Do you want to ride him?"

I nod and Asher groans behind me, slowing down to pull out of me. Zayn grabs me, pulling my body against his as Asher lays on his back.

There's hands touching me everywhere, setting every nerve on fire. The darkness is making my head spin, but Zayn holds my hips, lifting me to position my body over Asher's.

I lean down, gripping Asher's cock in my hand as I line him up, sinking down on him. Asher hisses, his hips pivoting upwards as I do so.

I roll my hips back and forth, using my hands to steady myself on Asher's chest. I lock eyes with Zayn, mesmerized as he lays on the other side of the bed, lazily on his side, stroking his cock through his boxers.

“What about you?” I ask, feeling bad that he's missing out.

He grins at me. “I'm fine watching you here. Don't worry though – one day soon I'm going to take your ass while you're in this position.”

My pussy clenches around Asher at his words, making him growl.

“Fuck,” Asher groans, grabbing my hips and thrusting upwards into me hard and fast.

I cry out, my body bouncing as he takes control, pounding into me.

“Ssh, Ry... not so loud,” Zayn laughs, teasing but looking like he's proud and hoping that we'll be heard.

I'm too far gone to care right now, my body wrapped around Asher as he spears into me.

"Let them hear," Asher says through clenched teeth. "I don't give a fuck. She's mine."

"Ours," Zayn corrects, pushing his boxers down. His cock springs out, catching my attention.

I moan, watching as he starts pumping his cock in his fist, his eyes raking over my body.

Asher releases one of his hands, his thumb rubbing my clit to get my attention back on him. "Eyes on me. It's my turn."

My gaze snaps to Asher's, his grey orbs burning into mine in the dark. I move my hips, grinding against him as he thrusts upwards.

"Or what?" I breathe out. "What are you going to do if I watch him?"

Asher's eyes darken, his movements slowing down. I'm suddenly thrown off him onto the bed, bouncing from the force. Asher shoves me onto my hands and knees, slamming into me from behind so hard that I fall forward into the pillow.

He fucks me so fast that I can't seem to lift my head, my face buried into the cotton pillowcase.

"There, two birds-one stone. It will help keep that smart mouth quiet."

I grind my teeth, throwing my hips back as Asher pushes forward, not letting him have complete control. The room

sounds are muffled by the pillow warped around my head, but I hear Zayn chuckle.

“Rude.”

Asher responds by grabbing my hips hard, smashing into me. I’m struggling to regain control, my body tensing up as I can feel my orgasm approaching.

Suddenly, Asher pulls out, killing my climax. I let out a cry of protest and he flips me onto my back, fisting his cock as he stares down at me.

My mouth falls open as I pant, watching in shock as he denies me relief.

“What the fuck?” I spit out quietly.

“Aw, were you about to come?” Asher taunts, still on his knees, leaning over me.

I glare at him. “You know I was.”

“Oh, no…” Asher mocks, not bothering to hide his smirk at all.

I look over at Zayn for support before deciding to take matters into my own hands. I shuffle to the side of the bed, reaching into my drawers to grab my Satisfyer Pro.

Locking eyes with Asher, flashbacks of our first ever dare come to life as I switch it on, pressing it against my body.

Recognition flares through his eyes as he watches, his own hand stilling on his cock as he gazes like a possessed demon at me.

Zayn groans louder, tugging his length as he watches me pleasure myself. “Sweet Jesus. That’s my fucking girl.”

“What’s wrong, Ash?” I ask innocently, letting out a little dramatic gasp and jolting my hips.

Suddenly, Asher snaps, lurching forward to rip the vibrator from my hand. He flings it across the room before grabbing my legs and bending me in half, so my knees are next to my head. He thrusts inside of me, growling.

“Your orgasms belong to me, Rylee.”

I’m so worked up that it only takes a few deep thrusts and slaps against my clit to send me over the edge. I cry out at the same time Zayn groans, his own release spilling over his hand.

Asher groans hearing my climax, a victorious smirk tugging on his face as he pulls a look of concentration. He finds his own relief a few seconds later, spearing me into the bed head with his force.

We end up a tangled mess on the bed, the three of us cracking up laughing as we come down from the high.

Zayn leans over, kissing my lips. “I wish I could see Blake’s face if he walked in and saw you like this. I think turning you into our own piece of twisted artwork is far more rewarding than anything else in my life.”

# Chapter 8

## Blake

It's eerily quiet when I enter the clubhouse. The usual music has been shut off and there's even less people here than last time.

Even though it's late in the evening, usually it would be busy as hell right now. It's obvious that the recent attack back home has sent a ricocheting effect through clubs everywhere. The Norsemen are growing in size, chapters banding together to achieve hostile takeovers. No one is safe.

Our clubhouse is only about an hour's drive from the house, maybe an hour and a half tops with traffic during the day. When Zayn and I took off as teens, we wanted to go far enough that we were out of the clutches of our father, but still near enough to keep an eye on things. We were never really far away, even though I'm sure it felt like it.

Sometimes, I used to drive back and watch Asher play football from out of view. Zayn and I even attended his high school graduation – Asher just never knew it.

He gets on my nerves like any normal sibling, but family has always been important to me. We made a harsh decision for our freedom, the grief of our mother's death too much for testosterone fuelled boys to handle. I don't regret leaving – I found confidence and a second family, and it gave Asher a chance to shine on his own.

Not that he ever needed that assistance.

Fetch looks up from one of the green torn chairs, a glass of whiskey in his hand. It's the first time I've ever seen him look his actual age. Frown lines have appeared, etching into his skin, and it looks like he hasn't slept much lately.

*That makes two of us.*

“Blake,” he greets warmly, jumping up from his chair and heading over to me. “What are you doing here? It's late, buddy.”

“Hey, Fetch,” I say. “I know. I just wanted to come and check on everyone. It's been a rough few days.”

Fetch takes a swig of his drink, his eyebrows shooting up. “Not fucking wrong.” He motions to Phal to grab me a drink before looking behind me. “Where's Zayn?”

“Back home with Rylee,” I answer. “We're not keen on letting her out of our sight right now.”

Fetch nods. “Understandable. Was she caught up in the recent shooting?”

My face pulls up in anguish, before I quickly control it, giving him a small nod. “Yeah, she was there at the time. But

she's okay, thankfully."

"Shit," Fetch breathes out. "I'm glad to hear that. We heard about the dead."

Phal walks over, handing me what appears to be a strong bourbon and ice. "You look like you need a strong one, B."

"Thanks, Phal," I nod, taking it from him. "Strong is good. Yeah, lots of Rebels from the Brightmore chapter were killed."

Fetch looks down, sadness washing over his face. "I still have good buddies back there. It's been a real mood here since it happened."

"I bet," I mutter, giving him a tight, sympathetic look. "I'm sorry, Fetch."

He nods, taking another swig of his drink. "Never thought those Norsemen had it in them. I guess we underestimated them."

"I guess so," I mumble, looking over as Bill's door opens and the man himself strolls out. He catches my eye immediately, signalling for me to follow him into his office. I say goodbye to Fetch and Phal, before heading to the other side of the room and slipping inside the dark green office.

"I'm not surprised to see you," Bill says sternly, sitting in his chair. "I heard you saw some of the Rebels after the attack."

"Yes, at the hospital," I answer in a monotone voice as I sit down, doing my best not to remember the sheer fear and panic I felt when I heard Rylee had been taken to the hospital.



Bill sighs, rubbing his temple. “This is getting out of hand. I thought this had been dealt with. Clearly, we were wrong.”

“I don’t think any of us could have predicted this,” I say. “It’s unprecedented for the Norsemen.”

“Unprecedented or not, we should have been more prepared,” Bill snaps quietly, frustration in his voice.

I pause, watching as his face twitches with uncharacteristic emotion. “There’s nothing we could have done, Bill. We can’t hold that guilt.”

Bill looks over at me, before pushing a piece of paper on the desk towards me.

“What’s this?” I ask, picking it up to read. My eyes scan the paper, looking at the list of names. Some familiar ones jump out, a feeling of dread sinking in my stomach.

“It’s the list of fallen brothers,” he says quietly.

I throw the paper on the desk, sitting back in my chair. I suspected we may have known some of the victims, but seeing their names on the paper hits hard.

“Maybe it’s time we re-evaluate our position. Though, to be honest, I’m not sure how I feel about it.”

Bill lets out a dry laugh. “You still haven’t told anyone, have you?”

I shake my head. “I didn’t think it was important.”

“Of course it is,” he says. “Especially if this attack means what I think it does in terms of our involvement now.”

Sitting back, I sigh loudly. I really didn't want it to come to this. But the next steps are crucial to everyone's survival. The problem is it's making things even more complicated than before.

"I'll tell them," I answer finally. "I don't have any other option now."

Bill nods. "I'm meeting with Mack tomorrow. Probably best to get it out of the way as soon as possible. I'll get Fetch to touch base afterwards and let you know what's going on. We will need to have a club meeting. I'd suggest bringing your brothers and girlfriend with you."

My jaw ticks at the thought of involving Rylee and Asher even more. "Okay," I mutter, standing up and heading towards the door.

As my hand touches the door handle, Bill lets out an exhausted sigh.

"I still think you would have made an excellent vice prez, Blake."

I glance over my shoulder at him. "Probably," I admit. "But life always has other plans, doesn't it?"

Knowing there's probably no reply coming, I head out of the office into the quiet main room, closing the door behind me.

I have no idea how well this impending conversation is going to go down. It's going to change everything. But we're at a crossroads and at the moment, every direction we turn is

met with Norsemen. The only option is to make a new fucking path.



By the time I arrive home, it's still dark but little whispers of sunlight are starting to break over the horizon. The house is quiet when I enter, everyone still fast asleep which is not surprising.

I climb the stairs quietly, pausing at the top as I figure out which direction to head.

I swing right, heading down the corridor until I reach Rylee's bedroom door. I have no idea if she's in here or across the hall in Asher's room. I open the door, gazing into the darkness to check the bed.

There's bumps under the blanket, so I step into the room and walk over, fighting back a laugh as I gaze down.

Rylee is fast asleep, guarded by Asher on one side and Zayn on the other. The former has his arm wrapped around her tightly, clinging to her, even in his sleep.

I watch them for a few seconds before turning around, getting ready to head back out when a whisper breaks the silence.

“Aw, come on. There's plenty of room.”

I snort, turning to find Zayn peering at me lazily. He's always been a light sleeper – or perhaps it's the twin sense.

We're good at knowing when the other one is nearby.

"I'm not spooning either of you," I murmur, raising an eyebrow. "Besides, Asher is likely to punch me in his sleep if I get near."

Zayn lifts his head, looking over at the other two. "They are so cute when they are asleep. Especially Asher... because he's not talking."

He kicks back the blanket, slipping out. I watch as he tucks it under Rylee's side, cocooning her against Asher, before he follows me out the room.

We head down the corridor to my bedroom, flicking on the light as we enter. It will be sunrise soon, but I'm still wide awake.

"Meeting went well, I take it?" Zayn asks, muffling a yawn.

"Fucking splendidly."

I sit on the edge of the bed, pushing my hair back. I fill him in on my conversation with Bill, avoiding the topic of the list.

"So, we tell Rylee," Zayn says confidently, laying back on the bed. "She will handle it fine. She's tough."

"I know she is," I mutter in a low tone. "But she's also going to be shocked. Possibly mad... enraged, even."

Zayn laughs. "Nah, she will be fine. I think all her dealings with bikers has given her a tough shell. She's just relieved that Chuck is alive."

“I don’t know what she’ll think,” I respond. “But regardless, there’s something else too.”

Zayn sits up, looking at me expectedly. “Spit it out, B.”

I sigh, running my hand over my face. “Bill had a list of the guys who were killed. There’s a few familiar names on the list.”

“Who?” he asks, his voice serious.

“Denver, Shev, and Austen were on the list.”

Zayn lets out a low whistle. “Shit. I didn’t even know they were there. And others, I assume?”

I nod. “A dozen others, but mostly acquaintances.”

He falls silent, thinking. “That’s devastating. We should reach out.”

“We will. But for now, we need to cross that other bridge first.”

Zayn nods. “We’ll tell Rylee when she wakes up.”



I must doze off at some stage, because next thing I know, my bedroom door is flung open, smashing into the wall.

My eyes jolt open, the sun burning my retinas before Rylee stops at the end of my bed.

I blink at her a few times before spotting Zayn curled up at the end of the bed, also just waking up.

“Oh, thank God,” she breathes out. “I woke up and *he* was gone,” she points to Zayn. “And I had no idea if you had made it back safely.”

“Good morning to you too, babe,” Zayn yawns, stretching. “You know we’re never far away.”

Rylee nods, but her face is full of concern. She’s dressed in shorts and an oversized shirt – Asher’s, I think – and her blonde hair is sticking up like a bird’s nest.

“I only got back a few hours ago,” I tell her, checking the time on my cell. “I must have fallen asleep.”

She walks around to the side of the bed, sitting on the edge. “I was worried.”

“I know,” I answer dryly. “That’s why I didn’t tell you I was going. The plan was you weren’t going to find out until this morning.”

Zayn pretends to look guilty, but just ends up giving her a grin. She returns a smile to him, relief starting to settle over her features.

“I can handle it,” she says quietly. “You don’t have to sneak out without telling me.”

“I know you can handle it. But you would have wanted to come and you needed rest,” I reply.

Rylee shakes her head. “I hate not knowing things. What if something had happened and I was just asleep? It scares me, Blake.”

She has a point, I guess. I can understand where she’s coming from, but I still know her stubborn ass would have argued with me last night if she had known beforehand.

“You just have to trust me, Ry,” I say to her, shuffling over to sit next to her.

Rylee rests her head on my shoulder, reaching for my hand. “I do trust you. I just don’t trust other people. I nearly lost Chuck. I can’t lose you.”

“I’m not going anywhere.”

I hear footsteps heading towards the room, and the three of us pause, watching the open doorway. Asher puts his head around the corner, looking. He visibly relaxes when he spots all of us, stepping inside.

“I woke up and everyone was gone,” he says in a husky, half-asleep tone. “All I heard was Rylee running around then suddenly she vanished before I could even open my eyes properly.”

Rylee gives him a sly smile. “Sorry. You looked peaceful. I know you like your beauty sleep.”

Asher returns her smile with his own warm one, his eyes looking at her like she’s the best thing he’s ever seen. “I only need sleep because you exhaust me.”

My face wrinkles as I piece two and two together... or should I say one and two.

“Anyway,” I interject, holding up my hand to stop him. “I need to chat to you both.”

Seriousness washes over Asher’s face as he crosses the room slowly. “Okay then.”

I take a small breath, looking at Zayn who gives me a nod to continue.

“I went to our clubhouse last night to speak to our prez. They are obviously going to put some plans in motion due to the recent attack. But, there’s some other information that we haven’t disclosed yet because it wasn’t the right time.”

“What information?” Rylee asks quickly, looking at me.

Asher tenses up as well, folding his arms as he watches. I grab Rylee’s hand, stroking her soft fingers.

“We haven’t fully told you about our background with the club. I know you’ve been to the clubhouse and met Bill, but there’s a history you need to know.”

“Okay,” she says slowly. “What history?”

I pause, trying to piece the words together when Zayn in his usual typical fashion just blurts it out.

“We’re Rebels, pretty girl.”



# Chapter 9

## Rylee

I blink at Zayn, confused. “Rebels? Like... the same club as Chuck and Butch?”

Blake glares at Zayn, obviously annoyed that his brother beat him to the punch. “Yes, kind of.”

“What?” I ask. “How does that work?”

“Clubs have different chapters as you already know,” Blake starts. “Our chapter is fairly new. Originally, our chapter was a part of the Rebels’ area here. But the higher ups had a falling out, and there were a lot of disagreements about locations and where we should be based. We ended up severing ties so to speak and half the club stayed here, and the other broke off to start a new chapter, although we go by a different name now to differentiate our crew since we didn’t want to be associated with the Rebels anymore.”

I’m even more confused. “But the way you spoke about them, you made it sound like you were all enemies or something.”

“More like broken brotherhood,” Zayn answers. “Our prez is the cousin of the prez here. They didn’t see eye to eye and instead of it turning into some club mutiny, we left. We don’t really associate with them anymore, but for all other purposes, we still fall under the same club. Think of it like a franchise, but we called ourselves the Nomads instead.”

My face falls. “So, you knew them all along. It makes sense I guess. You knew of each other, and even the Norsemen knew you,” I direct to Blake, thinking back to the day he rescued me in the parking lot of Wheels.

Blake nods. “We were only in the Rebels for a short period before they broke up. We followed Bill because he took us under his wing when we joined. A lot of the other members were loyal to Mack, so they stayed. Plus they had families here. We were in the process of running, so it was easier for us to leave.”

“Did you know Butch? And Vito?” I ask, unsure how I feel with this new information.

Zayn shakes his head. “Not really. We knew *of* them, but the club is so big, you rarely cross paths with everyone.”

“This explains how you knew so much,” I mutter. “But I can’t believe Butch never mentioned it.”

“It’s not his place to do so. There’s rules we have to follow,” Blake says. “We agreed to be *civil* with the Brightmore chapter, and the Rebels value privacy and respect.”

I nod. “I can understand that. It’s a lot to take in though. Does that mean you still know people here?”

Zayn looks crestfallen. “Yeah, pretty girl. We just found out some old friends were involved in the attack.”

“I’m so sorry,” I mumble genuinely.

“That’s fucked up,” Asher says quietly. “I didn’t realize it was that big.”

Blake sighs. “Yeah. So, it’s a lot more complicated and messy now. Bill is going to be meeting with Mack. It looks like we’re going to have to join forces again, at least temporarily.”

“How do you know all this?” I ask. “Butch and Chuck would never tell me anything. The higher ups always kept things under wraps and in their inner circle.”

Blake looks visibly uncomfortable. “That’s the other thing I haven’t mentioned. Before we decided to come back, I was being mentored to step up into a *bigger* role.”

“What role?” I ask, narrowing my eyes.

“Deputy prez,” Zayn says casually. “Subby was getting ready to retire and step back, so Bill wanted Blake to take over.”

Asher looks at Blake accusingly. “What?!”

“Calm down, Ash,” Blake growls. “It wasn’t a big deal. And it obviously didn’t end up happening.”

My mouth falls open and I look at Blake with wide eyes. “You were going to be a leader?”

“It didn’t end up happening,” he reiterates again. “We decided it wasn’t for me and once I stepped into that role, it would be a lot harder to get out. That’s why Bill was so mad when we asked to leave.”

“That’s fucked up and you know it,” Asher mumbles.

Blake rolls his eyes. “Don’t get caught up in the details, Asher. I’m home now.”

“But you’re still involved in the club,” Asher snaps back. “What happens if they want you to step up again?”

“It’s different this time,” Zayn answers. “Bill knows that. The main thing we need to focus on is the Norsemen. We need to stop those bastards.”

I look at Asher. “He’s right. We need to deal with that first before we even worry about anything else.”

Asher falls silent, giving me a curt nod.

“Besides,” Blake grumbles. “We also need to deal with the parents at some stage. They can’t know about the situation with the clubs. But we need to deal with *this*.” He motions to me then the rest of them.

My heart drops. “Do you think we’ll have to end things?” I ask quietly.

“Fuck no,” Asher says. “I’m not ending anything.”

“Neither am I, babe,” Zayn chimes in. “We just need to work out how to get them to accept it and live with it.”

I look at Blake, desperate for his input. He reads the expression of worry on my face, cupping my cheek.

“I’m not going anywhere, Rylee. I told you that. We just don’t need the hostility. So, we will deal with that when we cross that bridge. One thing at a time.”

I nod. “One thing at a time.”



I shove breakfast down quickly, determined to get back to the hospital this morning to see Chuck. When I’m back in my room alone getting dressed, I put on some music to distract my thoughts, humming away as I rummage through my closet.

I don’t hear my bedroom door creak open, or the footsteps into my room from the music. I grab a pair of black denim shorts and a royal purple tank top off the coat hanger, flinging them over my shoulder before I walk back into the main part of my bedroom.

I stumble over my feet, staring wide-eyed at the unexpected visitor.

“Phoebes!”

The clothes end up scattered on the floor as I fling them, tackling her in a hug.

“Easy, I’m fragile!” she groans into my shoulder as I squeeze her.

“What are you doing here?” I ask, pulling back with a smile.

Phoebe looks me up and down quickly, letting out a relieved smile. “Ty told Connor what happened. I wanted to make sure you were okay. Though, I have to admit, Ry, I’m pretty upset you didn’t call me yourself.”

“I’m sorry,” I answer, feeling a ping of guilt. “It’s been really hectic. And I didn’t want to stress you out with everything happening with your Dad. How is he, by the way?”

Her smile drops, tears starting to swell in her eyes. “He’s doing okay. He’s nearly ready to move into hospice care. Mom is in the process of getting the house set up so he can be at home with nurses. Dad wants to be at home when he goes.”

“Oh, Phoebe,” I mutter. “I’ve been such a shit friend. You deserve better.”

“Don’t be like that,” she replies. “You have a life, Ry. Besides, I know you’re busy. And Dad still thinks the world of you. He asks about you from time to time. He’s so proud of you. Like I am.”

I fight back the urge to cry. I don’t feel like I deserve to shred the tears.

Phoebe wipes away a stray tear that slips down my cheek. “Hey... it’s fine, Ry. We’ve started to make our peace with it. It’s fucked up and cruel, and I can’t imagine a world without my Dad in it. But I’m making sure to spend every spare

minute with him. Besides, he deserves to be free from the pain.”

I nod, giving her another hug. “I’ll come stop by and see him soon. He looked so happy at your wedding. Gosh, I can’t believe how fast time has flown by since then.”

“I know,” Phoebe laughs. “Life as Mrs. Sloane is pretty good. Though, it still feels the same as before. I just have a fancy new name. Well, among other things.”

“Oh?” I ask.

Phoebe digs into her pocket, pulling out her phone. “That’s the other reason I wanted to stop by instead of just calling. I want to show you something.”

I wait as she opens up her phone, clicking into something.

“There,” she smiles, turning the phone screen to face me. “Meet your new baby niece or nephew.”

Staring back at me on the screen is a blurry ultrasound picture, the clear outline of a baby’s head side-on.

“You’re pregnant?” I ask, excited.

She nods. “Around eight weeks. I was going to wait until twelve weeks to tell everyone, but I just can’t. I’m too excited!” she squeals.

I kneel down, looking at her still nearly flat stomach. On closer inspection, I see a bit of a bump... tiny enough that it looks like she might have just had a big breakfast. But it’s there... a baby.

“Oh, my God. Hi, baby!” I tell her stomach. “I’m your psychotic Aunt Rylee. Can I touch it?”

Phoebe nods, laughing. I put my hands on her stomach, wondering just how much a tiny baby can hear or feel at this stage. Probably nothing.

“Bub is about the size of a kidney bean,” she tells me. “Probably still really low. But fudge, the sickness...”

I wrinkle my nose. “Ew. Is it bad?”

“I hate to admit it, but Connor stinks all of a sudden. But at the same time, I just want to jump him whenever the nausea passes.”

“I’ve heard the second trimester is great for sex,” I mumble, standing back up. “You’ll be glowing and fucking him.”

Phoebe laughs, putting a hand on her stomach. “Or I’ll still be vomiting. I hope not. Mom had hyperemesis with me. Vomited non-stop the whole nine months, even apparently still felt nausea the whole year afterwards whenever she breastfed.”

“That sounds... horrible,” I say. “But it’s all worth it.”

“It is,” she agrees. “I just wish Dad would be around to meet his grandchild.”

I nod sadly. “He’ll be around. I watched a documentary ages ago that said kids have this weird sixth-sense shit. Like they can see ghosts.”

“Okay, that’s creepy,” Phoebe says. “I watched too many horror movies growing up.”



I wave my hand at her. “I mean, it will be fine. Your baby will be completely normal. But maybe stay away from the scary movies for a bit.”

Phoebe nods, her smiling fading slightly. “Fuck. Hold on...”

She barrels me out of the way, running through my closet into my adjoining bathroom. The sound of retching appears, and I wait, staring at the closed door with wide-eyes.

Phoebe emerges a few minutes later, wiping her mouth. “It’s fine. It’s getting better, I think. Just don’t mention food and I’ll survive. Speaking of, tell me about your snacks.”

“Snacks?”

She laughs. “Your stepbrothers. Wait... are we still calling them that? Also, I don’t mean to pry but Ty insinuated that you’re dating his brother. Distract me with an update until this nausea passes.”

I walk over to the bed, patting the blanket next to me. “Okay. Sit down and I’ll fill you in on my love life. Trust me, it’s a clusterfuck right now.”



“You’re looking better,” I tell Chuck as I stand in the doorway of his hospital room.

He looks up from his jello cup, the remains of food scattered in front of him on the table.

“There’s my girl,” he says, eyes lighting up. “I’m feeling better actually.”

I walk over and take a seat next to the bed. He reaches for me immediately, grabbing my hand.

“I’ve missed you,” I mutter, linking my fingers with his.

“I’ve missed you more,” he answers. “Also, don’t be fooled. The hospital food is shit. But I’m starving all of a sudden and there’s limited options.”

I laugh. “Do you want me to bring a pizza or something back later?”

Chuck groans. “Don’t tease me like that. The only thing I want more than pizza is you.”

“The nurses wouldn’t like that,” I taunt.

His eyes look behind me to the glass door. “Fuck the nurses. Just sit on my face.”

I squeeze his hand in a warning, fighting back a grin. “You need to rest.”

“Fuck resting,” he groans. “It’s taco Tuesday.”

Laughing, I shake my head. “It’s Friday, Chuck. So, the taco tasting will need to wait until you get out of here.”

# Chapter 10

## Zayn

Fuck me, this heat is stifling. I refuse to wear anything but jeans and sweatpants, but right now in my denim, my balls are sticking to my legs.

It doesn't help that Blake also insists on having the windows down and the AC off as we drive to the club meeting. Even the breeze has a random heat to it, making it feel hard to breathe. The only time I want to feel suffocated is with a mouthful of Rylee's pussy. And sadly, she denied me before we left.

Okay, we may have already been pushing it for time, and I could see her little mind ticking behind her eyes as she considered it, but one of us had to be reasonable.

“What the fuck is this music?” Asher complains from the backseat.

Blake hits the off button on the car stereo. “Fucked if I know. It's just the radio.”

“Who listens to the radio these days? Cars have Bluetooth now,” Asher mumbles under his breath.

Rylee laughs from the backseat next to Asher. “I liked it, actually. It sounded catchy.”

“I don’t trust your judgement in music,” he says. “I’ve seen your playlist.”

“Hey,” Blake interjects from the driver’s seat. “Leave her music alone.”

Rylee nods. “That’s right. I have good taste. Unlike the rap stuff Asher listens to.”

I chuckle, gazing over my shoulder at Asher. He looks like he’s sucking on a lemon drop. He catches me looking and turns away, staring out the window.

“I like your music, pretty girl,” I tell Rylee, catching her eyes.

She lights up, giving me a smile. “Thanks! I’ll be sure to reward you later.”

My lips twitch into a smile, knowing full well she’s remembering our conversation before we left the house as well.

Blake reaches down, grabbing his cell before handing it to me. “Can you plug that into the car? I need to pull up Google Maps.”

The two chapters decided to pick a neutral spot for our meeting. Both wanted to host, but neither wanted to go to the

other's location. It's been a long time since we'd all been together, and despite the recent events, I know there's still going to be some hostility when we arrive.

I take the cell from Blake, plugging the cord in. I tap the screen on the car dash, putting the address into Google Maps. It's about half way between the two chapters, in the State Park. Apparently, Mack knows a quiet place we can all gather that will be free from the general public. We need the privacy, not only for protection for club business, but also to make sure if something were to go down like another attack, innocent bystanders aren't going to be in the firing line.

I look back at Rylee again, noticing she's rubbing her shoulder. She took the gauze off this morning because it was getting itchy. Her black painted fingernails touch her wound gently as she stares off into space.

"You okay?" I ask her.

She looks over at me, breaking out in a small smile. "Yeah, I'm fine." Her hand drops back to her lap, and I'm not sure if she even knew she was doing it. I wish I could read her mind, she keeps way too much to herself. It's not healthy. I've been trying to get her to open up more, to talk about her emotions, but she insists she's fine.

I *know* she's fine. But still... you don't go through the shit she went through and be completely okay. I can just imagine the whirlwind of shit going through her mind at the moment.

"We'll be there in about twenty minutes," Blake says, looking over at the screen. "The two of you just need to stick

close to us.”

“Why?” Rylee asks, and I can hear the concern in her voice.

Asher looks over too, his jaw tense as he clenches his teeth.

“There’s just going to be a lot of people. And I’m not sure of the vibe. We’re all old buddies so to speak, but it’s still not the perfect environment.”

“Will people fight?” Asher asks. “Because I’m not down with that.”

I laugh. “No one will fight. It’s just going to be a little *intense*. So, for the love of Peter Pan, do not hit anyone, Asher.”

Asher grumbles, muttering something about not fighting anyone. It’s bullshit and he knows it. He won’t be afraid to throw a punch if push comes to shove. But it won’t – I know it won’t.

Blake’s hands tighten on the steering wheel and I know he’s nervous too, even if he doesn’t want to admit it. It’s going to be a rough mood – fuelled with animosity and grief.

Rylee reaches over and grabs Asher’s hand. “It will be fine, Ash. Just stick close to me – I’ll protect you.”

His lips fight back a smile, and even without saying it out loud, I already know what’s going through his head. Rylee can think about protecting us all she wants, but at the end of the day, we’re the ones that would breathe fire and burn bridges to ashes if it meant protecting her.

As we start to head into dense woodlands, the car starts getting more and more quiet. There's bikers in front of us and some behind us, as we all travel the dirt path into the State Park.

At a divider, we swing left, following the trail of bikes and cars. It's pretty easy to know when we've reached the spot – the giant dirt lot at the end of the path is filled along the edges with vehicles and bikes of every different make. People are standing around, chatting and watching new arrivals closely, their eyes peering in suspicion.

Blake pulls into a spare space, killing the engine. “Okay, here we go.”

We climb out of the car, the four of us staying close together as we manoeuvre around the various traffic of vehicles and people. It's hard to distinguish the two chapters with many bikers wearing their club colors and jackets. There's very minimal differences, other than the patches that name the different chapters.

I scan the crowd, searching for familiar faces as we walk towards the larger group of gathered souls.

“Fuck me sideways! Zayny!” a deep voice calls out. I glance over, grinning as a large man heads towards me.

“Frank!” I greet, giving him a quick bear hug.

Rylee lingers behind me, holding hands with Asher. I can tell it's for his sake, rather than hers. She's always been

comfortable around bikers, even ones she doesn't know. Plus, a lot of her friends are here too.

Frank's green and blue eyes light up when he spots Blake, giving him a slap on the shoulder. "Fuck, it's been too long, brothers."

"It has," I agree, waving at the brunette walking up behind him.

"Zayn," she says warmly, leaning in for a hug.

I can't help but glance over at Rylee, my mind automatically checking if she's okay. Her eyes are locked on the brunette, a little uneasy as she watches our encounter.

"Rylee," I motion to her. "I want you to meet someone."

Asher lets go of her hand as she steps forward. I take his place immediately, squeezing her hand.

"This is our old friend, Frank, and his daughter, Lenah."

"Hey," Rylee greets, giving them a small smile.

Lenah looks between us and back at Asher, putting together the resemblance. "This is your younger brother?" she asks politely.

I nod. "That's Asher. And this is our girlfriend, Rylee."

It always cracks me up seeing people's reactions to the use of *our*. Lenah pauses for a moment, the words sinking in, while Frank lets out a booming laugh.

"Atta boy. It's nice to meet you, Rylee. I think I've seen you around Wheels."



Rylee nods. "You definitely look familiar. It's good to meet you in person."

Lenah nods to Asher before waving to Blake. He returns the gesture with a sharp nod.

"I didn't think I'd see you both again," Lenah says softly. "Keeping out of trouble, I hope?"

"The best we can," I reply with a grin. "You know how it is."

We chat for a few minutes until Rylee suddenly shoots past us. The five of us watch as Butch appears with Vito through the crowd, Rylee tackling them both in a hug.

"Lee," Butch says, giving Rylee a squeeze. "How you doing, love?"

Rylee glances at him up and down. "You're out of hospital?"

"Can't keep me down, kiddo. Plus I hate the place."

Butch sends a nod our way before returning his attention to Rylee. I can see her more relaxed at the sight of her friends and I smile.

"Aw, you're a good man, Zayn," Frank says, punching my shoulder. "I'm surprised to see Butch here though. He copped quite a beating."

Blake sighs. "He wasn't the only one. I'm sorry to hear about Denver."

Frank and Denver were best pals, both joining the club together many years ago. They took us under their wing when we joined a few weeks before the split happened. When Blake

told me that Denver's name was on the list, I was devastated. He was always a barrel of laughs, cracking jokes to keep the mood light.

"Me too," Frank says with a bit of a shaky voice. "His wife is getting him cremated and we're spreading his ashes over the mountains where he loved hiking."

"That sounds beautiful," I tell him. "Denver would have loved that. He liked being outdoors, even in the pissing down rain."

Movement catches my attention and I look over, spotting Bill climbing onto a picnic table so he stands above everyone.

"Okay, everyone take it down a notch."

Next to him, an old familiar figure climbs on to the table. Mack Minton – the Brightmore Prez.

He hasn't changed a bit – his chestnut hair spiked up with tiny greys on the ends. He scans the crowd with a tight face, nodding in the direction of some people who wave at him.

"Who's that?" I hear Rylee ask Butch.

He leans down, muttering something quickly in her ear before they fall silent and give the two men their attention.

It becomes quiet – everyone listening. For a gathering where there's at least sixty people, it's so quiet you can hear the birds chirp in trees and the leaves as they sway in the gentle breeze.

"Thanks for coming on such short notice," Mack says, his gravelly voice loud and clear. "I wish it was under better

circumstances.”

There’s a few mutters in the crowd, people bowing their heads as a sign of respect for our fallen brothers – most of whom still lay cold in a morgue somewhere.

“As you know, the Norsemen have been recruiting and growing in size for a while now. They have caused a lot of chaos here recently, and we’ve just found out that they have merged their chapters to strengthen their numbers. You might have heard they also attacked another small club recently in Linton. That club no longer exists,” Bill states, watching everyone’s reactions.

Rylee stands off to the side of us next to Butch, and I can’t help but watch her reaction to everything. She’s been dragged through so much of the Norsemen’s havoc lately, maybe even more so than anyone else here.

“From today, we are temporarily merging again as one Rebel chapter,” Mack says. I can’t help but notice the slight disdain in his voice. Next to him, Bill gives a short nod, his own unhappiness obvious.

People start whispering but Mack raises his hand, annoyed.

“Right now, we have little choice. We need to stay prepared. The Rebels are the largest club in the region, and the Norsemen want us gone. It’s apparent they will stop at nothing to achieve that.”

Rylee looks over at us, our eyes meeting. I give her a small wink, making her grin and turn away. My gaze drifts to her

ass, and I start thinking about all the things I want to do to it. Blake spots what I'm doing and elbows me in the ribs, gesturing to pay attention.

“The plan for now is to do nothing except to observe. We will be reaching out to people in areas we think are useful to watch for information. In the meantime, should the Norsemen attack us or anyone else, we're prepared to attack back. If they attack, we hit them where it hurts – their clubhouses. Keep your weapons on you at all times and when conducting club business, make sure you're with a group. It's likely they will attack if you're alone.”

Rylee shifts uncomfortably at that statement. Next to me, Asher curls his hands into fists, clearly thinking the same as me. The car accident was single-handedly the worst thing I've been through. I thought I was going to lose Rylee that day. Listening to her car lose control and the metal fucking crumbling into pieces is something I will never forget.

“You're welcome to stay and mingle with your old friends for a while,” Mack grumbles, climbing off the table.

The crowd bursts into chatter, many people looking uneasy while others look like they are ready to murder any Norsemen that cross their path. I walk over to Rylee, slipping my hand around her waist.

“Are you okay?” I murmur against her ear.

She leans back against me, nodding. “Just a bit worried, but it will be fine.”

“You know what’s good for worry?” I ask.

“What?”

I run my tongue up the shell of her ear, chuckling when she shivers.

“Coming on my cock. Come on, let’s get out of here. I need to fuck that worry out of you.”

# Chapter 11

## Rylee

When we arrive back home, Zayn directs me to wait outside. He mutters something to the other two who give me knowing looks before they head inside.

I stand outside by myself, soaking up the sun rays. Zayn trots down the steps two at a time a few minutes later with a backpack.

“In the car,” he orders, giving my ass a little slap as he walks by.

“What?” I ask, turning around and following him. “Where are we going?”

He jumps into the Jeep, beckoning me with his finger through the glass. I open the door and slide into the passenger seat, reaching for the backpack.

“Nope,” he says, flinging it in the back, out of my reach.

I laugh, clicking my seatbelt on. “Should I be worried?”

“I told you,” he starts, flicking over the engine. “We’re going to *fix* that worry.”

Shaking my head, I cross my legs and sit back, watching as he peels out of the driveway and heads down the road. I gaze out at the passing houses and cars, bopping my head to the soft music coming through the speaker.

When we take the road that heads out of town, I realize where we’re heading.

“Ohh... you cheeky devil,” I tease.

Zayn grins at me from the driver’s seat, reaching over to squeeze my thigh with his hand. “It’s been awhile.”

The Jeep veers off the main road onto the dirt path, dodging trees and shrubs until the cabin comes into view. We park at the bottom of the steps and I let myself out of the car, looking around.

“It’s exactly as I remember,” I state, climbing the stairs.

Zayn hits the lock button on the key fob before heading to the front door. “There’s a few changes inside.”

He opens the door to let us in, motioning me to walk in first. I step inside the cooled cabin, noticing all the sheets have gone. It’s clean – all the dust gone.

New furniture decks out the room, including a new double chaise which serves as a bed. There’s also a tv set up and a mini-fridge in the corner, filled with snacks and drinks.

“Been busy, I see,” I remark, jumping on the chaise.

“I needed to revamp our little love shack. It was getting a bit bare.”

I lay down on the chaise, groaning. “It’s so soft. Where did you get the money for all this stuff?”

“The three of us have trust funds set up from Mom’s inheritance. Well, I invested my money and live off the interest. No idea what Asher and Blake do with theirs.”

I did think it was weird that none of them work. I just assumed Gareth was full of money and they were rich babies who didn’t need to. It’s always a bit sombre when money comes from the death of a loved one.

Zayn sits on the chaise next to me, putting the backpack in his lap. I lean over as he unzips it, trying to peek inside.

“What did you bring?”

He waves his finger at me in a “no” motion, digging into the bag. I roll my eyes, smiling. Fucking typical of him.

I expect him to pull out candles or a vibrator... something sexual. But instead he pulls out... a stopwatch?

“Jesus, I haven’t seen an old fashion stopwatch in years,” I say. “Don’t you just use your phone like a normal person?”

He grins. “Of course I do. But my phone isn’t coming with me.”

My brows furrow in confusion. “Where are you going?”

“We’re going to play a game.”

*Oh, great. This again.*



He looks at me, laughing. “Don’t you start. You’re the one that started the games, Rylee. If you can’t win or keep up, just say so.”

I growl under my breath. “I’m not opting out. I’ll kick your ass.”

“You can try,” he murmurs, closing the backpack up again and putting it on his back. “How’s your legs?”

“My... legs?” I ask.

Zayn stands up, holding his hands out for me. “Yeah. Are you a runner?”

I let him pull me up. “I’m pretty fast. Why?”

“So am I,” he grins, squeezing my hand as he leads us back outside the cabin door. We walk down the steps and I pause, confused.

“What are we doing exactly?”

Zayn looks around, giving himself a little nod. “I do love our Truth or Dare. But I have a better game today.”

“Oh, no,” I mumble, trying to hide my grin. “What’s the game?”

“Hide and Seek.”

I blink a few times, staring at him in bewilderment. “Come again?”

Zayn holds the stopwatch in his hand, fingers pressed lightly on the buttons. “I’m going to start counting. You have one minute to hide, then I’m coming to find you.”

“There’s more to this. I know there is,” I mutter, wondering where the fuck I’m going to be able to hide in the middle of the woods.

He nods, stepping towards me. “Oh, there sure is, pretty girl. If I catch you, I fuck you. Any way that I want. Now, are you ready to run?”

My heart starts beating rapidly in my chest, eyes locked with his. There’s a dangerous glint in them, a touch of crazy.

I’m relieved to be in sneakers and shorts. It’s the best impromptu outfit I could have hoped for to run in. I give him a nod.

“Bring it on.”

Zayn grins, hitting the button and starting the timer. “Start running then.”

He turns his back towards me so I take off sprinting, running over shrubs and branches. I keep going as far into the center of the trees as I can, looking around wildly for somewhere to hide.

There’s literally nothing – the only option I have is to find a thick enough tree to duck down behind. My footsteps echo around the trees loudly, so I know it’s pointless trying to keep moving. I might be a quick runner, but something tells me that Zayn is faster.

Finally, I spot a thick old tree, ducking behind it just as I hear Zayn’s voice bellow out in the distance.

“Ready or not, here I come.”

I stay out of view, straining my ears to listen for sounds. If he starts getting close or heads in this direction, I'm going to have to run.

Branches snap all around me, the sounds of nature fucking up my ability to listen for the predator who's searching for me right now. I peek my head around the trunk, looking towards the cabin in the distance. Zayn is nowhere to be seen, which concerns me. I can't hear or see him at all.

I stand up, checking once again before moving to a slightly thinner tree. The pounding in my chest sounds so loud that I can hear it in my ears. I take a deep breath, focusing on calming my body.

I won't let him catch me. I'm going to win this.

The sound of crunching reaches my ears and I freeze, listening. It could be Zayn... it could be an animal. It's hard to tell.

Poking my head out again, I'm baffled when there's still no sign of him.

Suddenly, something grabs me on the waist, spinning me around. I gasp as Zayn slams me into the tree trunk.

"Oh, come on, baby. That was too easy," he smirks, pressing against me.

"Where the fuck did you come from?" I gape.

I feel something wiggling against my leg and I flinch, jumping as I look down for spiders. I pause as I notice the black nylon rope in Zayn's hand that's hanging against my leg.

He notices that I've seen it, his fingers curling around my throat and pushing my head back against the tree.

"I've caught you. So, now I *get* you."

My heart races in excitement at his words. Zayn lets go of my neck, grabbing my wrist and tying the rope around it. He flings the rope around the tree, grabbing the other end before wrapping it around my other wrist. I stare at him wide-eyed as my arms hug the trunk of the tree. He has me tied up like I'm on a cross, the bark scratching my back.

He leans down, unzipping the backpack. He pulls out a black blindfold and a piece of purple cotton.

"Try not to say a word," he grins, shoving the cotton into my mouth and tying it behind my head.

I mumble against the material, trying to curse him for silencing me. He leans in, kissing me on the mouth over the fabric before slipping the blindfold over my eyes.

I'm completely immobile, unable to hear and speak. But apparently, it's still not enough for Zayn.

I feel something press into my left ear, blocking the surrounding sounds out. Zayn lips touch my right ear gently, nipping at my earlobe.

"If it gets too intense, use your ankle to tap my leg three times and I'll stop."

He shoves the plug into my right ear, everything fading away. All I can register is the feel of his hands as they glide down my body, touching me over my clothes.

I feel him pause at my shorts, his hand cupping me through them. I try to push my hips towards him but he moves away.

I let out a noise of protest, the sound scarily loud in my own mind as my senses vanish.

Zayn's hands grab the tops of my shorts, pulling them down my legs. I kick them off, thankful that my legs aren't restricted. He runs his finger over the top of my underwear, trailing my pussy tauntingly.

He mumbles something I think, but all I can hear is the sounds of my own breathing and heartbeat. I feel his hands grab the sides of my underwear, pulling them down my legs, leaving the bottom half of me completely naked.

My ass brushes against the tree, the bark scratching it. I shift uncomfortably, the feeling of touch heightened.

Fingers graze my pussy gently, slipping inside. I mentally curse myself for already being so wet, the thrill of being chased exciting me.

Zayn pumps two fingers in and out of me, making my legs shake. I feel his thumb brush over my clit, circling the sensitive area as my hips press into him, desperate for more.

I'm close to coming when he suddenly removes his hand, leaving me feeling empty. I mumble a curse which comes out muffled, but it's cut off quickly as he grabs the backs of my legs, lifting them off the ground.

I feel his body press against me, allowing me to wrap my legs around his waist for stability. He rubs the head of his cock

against my clit, before guiding it to my entrance and pushing inside.

My head falls back against the tree, a moan catching in my throat as he slowly fucks me. I don't even care that the bark is scratching my ass and back now. It's making my skin feel like it's on fire in the best possible way.

Suddenly, he starts fucking me faster. Hard, against the tree, he impales me over and over on his length, his fingers digging into my legs tight as he holds me up.

I start to clench around him, my orgasm building from the sensations. My legs start falling, my feet finding the ground as he suddenly pulls out of me and leaves me against the tree.

"No!" I mumble, impressed that I could manage at least that with a mouthful of fabric.

My legs shake as they try to hold my body weight, my arousal dripping down my thighs. My pussy aches as my orgasm starts to fade, desperate for more.

Hands slide up my outer thighs and I lift one of my legs, trying to find Zayn's body.

I let out a gasp when he slaps my leg playfully, knocking it away.

Muffled words of protest come out as best as possible, sounding completely incoherent. Hands reach for me again, and this time, I stay still, silently begging for him to take me again.

My heart bounces happily when I'm lifted off the ground again, my legs moving around his body. His cock thrusts into my eager body forcefully, filling me.

Moans rip from my throat, my hips testing the waters as I rock against him. Despite the pleasure shooting through my body, I can't help but feel something is off.

It's hard to concentrate though and I can't figure out what, as his cock slides in and out, smashing my back into the tree with every thrust.

Fingers find my clit, circling it before pinching it. My body starts shaking as I lay helpless against the tree, my back burning with small cuts and grazes.

My climax suddenly flies through my body, making me scream into the fabric. I clench around his cock, squeezing him as he continues fucking me at a fast pace.

I accidentally throw my head back too fast, hitting the tree, but I don't care. My legs cling hard, pulling him in as far as possible as my lower body is practically bent into a 'V' shape.

I feel him still, spilling into me as he leans his forehead against mine. I gently push back against him, wishing I could touch him.

He pulls out of me, carefully placing my feet on the ground. I do my best to stand, waiting as my hands are untied from the tree.

Reaching for the blindfold and mouth gag, I pull them off. My head is still spinning from being fucked so hard, that I'm

seeing double.

*Literally double.*

My gaze shifts between Zayn and Blake, the two of them fully dressed and staring at me with smirks.

“I fucking knew it,” I laugh, grabbing my shorts and underwear off the ground and slipping them on.

“How could you tell?” Zayn grins.

I shrug. “Something felt different. I should have known you would do a twin swap at some point to try to confuse me.”

Blake scoffs playfully. “Too clever for your own good.”

I walk over, wrapping my arms around his neck and leaning in for a kiss.

“Maybe. But you love my smart mouth, don’t you?”



# Chapter 12

## Rylee

“Why are you walking funny?” Chuck asks, as I hobble into the hospital room.

“I think I have a splinter in my pussy.”

He bursts out laughing, motioning for me to sit down. I spread my legs open in a very un lady-like fashion as I sit down.

“How did that happen?” he questions.

“Got fucked against a tree. It’s nearly as bad as the time you fucked me in the mud,” I grumble.

Chuck grins. “Ahh... good memories. Do you still speak to your old roommates?”

I shake my head. “I haven’t for a while. I should reach out to them. I miss them, even with their terrible cooking skills. Hey, maybe the two of us could go for a drive to Rosevale and visit them one day soon.”

He nods. “That sounds good. I bet your old work friends would be happy to see you too. Isn’t there a wedding coming up?”

My eyes light up. “George’s wedding! Fuck, I totally forgot to RSVP. Do you think it’s too late?”

“Nah,” Chuck says. “Everyone loves weddings. Though, not sure how you’d swing having a plus four.”

Snorting, I imagine the look on George’s face when he finds out I am, in fact, the dating queen. My dear old Georgie smashed the online dating world and here I am, with four boyfriends like such dick-crazed psycho.

“We’ll figure it out. You know you’d be my preference for a plus one there. But something tells me that the others won’t let me out of their sights.”

Chuck nods in agreement. “I don’t blame them. I encourage it, actually. You’re precious cargo and need to be protected at all costs.”

“Precious cargo, my ass,” I mumble. “Besides, I’m not the one that needs protecting right now. Look at you.”

“Well,” he starts. “Now that you mention it, I have some news.”

“Oh?”

Chuck grins, lifting his hand to show me that his IV is gone. “I’m on oral painkillers now. Doctors said I can go home either tomorrow or the day after. No signs of infection and all

my levels are back up to normal. I just have to take it easy at home.”

I grimace. “You don’t know how to take it easy.”

“If I had a sexy nurse to help, I might be able to rest.”

I tap the side of my face, deep in thought. “Maybe you can come stay with us. I don’t think the guys would mind. The only problem is...”

“Is what?” he asks.

I sigh. “Our parents. They are still struggling with the fact I’m dating my three stepbrothers. Not sure how they would react to a fourth boyfriend.”

“Since when do you give a fuck?” he asks genuinely.

“I don’t,” I admit. “I just don’t want to rock the boat right now with the Norsemen keeping us on edge. I just wish my Mom would get off my back and let me live my life the way I want to.”

Chuck hums thoughtfully. “Sounds a lot like my Mom. Tyson has gone back home, but he stopped in to see her before he left. Apparently, she’s still a religious nut.”

“You don’t talk to her at all?” I ask.

He shakes his head. “When I got my first tattoo, she drove me to the church and tried to get me baptized. I think she’s too far gone. I love her as my mother, but it doesn’t mean I have to like her. Respect goes both ways.”

“Too true,” I sigh. “I love my Mom too. I just think she blames me for my Dad’s death and still thinks that one day I’m going to wake up, and want to be a perky cheerleader again.”

“Do you still have the outfit, by chance?”

I raise an eyebrow at him. “Pervert. I’m not putting it on and dancing for you.”

Chuck pouts, feigning a hurt look. “Meanie. I’ve always wanted to fuck a cheerleader in costume.”

“Maybe for Halloween,” I say, laughing as his eyes laugh up like a kid at Christmas.



“I need to talk to you guys.”

The three brothers look up from the gaming console, their half-empty beers in front of them. Apparently, they’ve taken to hiding in Asher’s mancave during the day when the parents are at home.

“Yes and yes,” Zayn grins.

“You don’t even know the question yet,” I laugh.

Asher’s eyes scan my body heatedly. “If it involves you, then yes.”

I cross my arms, jutting my hip out. “It does involve me. It also involves Chuck.”

Asher’s face falls, like he’s just been cockblocked.

“Maybe,” he grumbles, his face twitching as he considers possibilities likely involving me in the middle.

I roll my eyes, walking over to sit in between Blake and Zayn.

“Chuck’s being let out of the hospital tomorrow. I think he should come stay with us.”

Asher’s eyebrows crease as he puts his controller down. “Here?”

“Where else would I be talking about?” I snipe, annoyed. “Yes, here.”

“It’s not a horrible idea,” Blake says. “Especially with everything happening right now.”

Zayn puts his hand on my knee. “I’m easy. But I’m not sharing my bed. That’s reserved only for you.”

“Speaking of... where would he sleep?” Asher asks. “Because it’s not fair if he gets to camp in with you and the rest of us don’t.”

“Look,” I start. “I don’t know the logistics. Maybe he sleeps down here. I don’t know. I’m just trying to think of solutions until this mess gets sorted.”

Asher picks up his controller, resuming his game. “Fine. But he needs to help clean up. I’m not picking up after everyone.”

“When do you even clean?” Blake snorts.

Asher ignores him, fingers smashing the keys as he focuses on the tv screen. I look at Blake, giving him a thankful smile.

“You’re so good to me,” I tease, but there’s sincerity to my tone.

Blake leans down, pressing a kiss to my forehead. “I know. Which is why I’m your favorite.”

I jump when Zayn kisses the spot behind my ear. “We both know I’m your favorite.”

“Okay, stop it,” I tell them, standing up. “I don’t have time to be distracted by your dicks. I have to go tell my Mother about it and we all know how well that’s going to go down.”

Asher snorts. “Good luck with that.”

“Thanks,” I grumble, heading towards the stairs. “If I don’t come back soon, I’ve been murdered. Avenge me.”



I find Mom in her bedroom, sitting on her bed, sorting through a box. She looks up as I knock, letting out a sigh.

“I was just looking for my old couture perfume and found these photos.”

Walking into the room, I look down at the box, noticing all the developed photos of us.

“I forgot real photos used to be a thing,” I mumble, picking a blurry polaroid and letting out a smile.

It’s a photo of my Dad and I at the beach when I was around seven. I’m sitting on his shoulders, grinning from ear to ear

with an ice cream cone in my hand.

“Yes, well, technology certainly changed that,” Mom says, neatly packing some photos back away. “Did you need something?”

I resist the urge to roll my eyes, doing my best to keep this civil.

“I wanted to chat to you about something.”

Mom lets out a dry laugh. “It must be serious. You don’t chat to me about anything, anymore.”

“When are you going to stop punishing me?” I ask, putting the photo down.

“What am I punishing you for?” Mom questions, looking exasperated.

I step back, creating some distance between us. “For not being the perfect daughter.”

“I don’t know, Rylee,” she sighs. “I just feel like you were there one minute, and gone the next. I don’t know how to have this relationship anymore.”

I nod, sadly understanding what she means.

“I’m still your daughter,” I tell her softly. “I’m just not doing the things you used to love. But I’m still me.”

“Grief changes people,” she murmurs quietly. “I know I changed too. I just kind of expected you’d follow in my footsteps.”

Sitting down on the edge of the bed, I lean on my knees. “I was just a teenager, Mom. We grieved differently. There’s nothing wrong with that. But I don’t think the way I’m living my life these days has anything to do with grief now. I’m just trying to be happy. That’s all any of us can ask for.”

“I want you to be happy, Rylee. But is this truly what you want? I just don’t understand it. We left for a few months and suddenly you and Asher like each other. Don’t get me wrong, I’m thrilled you are finally getting along. But if we had returned and found you had both killed each other, I would have been less surprised.”

I laugh, genuinely laugh. “I still want to kill him sometimes. But he helped me through a lot, Mom. We grew together. And Zayn and Blake... they are really special too. They get me, you know what I mean?”

“No,” she answers honestly. “But I’m not saying that you’re wrong. I just couldn’t help feeling like this was your way of getting back at Gareth and I.”

“I didn’t fall in love with Gareth’s sons to hurt you,” I grumble. “In fact, they are the last people I ever expected to fall in love with. Please don’t take it personally. I’m not out to ruin your marriage.”

Mom’s eyebrows shoot up and a look crosses her eyes that resembles hurt. “Well, Gareth is certainly not happy with it. We even discussed the possibility of getting a divorce.”

“What?” I yell. “Don’t be ridiculous. Neither of our relationships have to affect the other.”



She gives me a tight smile. You know those smiles that our Moms give us when they are trying to reassure us, even though we know it's bullshit? Yeah, one of those.

“Don't worry. We're not getting divorced. But we are deciding whether or not to move to the ranch permanently.”

“And what would happen to the house and us?” I ask, concerned.

Mom looks at me carefully, eyes roaming over my face. “We would still own the house, but you four could live here together. Besides, Gareth can work remotely from pretty much anywhere and I'm not a worker as we know. We have plenty of money to survive somewhere else. It would give you freedom, at least.”

I shake my head, trying to process the conversation. “Wait... so we would live here alone? I don't understand.”

“We like the ranch, Rylee. It's peaceful and it's a new start. I don't know what it would mean for you down the track with your relationships, but it's an olive branch.”

I swallow. “Surprisingly, that brings me to my next point quite nicely.”

“Oh, there's more,” Mom says sarcastically with a dry laugh. “What else?”

I stand up again, pacing slightly with folded arms. “I actually have a fourth boyfriend,” I spit out quickly before I can change my mind. “He's a ... friend, kind of, with the other guys. Anyway, he got hurt saving me but he's being released

from hospital. I want to see if he can stay here with me for a bit.”

Mom freezes, stilling for way too long that I start to worry I’ve pushed her over the edge and she’s having a stroke. Finally, she lets out a shaky breath.

“Four boyfriends…”

“Well, it’s not like one person could handle me on their own,” I joke.

She shakes her head in disbelief. “It could be worse. It could be drugs, I suppose.” She pauses, looking at me rapidly. “You’re not doing drugs, are you?”

“No,” I deadpan. “I’m not doing drugs, Mother.”

“Good,” she breathes a sigh of relief. “I suppose that’s fine then. But perhaps we should all sit down soon and have a chat about things again. Less heatedly, this time.”

I nod. “I’m prepared to do that. I think the guys would like to work things out with Gareth too. We don’t want shit to be awkward.”

Mom finishes closing up the box, standing up and walking to her closet to put it back on the top shelf. “I think that’s a smart idea. We’ll do that maybe tomorrow when I’ve had a chance to talk to Gareth.”

“Okay,” I say. “Thanks Mom. This was oddly productive.”

She turns, giving me a small smile. “Your Dad would be proud of you, Rylee.”

I watch as she walks over, holding out a singular photo that didn't make it back to the box – the beach photo. I take it, staring down at my Dad's smiling face.

“I think he would be too,” I admit. “I hope wherever he is, he's happy and waiting for me.”

Mom gently puts her hand on my shoulder as she walks past. “We'll see him again one day, Rylee. I'm sure of it.”

# Chapter 13

## Rylee

“What are you looking for?” Asher asks, walking into my bedroom. I’m ripping apart my drawers, flicking through paperwork and making an absolute mess.

“George’s wedding invitation. I can’t remember where I put it and I need to RSVP.”

Asher frowns, stepping over abandoned scraps of paper with college scribble. “Who the heck is George?”

“George!” I tell him, frustrated. “My friend, George. Remember, we went to collect the invitation?”

“Wait,” he pauses. “From Rosevale? The guy from the bar?”

I stomp over to the closet, grabbing the bag I took away, checking the pockets. “Yes! I helped him set up his dating profile. It’s totally slipped my mind recently. AHA!” I pull out the invitation from the internal pocket, checking the date. “Found it.”

Asher walks up behind me, peering over my shoulder. “Do you think going to a wedding is safe right now?”

“Of course I do. Besides, I’ll have you guys with me. Maybe... I need to figure out the plus one situation,” I mumble, reaching into my shorts pocket for my phone.

“You can’t expect to take all of us as your date,” Asher says. “Weddings are expensive.”

I sigh. “I know. But you guys will fight over it.”

“Nah, we can just do rock-paper-scissors. I know Zayn always chooses scissors because he likes to wiggle his tongue in between them afterwards.”

Snorting, I send a quick text to George, apologizing for my delay in replying but that I want to attend and how many guests is it possible to bring. I *can’t wait* to have that conversation with him.

Asher stands behind me, wrapping his arms around my body. I smile, leaning back into him.

“So, what time does Chuck get here?” he asks.

I check the time on my phone screen. “Probably in an hour or so. I offered to go pick him up but he said Butch was already giving him a ride.”

“We should have pizza or something special for dinner. Welcome him to the house.”

I turn around, pressing into his chest. “Okay... what have you done with Asher?”

Asher scoffs. "What? Can't I be nice?"

"Not really," I mumble. "Do you want something? Is that why you're sucking up right now?"

"I do actually want something," Asher confirms, grinning.

I raise an eyebrow. "And what is that?"

Leaning down, he presses his lips to mine. I kiss him back, resting my hands on his chest.

"I was hoping you'd have a shower with me," he says, pulling back slightly. "It's been awhile since I got you to myself in there."

I grab the bottom of his shirt, lifting it over his stomach. He moves his arms, allowing me to fling it over his head.

I take a moment to look at his bare chest in appreciation, my fingers tracing his stomach muscles. "Okay," I answer softly. "Yours or mine?"

"We're already here, so yours," he says, lifting me up suddenly and carrying me towards the bathroom.

I let out a squeal, wrapping my legs around him as we head into the ensuite. Asher leans over into the shower, turning the shower handle while still holding me. He presses my back against the shower glass, kissing my neck as my legs slide down to the ground. His hands reach for my shorts, slowly removing them from my body.

"What the hell happened to your ass?" Asher asks, laughing when I turn around.

“Your brothers fucked me against a tree,” I say, pulling my shirt off.

Asher shakes his head, kicking his pants off. “Typical. And here I just get boring showers.”

I lean against him, our naked bodies pressing together. “There’s nothing boring about our showers, Asher,” I tell him, dragging my nails lightly down his chest.

“Nothing is boring with you, Ry,” he says, grabbing my hand and leading me into the shower.

Water falls over us as we squeeze together, making out under the stream. I reach for the soap, lathering up my hands before washing Asher’s shoulders.

Asher’s mouth attaches to my neck, kissing my wet skin along the nape of my throat and down to my collarbone. I tilt my head, giving him more access as I run my hand down his stomach before reaching his hips. I grip his cock, stroking him with my soaped up hands.

He groans into my neck, snaking an arm around my body before swinging me around and pushing my back against the tiles.

“I won’t last long if you do that,” he says, kicking my legs apart with his foot.

I gasp when his fingers find my center, stroking me gently before slipping inside. “I think you should hurry up and get inside me,” I tell him.

Asher laughs, pumping his fingers in and out of me faster, making my legs shake. “Do you now? I’m quite enjoying this.”

I grab his shoulders to help steady myself, my eyes closing as feelings of ecstasy roll through my body. “Fuck, Asher. I’m going to come,” I moan, doing my best to stay upright as he increases his pace.

“Do it. I want you to come,” he says huskily, biting my neck.

A cry tumbles out of my lips as I climax, my body dropping slightly as my legs buckle. Asher helps me stay upfront, lifting me slightly with his arm. When I come down from the high, he pulls his fingers out, popping them into his mouth and sucking them.

“That’s my good tasting girl,” he grins.

My chest heaves from my breaths as I watch, my stomach twisting. He’s absolutely drop dead gorgeous, especially soaking wet.

I slowly lower to my knees, holding eye contact with him. His eyes flare as he watches and waits.

I grip his hard cock in my hand, stroking him a few times before I pop the tip of it in my mouth. He lets out a little hiss, encouraging me to take him further.

My lips slide down his length, tasting the water on his skin. I take him as far as I can go, pulling back as I apply suction with my mouth.



“Just like that,” he groans, holding the back of my head as I lower myself again. “Take me as far as you can go.”

I hum my agreement, the vibration in my throat making him jolt. Asher tips his head back, his breathing getting uneven as I start moving faster.

I continue tasting him with my tongue and lips, taking my time to torture him. When his hips start moving in urgency, I pull back, letting him fall from my mouth.

“Sorry... were you about to come?” I ask, teasing him.

Asher growls, looking down at me. “You’re a fucking brat.”

“I know,” I smile. “What are you going to do about it?”

I see a flash of danger in his eyes before he leans down, scooping me up and bringing me to my feet. I laugh as he picks me up from the ground, carrying me on his waist. I wrap my legs around him, reaching down to grab his cock as I line it up with my eager body.

He pushes into me, holding me upright against him as he starts thrusting into me. I lock my arms around his neck, tightening my legs as I hold on while he fucks me standing up.

We’re so close to each other, our hips perfectly rubbing against each other’s. The friction rubs against my clit constantly as Asher spears into me.

“I bet you can’t make me come like this,” I breathe out, challenging him.

Asher lets out a low chuckle. “Challenge accepted,” he replies, pushing into me deeper as he rocks his hips against me.

I bite my lip, rolling my body against him, chasing my high. It was stupid to challenge him, because we both know I’m going to come. It’s only a matter of time. Asher knows my body so well now, probably almost better than I know myself.

Our mouths collide, tongues heatedly smashing together as we build towards the edge. We fall over it together, sounds of our release pouring into the other’s mouth as we come at the same time.

Asher lowers me slowly, the feeling of his release spilling out of me and down my legs into the drain as we kiss.

We take our time in the shower, washing each other before climbing out, slipping into my bed naked. And that’s where we choose to stay until there’s a knock on the door an hour later.



“This pizza is surprisingly good,” Chuck says, gesturing to the boxes on the coffee table.

We’re all holed up in the mancave, sitting in a circle around the table. It’s been pleasant so far, except for the part when Chuck insisted on walking down the stairs himself. The nurses gave him strict instructions to limit the movement on his bad

leg as much as possible, but if I've learnt anything, it's that men are fucking stubborn.

Thankfully, he's on painkillers so he assures me he doesn't feel anything at the moment and can walk fine. Personally, I think he's bullshitting but when weighing up the option of staying upstairs for dinner with the parents, I can understand the decision.

"It's the best around," Zayn replies, leaning back into the couch. "Probably a lot better than the hospital shit you were getting."

Chuck laughs. "Not wrong. I'll be glad to never have to eat another hospital meal again."

"The jello goes alright," I mumble between bites.

Asher wrinkles his nose. "No, it doesn't."

I shrug. "Jello is just jello. Anyway, did you get a chance to talk to your Dad yet?"

Blake snorts. "Zayn and I spoke to him for a little bit earlier. Apparently, they are heading back to the ranch tomorrow, so we're going to sit down with him in the morning before they leave."

Chuck looks over at me, scanning my face. "The fun never stops, does it?"

"Nope," I grumble. "Such a fun experience for all."

"Well, they do say to keep it in the family," Zayn muses, whining when I elbow him in the ribs.

I finish shoving my pizza into my mouth, tucking my legs under me. “It’s just another problem to deal with. Who knows – maybe things will go quiet for a bit.”

“Don’t say that,” Blake says. “You’ll jinx it. I just want to relax for a few days.”

“And do observation,” Zayn points out.

Bill and Mack contacted the twins today and directed them to keep a look out for any unusual behavior from the Norsemen. So far, there’s been no sign of them after the attack on Wheels, and we’re optimistic it might stay that way.

“Not really much to observe,” Blake states. “Their closest clubhouse is the next town over, and from what I’ve been told, they haven’t even been gathering there.”

“Is there a clubhouse in Linton?” I ask.

Blake nods. “A small one, but their presence wasn’t overly huge up that way. They are more situated here, but given they are trying to push for territory, it’s possible they are trying to set up shop somewhere else.”

“I don’t understand why clubs don’t just live in harmony.”

Chuck laughs, his eyes lighting up. “Bikers... living in harmony? Sounds like a fantasy.”

“What?” I argue. “Plenty of bikers shared Wheels with no problems. It’s not completely unreasonable to assume they could act like adults.”

He shrugs. “This is true. But not all bikers are like us. Besides, we’re pretty awesome.”

Asher scoffs. “I don’t understand the fascination. It’s just illegal doings and riding around.”

I look at the twins and Chuck before staring at Asher. “They all had their reasons, Ash. Zayn and Blake wanted an escape and Chuck had a rough upbringing. The club was like a new found family for them.”

Hurt crosses his face, making me regret my words. Blake puts his beer down, leaning forward.

“Ash, the club is a brotherhood, but it doesn’t take anything away from what we have as a family.”

“You still left,” Asher points out. “On my birthday.”

Blake nods, not denying it. “I know, and we’re sorry. But you know how toxic shit was getting here. We just needed space.”

“I get it,” I chime in. “I felt the same when I met Butch then the guys at Wheels. It was a nice escape from home. It helped me make new friends and get through Dad’s death. Especially since I quit the cheer team and lost all my friends.”

Asher stiffens. “Was Jenny ever really your friend?”

“Of course she was,” I say. “We just became different people. Sometimes people are only meant to be in your life for a certain amount of time and when they’ve fulfilled their role, it’s time to part ways.”

“Very wise, Obi-Won,” Zayn comments.

I roll my eyes. “It’s true. We grow as humans all the time. We can’t be expected to be in the same circle forever. People change.”

Blake snorts. “I don’t know. Asher is still the same pig-headed asshole he’s always been.”

He dodges a bottle lid as Asher throws it at him, giving his brother a smirk.

“Not to mention angry and stubborn.”

I laugh as Asher looks offended. Out of all of us, he’s probably changed the most recently. And I’m not sure I can admit it, but I’m pretty sure it’s making me fall more in love with him every day.

Blake pauses, digging into his pocket, pulling his phone out. He swipes open the screen, reading something.

I’m still focused on Asher when Blake stills.

“Fuck,” he says quietly.

“What?” I ask, looking over at him.

He glances up at me. “You jinxed it. The Norsemen just attacked.”

# Chapter 14

## Zayn

“What? Where?” Rylee yells, her eyes widening.

*Ah for fuck’s sake. Knew shit was way too quiet.*

Blake hands me his cell, a knowing look on his face. I glance at the screen, reading the text message from Bill.

“The Jokers? Seriously?” I ask bewildered.

“Who are the Jokers?” Rylee questions, turning to Chuck.

He scratches his head, frowning. “As in the Jokers from the South? Shit, I haven’t seen or heard much about them in ages.”

Asher and Rylee look frustrated, clearly annoyed at being kept out of the loop. I hand the cell back to Blake before looking at Ry.

“The Jokers are the largest club down South. Really old school – been around for ages. It doesn’t make a lot of sense,” I say.

Chuck grabs his cell, tapping away at the screen. He's probably messaging his contacts or checking for info.

"And do we know anything else?" Asher asks.

Blake shakes his head. "Only that they were attacked tonight at their clubhouse. It's the end of the week so it's possible they were in the middle of a club meeting or hang out."

"I thought you said it was suicidal for the Norsemen to attack a clubhouse," Rylee says to me.

She's right. I did say that. There's never been a good outcome when a club is attacked on their own turf. Even when just hanging out, bikers will have weapons on them and be in large numbers. They would be ready to defend themselves, and would have the upper hand once the surprise element is gone.

"It's unexpected," I reply, frowning. "I can't imagine why they would have done that."

"Because they want to make a statement," Blake snaps. "They are trying to show they don't care about consequences."

Rylee stands up, pacing. My lips twitch as I fight a smile. She always paces when she's thinking. It's like it generates energy and powers her brain. It's quite cute, actually.

"But your higher ups said if they attacked again, the Rebels would move into action. They haven't attacked us and Bill said they don't get involved in other club's shit. So, what happens now?"



Blake sighs. “I can only assume the Rebels will want to attack regardless. If we do nothing, it leaves the door open for them to attack us next.”

Rylee pauses, glaring at him. “But if we attack, then they will definitely come after us.”

“Yeah, they will,” I confirm, watching as the color drains from her face. “Unless we take them out fully.”

“Take them out fully,” she repeats. “Like murder an entire motorcycle club? Why don’t the police step in?”

Chuck scoffs. “They won’t do anything. They can’t control the clubs due to our numbers. They turn a blind eye to it, unless absolutely necessary.”

I look over as Asher throws his hands up in exasperation. “Isn’t this necessary? They are literally killing people. You know – arguably the worst possible crime.”

“It’s just how it’s always been,” Blake responds. “They don’t want to get in the middle of a biker war. It’s suicide for them.”

“So, will there be another meeting?” Rylee asks, leaning against the wall.

I shake my head, crossing my leg over my opposite knee. “Not likely. We won’t be able to gather again this soon after an attack. They will be watching and hoping for that.”

Blake’s cell lights up again with a silent text and we all turn to watch as he reads.

“They are going ahead with the plan,” he says. “Sending more information to everyone when it’s organized.”

Rylee walks over to Chuck, sitting down next to him. “You don’t have to go again, right? I mean, you’re injured. Surely they won’t need you.”

There’s a desperation in her voice that breaks my heart. Her hands tremble slightly as she fights to compose herself, and if I’m correct, there’s also a glint in her eyes that says she will fight every single person who tries to take him away again.

*I have to admit I’m a little jealous.*

But also incredibly proud of her. She fights for the people she loves – not an easy feat when you consider the enemies.

Most people would run from us, protect themselves from this type of chaos.

Not Rylee.

That stubborn, fiery attitude is unmatched. She’s truly a force of fucking nature.

My cell dings on the table in front of me and I lean forward, clutching it in my fingers. Rylee glances over as the others watch and wait for me to read.

*Hm. Not ideal.*

I click the screen off and put the cell back down, grinning at Rylee as she stares at me impatiently.

“What was it?” she asks, her tone on edge.

“Spam message,” I respond. “Something about buying pills to make my cock grow an extra three inches. But I don’t need it.”

Relief washes over her face as she shakes her head with a nervous laugh. Blake and I lock eyes, and I can already tell he knows I’m lying. His face tightens before he gives the smallest of nods – so discreet that no one else notices.

I gaze over to Asher, making sure he hasn’t picked up on anything either. He’s too busy watching Rylee to notice, but he doesn’t say anything about the message.

I’m not sure how to break the news to her. I should have known they would call me in as part of the crew. Bill already gave me the brief heads up that he’d be recruiting one of us if this needed to occur.

Watching her panic over Chuck makes me realize I can’t let her in on this. She’ll lose her shit, and right now, we can’t afford for Rylee to involve herself in any way more than necessary. We’re about to head into dangerous territory, and the last thing any of us need to worry about is her safety if she spirals and tries to opt in.

The text message laid out the plans succinctly – a dozen of us will meet later tonight and target the Norsemen’s clubhouse. We need to act swiftly and forcefully, before we give them more time to prepare or attack someone else.

I check the time on the tv screen, noticing it’s already 8pm. We’re meeting at 11pm at the State Park again. I’m going to

have to get Blake alone to work out a plan – maybe even Chuck too.

Rylee and Asher need to be kept in the dark about this for now, so we need to figure out a way to distract them both so I can leave without being noticed.

Thank God Rylee has four boyfriends. Strength does come in numbers and right now, I'm going to use the shit out of that advantage.



I managed to speak to Chuck privately after offering to help him with the stairs when he needed to use the restroom. Thankfully, he's on the same page about Rylee and offered to distract her while Blake and I head upstairs to chat.

We lock ourselves in my bedroom when the other three are back in the mancave together, reading over the texts again.

“Are you ready for this?” Blake asks, scanning the information from Bill.

I nod. “Piece of cake, really. I'll be back before sunrise. You just need to keep Rylee from coming in here. We'll tell her I'm sick from dinner and resting.”

Blake scoffs. “She's not stupid. She'll want to check on you, but Chuck is going to play on his pain. Maybe she needs to see you in bed first, then we can sneak you out afterwards.”

“Me and Rylee near the bed?” I taunt. “I’ll never make it to the meeting.”

He shoves my arm, scowling. “Stay focused. You need to be sensible. I’m not coming to save your ass if shit goes south.”

“Yeah, you would,” I tell him, grinning. “Mr. Hero complex.”

I start gathering some things into a bag, shoving it out of sight before climbing into bed. I send Blake downstairs to tell Rylee I’m not feeling well, and as suspected, she comes up to inspect me herself.

“What’s wrong?” she asks, heading over to the side of the bed and looking at me concerned.

“Just a sore stomach, babe. I’ll be fine,” I tell her. “I think I just need an early night.”

Rylee frowns, sitting on the edge of the mattress. “Do you want me to stay in here with you?”

I resist the urge to grin at her or make a cheeky comment, doing my best to act like I’m dying. “Nah. You hang with Chuck. Poor guy was telling me before that his leg was killing him.”

Her eyes flash and I think ‘*there we go*’ as she falls for my mastermind plan. She bites her lip, nodding.

“Okay,” she says softly, giving me a smile. “I’ll go keep an eye on him. But promise me you’ll call if you need me?”

“Of course,” I respond, doing a little groan. “I’m feeling a bit tired, so I’ll probably be asleep before you even get down there. But I promise if I need you, I’ll let you know.”

Rylee nods, obviously satisfied with the plan. She crawls over the bed, kissing my forehead gently.

God, she smells and looks so good that it takes everything in my willpower not to pull her under the blanket with me and have my way with her. I’ve never understood how people can think she’s selfish. She’s got such a caring, protective nature. It makes me almost want to put a baby in her, or do something to nurture that side.

Maybe even marry her one day.

“I love you,” I say to her, cupping her face. “Always and forever.”

She beams at me. “I love you too, Zayn. Get some rest.”

I watch as she moves off the bed, heading out of the room. I close my eyes for a second, frustrated that I’m going to have to leave shortly. I just want to stay with her but duty calls.

I give it a few minutes before I text Blake, confirming with him that she’s downstairs again and distracted. Fetching the bag, I sneak out of the house into the garage, pushing my bike out. It will feel really good ripping this beast out again.

Pushing the bike down the driveway, I wait until I’m near the gate to start her up. I should be far enough away that they won’t hear the engine in the mancave.

I shove my helmet on and kick the stand up, pulling out onto the road and heading towards the State Park.

It's a beautiful night, with not a cloud in the sky. It's still warm, the breeze offering a comforting heat to it as I ride.

When I arrive at the State Park, I'm met with a dozen other club members, all standing around chatting.

"You're late," Bill snipes at me as I walk up to the group.

"My bad," I grin. "I had to take care of some business first."

Mack's present too, his grim features looking even darker than usual in the dim light. He looks over at Bill, obviously holding him accountable for my tardiness.

Bill glares back at him. "He's referring to his girlfriend."

The others snicker quietly, obviously thinking I'm referring to something else. I mean, I wish it could have been *that* but alas, I'm cockblocked. I take the chance to look around at the familiar faces. Butch is here, a small smirk on his face as we lock eyes. Without a doubt, he knows that Rylee needed to be dealt with for me to be here. Frank has also been called in, as well as a few other various members.

"Let's get this sorted," Mack starts. "We're going to break into two groups. One group is going to attack the Linton clubhouse. The other will target the clubhouse near the Brightmore border."

"And how do we do that exactly?" I ask.

Bill nods off to the side, motioning towards jerry cans. “Accelerates. Burn the clubhouses down. There’s enough here to set them completely alight. I trust some of you have Zippos on you.”

There’s murmurs of confirmation which appear to please Mack and Bill.

I’m placed with Mack, Butch and a few others and given the Brightmore clubhouse. I have no issues with that. When I’m finished, it will be a nice short drive back home.

We start loading the jerry cans onto the bikes, placing them in the storage compartments or tying to the plate racks. We go over team plans, deciding who will do what and when, orchestrating the blaze from start to finish.

“We’ll confirm by text when it’s done. If there’s any signs of movement in the clubhouse, resort to Plan B which is lighting up their motorbikes. But as far as we’re aware, both clubhouses are empty right now,” Mack tells everyone, swinging his leg over his bike.

I follow suit, pulling the helmet on. Let’s get this shit over and done with so I can get home to my girl.

The teams break off in different directions when we exit the State Park, heading to the clubhouses. When I pull up to the Norsemen clubhouse on the edge of Brightmore and Mayland, it’s completely shrouded in darkness. Their intel was correct, with not a soul in sight.



Mack walks over to their door, kicking the living shit out of it until it smashes open. We grab jerry cans, circling the perimeter inside and out, pouring gasoline on every surface.

“I’ve got a Zippo,” Butch says, pulling it out of his pocket. He sparks up a cigarette, taking a drag.

“Remember, get straight out of here and head home,” Mack directs. “It won’t take long for them to realize and you don’t want to be caught. Ready?”

Butch nods, taking another long drag before flicking his lit cigarette into a puddle of gasoline just inside the door of the clubhouse. Immediately, it catches, flames shooting up and spitting in every which direction.

We wait for a few minutes, checking that it catches well before mounting our bikes and taking off.

*Easy peasy. Home time.*

As I ride back through the quiet streets, I spot a gas station open. I pull into the parking lot, killing the engine before heading inside.

Rylee deserves some chocolate. Females love chocolate, right? Nothing is as sweet as her, but maybe it will help placate her after I fill her in on tonight’s events.

The gas station attendee is barely awake before the counter, eyes drooping as he scrolls his cell. He looks up, greeting me lazily as I walk past and survey the candy bar selection.

I start grabbing a few different ones and head to the counter, tapping my card on the pay terminal. The young, lazy ass

attendee barely says anything, just grunting at me when I'm done. I tuck the candy bars into my leather jacket pocket, zipping it closed so they don't fly out on the way home.

I head back to the bike, spotting another motorcycle pull in as I straddle my seat. It pulls up next to me, the rider gazing over to me through the dark visor. I give a polite nod, shoving my helmet on before revving the engine and walking the bike backwards.

I don't bother being quiet when I pull into the driveway, riding the bike all the way to the garage. It's not because I don't care about being quiet since Rylee can know now. It's more about the fact that as I cruised down the driveway, I spot Rylee standing at the front door, arms crossed as she glares at me.

The candy bars are definitely about to come in handy.

# Chapter 15

## Rylee

“I can’t believe you!” I yell, shoving my finger into Zayn’s leather jacket. “You tricked me.”

He looks down at my finger with an amused expression before gazing back up at me.

“Don’t be mad, babe. It was just a quick little excursion.”

I should have known something was up earlier. I’ve never known Zayn to be sick like that. It’s not that I don’t believe he can’t be sick – he’s human, after all. It’s the fact he willingly encouraged me to leave the bedroom. There was something so unusual about his behavior, that it planted a ticking time bomb in my mind, fucking with me until I started to lose focus on everything else.

After that, Blake and Chuck were being fucking suspicious and it didn’t take me long to realize something was definitely up. Chuck might be walking a bit better, but he sure as hell isn’t as fast as me yet. So, when I took off from the mancave,

it left only Blake to charge after me. I knew if he followed, then I was right.

He caught up to me quickly and I rounded on him, barrelling him up in the hallway, demanding to know what was going on. He didn't even try to deny it, just stared at me with a blank, bored expression that infuriated me to no end.

*Fucking asshole.*

Finally, I managed to get a short confession out but thankfully it wasn't long after that, that I heard the roar of Zayn's bike in the driveway. I took a peek from the front porch before heading inside and waited for Zayn at the internal garage door, ready to unleash when he got inside.

"Why didn't you just tell me?" I ask, hurt.

Zayn pulls me against him, the leather brushing against my skin. "Because you would have lost your mind. I saw how worried you were when you thought Chuck might have had to go. I didn't want you to worry about me."

"Of course I worry," I mutter. "I worry about all of you. You should have told me."

He shakes his head. "You would have demanded to either come or that I stay home. Neither option was available. What you don't know, won't hurt you. Don't be mad, pretty girl. It's done now, anyway."

Blake stands off to the side behind us, watching our exchange. I give Zayn a quick nod, stalking past Blake with a glare.

“What? Why am I the one in trouble and he gets off?” Blake complains.

“It’s because I’m handsome and charming,” Zayn teases.

I spot Asher lurking in the kitchen, glass of scotch in his hand. I head over to him, prying the glass from his fingers and taking a swig.

“I was drinking that,” he points out.

“I need it more,” I shoot back, ignoring the twins as they walk in.

Asher glares at Zayn, annoyance on his face too. He’s equally as pissed about being kept in the dark.

“Oh, not you too,” Zayn groans, trying to grab the drink from me.

I turn away, holding the glass to my chest. “Get your own.”

Asher flails his hands in exasperation. “You took mine.”

“Yeah, well,” I start, narrowing my eyes at the twins. “I’m coming to bed with *you*, so you’ll forgive me.”

Asher’s face lights up, sending a victorious beam at his brothers. “Sounds good to me.”

“And what about me?” Chuck asks, hobbling into the kitchen.

“You’re in trouble too,” I say, finishing the drink and putting the empty glass into the sink. “Come on, Ash.”

Grabbing his hand, I pull him behind me past the others and head towards the stairs. I hear the three of them in the kitchen

grumble but I ignore them, leading the way to Asher's bedroom.

I'm allowed to be mad and frustrated right now. After all the hell we've been through recently, I'm allowed to feel this one thing. If I had done it, I know they would have been mad at me too.

"I know how you feel," Asher says when we close the bedroom door behind us. "It's a fucked up feeling."

I grab a pillow from the bed, flinging it across the room in anger. Asher watches it fly through the air, bouncing off his desk.

"I hate this whole fucking situation," I tell him. "I just want it to end. I'm sick of always walking on eggshells, waiting for the next fucked up thing to happen. Why can't we just have normal lives?"

Asher snorts. "I ask myself that all the time."

I throw myself on the bed, grumbling into the blanket. The bedroom door clicks open and we look over. I twitch as I spot a leather arm snake through the gap between the door and frame, pushing a candy bar across the floor.

Zayn pops his head around the corner of the door, spotting me on the bed. "A peace offering," he winks before closing the door.

I purse my lips before slowly climbing off the bed and snatching the candy bar from the floor.

“You have to admit, he’s kind of cute,” I mumble, snapping the bar in half and handing the other piece to Asher.

Asher rolls his eyes, popping the chocolate into his mouth. “Sure, if you like that type of thing.”

The sugary snack goes down like a treat, but I decide to hold off forgiving until the morning. I walk into Asher’s closet, grabbing a shirt from a coat hanger and changing into it.

“How am I going to sleep with you in my bed, dressed only in your underwear and my shirt?” Asher questions with a groan.

“You’ll figure it out.”

We pull back the blanket together from either side of the bed, climbing in. Immediately, I roll against Asher, tucking myself along his side. He wraps his arm under my back, holding me close.

“They just want to keep us safe, you know? I don’t like it either, but I guess it’s their way of caring,” he says quietly.

I rest my chin on his chest, staring blankly at the wall. “I know,” I admit. “But it would kill me to lose any of you. This is so very real and dangerous. I wish we could all just leave and come back when it’s safe.”

Asher gazes down at me, brows furrowed. “No, you don’t. You wouldn’t leave your friends behind to deal with it. You’re too protective. You just hate the fact you were left out. I do too.”

“Maybe you’re right,” I admit. “But I can’t help but feel like this is just going to get a whole lot worse now.”

He nods in agreement. “Maybe it will scare them off. We’re due to catch a break eventually.”

“Maybe,” I repeat. “I hope so, anyway.”



“So, any news yet?” I ask the next morning as I walk into the kitchen.

Zayn and Blake look up from the kitchen table, surprised at my change in attitude.

“No updates yet. Just that they burnt completely down. Both clubhouses are gone,” Blake tells me, pulling out the chair next to him and motioning for me to sit down.

I walk over, sliding in beside him. Zayn pushes his plate towards me, my eyes burning holes in the delicious stack of pancakes.

I take the plate, watching as he looks pleased. “I’d already forgiven you,” I tell him, stabbing a fork into the fluffy, syrupy stack. “The candy bar sealed the deal. But you just lost your pancakes now.”

“It was worth it,” Zayn says, grinning as he watches me shove a forkful into my mouth.

“Where’s Asher?” Blake asks, looking at the doorway.



I swallow my food. “He’s gone for a run. Where’s Chuck?”

“Still in bed, I assume,” he replies.

Laughing, I reach for Zayn’s orange juice, taking a sip. “He’s not a morning person. Plus the rest will do him good.”

Zayn leans back in his chair, arms folded as he looks down at his now empty placemat. “Did you sleep well?”

“I slept great,” I tease. “Asher has amazing body heat.”

Zayn narrows his eyes at me, a smirk pulling on his lips. “Oh, you’re going to get it so bad later, babe.”

“I said I had forgiven you, not that you could fuck me.”

Blake snorts, holding in a laugh. “Withholding sex? Really?”

I shrug. “I have four of you. It’s not like it’s going to bother me.”

“That’s cruel,” Blake grumbles, shaking his head. “And here I was going to invite you on a bike *ride* today.”

My stomach clenches at the memory of us having sex on his bike, the first time we finally connected and gave in fully to our impulses. He knows what he’s doing, I can tell by the look on his face.

I smile at him innocently. “I have plans today anyway. Nice try though.”

“What plans?” he demands to know.

“If you must know, I’m going to see Phoebe. Her Dad is in hospice care at home so I’m going to visit them.”

Blake and Zayn's faces fall, their taunting smirks disappearing. They nod, giving me sympathetic smiles.

"Do you need a lift?" Zayn offers.

"I think I'd prefer to go on my own," I say, looking down. "Ronnie is like a second Dad to me. I think I'll need some space afterwards to deal with it."

Blake reaches over, grabbing my hand under the table. "We'll be here if you need anything."

"I know. I appreciate that," I tell him, squeezing his hand. "But promise me if there's any updates, you'll let me know straight away."

He nods. "We will. I don't like you going out on your own, but you should be safe. Besides, they live locally, don't they?"

"Just across town. Besides, you should probably have that awkward talk with your Dad. I'm sure that's going to be lots of fun," I laugh, picking up my empty plate and carrying it to the sink. "Enjoy that sinking ship."



"Phoebes!" I latch onto her as soon as she opens the door, giving her a hug before leaning down to look at her stomach. "And my little baby niece or nephew."

"Argh, you smell like pancakes," she groans, covering her nose.

I straighten up, looking at her bewildered. “What?”

She takes a deep breath, regaining her composure. “Don’t ask. It’s a pregnant superpower, I swear to God. And not a good one.”

I lift my arm, taking a whiff to make sure I’m not leaking the smell of pancakes from my pores. “That’s so weird.”

“Tell me about it,” she grumbles, beckoning me inside.

It’s been ages since I have been to Phoebe’s parents’ house. It still looks exactly the same as I remember – the homey, welcoming feeling, the cream walls and salmon pink carpet and photos of the kids when they were younger.

Connor walks out of the living room, giving me a wave. “Long time, no see, stranger.”

“It’s been awhile,” I agree, giving him a quick hug. “How have you been?”

He looks over at Phoebe, sharing a sad glance with her. “It’s been bittersweet. We love being married. It’s just difficult with Ronnie being unwell.”

Connor adjusts his glasses, giving Phoebe a quick peck on the cheek. “I better go to work. Call me if you need me, okay?”

Phoebe nods. “I will. Love you.”

“Love you too. Catch you later, Rylee,” he says, nodding at me.

“See you, Con.” I turn to Phoebe, checking her over. “Are you sure it’s okay that I’m here?”

She smiles at me sadly. “Of course. The nurse said Dad’s starting to shut down, so it’s best that people say their goodbyes now. He doesn’t have long left with us.”

“I’m so sorry, Phoeb,” I say again, feeling like a parrot these days.

A stray tear falls down her face, her finger quickly brushing it away. “Come on. Let’s go see Dad. I know he’s excited to see you.”

# Chapter 16

## Rylee

After seeing Ronnie, I drive around for a little bit, listening to music and unwinding.

Cancer is so cruel. Ronnie isn't the first person I know who's had it, but he's definitely the closest. He looked like a shell of his great, former self. Although he looked so different physically, he was still the joke-cracking, playful man I remember.

I haven't been in a car solo since the accident, and it amazes me that grief has pushed me to overcome the fear. The Norsemen are dangerous right now, and I have no doubts that they would try to do it again if they saw me. But I feel nothing right now, except the depressing sadness that fills my body knowing I'm going to lose the man that was like my second father.

I can't seem to wrap my head around the fact that life took my Dad, and now it's going to take Ronnie too. It's not fucking fair.

My playlist shuffles when the song ends, turning into an upbeat pop song. I jump, immediately hitting the buttons on the screen to try to change it. I need depressive music right now – damnit, just let me be in my feelings.

The song accidentally starts again and I curse, annoyed that I still can't seem to figure out all the buttons in Asher's car. He was kind enough to let me borrow the Aston Martin since my Chevy was written off. I can't help but laugh at the fact Asher must really love me if he's letting me drive his precious car around alone.

The Aston Martin is Asher's pride and joy. It's always kept so clean and tidy with how much he obsesses over it.

Finally, I figure out how to skip the music until I find a new song. 'My Immortal' by Evanescence starts playing and my old little emo heart bounces in excitement. I will forever live in the emo-punk rock stage, and I don't care what anyone says.

The afternoon sun is starting to move between the mountains and trees in the distance, dimming the streets, so I decide to head back to the house. While I feel nothing right now, I know it's not safe to be out alone in the dark, so I make the right call.

I park Asher's car in the same spot it was in earlier, making sure it's locked before heading inside the house. There's a few sounds lingering around – the tv in the basement is on, likely where Asher is. Someone is in the kitchen, banging around the fridge and stove – my money being on Zayn.

I'm not sure where Chuck is, probably with Asher or resting. Hopefully resting or else I'll have to kick his ass.

It's comforting knowing the guys are lurking around somewhere, but I'm still not quite ready to interact just yet, so I head to my bedroom. When I walk in, I notice some mail on the end of my bed, so I head over, flicking through the envelopes.

Most of it looks like bills or junk mail, but the last one catches my attention. The logo on the corner of the envelope is unmistakable, because I've seen it hundreds of times.

*Brightmore College.*

Doubt fills my mind and I double check again, making sure it is, in fact, addressed to me. Asher is still a student there, even though he seems to barely go these days. I have no idea how he's even passing classes.

I dig my finger into the corner of the envelope, ripping it open and pulling the letter out. Unfolding the letter, I read over the contents, disbelief flooding through me.

*Dear Ms. Rylee Selwood,*

*I refer to your previous enrollment at Brightmore College, which was terminated during the Summer semester.*

*As part of our policies and procedures, the college endeavours to review all terminations, suspensions and withdrawals to ensure our quality standards are being met. Your termination has recently been reviewed, taking into consideration new evidence, statements and character references which have been forwarded to the College.*

*The review committee has reviewed this matter and in light of the above, decided to withdraw the termination of your enrollment at Brightmore College.*

*As such, we are pleased to offer you a place next Semester in your previous course. All completed units will still appear on your transcript and you will find a course unit guide enclosed to assist with semester preparation. Enrollments for units in your course are currently open and can be accessed via your student portal.*

*We would be pleased if you would contact the College at your earliest convenience to confirm your enrollment.*

*Yours Sincerely,*

*Dean Richmond*

I drop the piece of letter on the bed like it's red-hot to touch. I stare at it, wide-eyed, unsure of what to make of the situation.

I guess whatever Asher did worked... and possibly Jenny. I know she said she was considering helping, but I never expected to receive this. Dean Richmond made it quite clear on a number of occasions that they didn't like me there, and now suddenly, I'm welcomed back?

My bedroom door opens behind me and I look over my shoulder, watching as Blake steps inside the room.

"I thought I heard you come back," he says, closing the door behind him quietly. "How are you doing?"

I shrug. "Fine, I guess."



Blake heads over to me, turning me around to face him.

“It’s okay if you’re not okay. No one expects you to be right now.”

“I’m just overwhelmed,” I tell him, looking away. I can feel the emotions threatening to bubble over, and right now, I might break if any of them try to look inside.

Blake senses my uneasiness, stepping back slightly to give me some space. “That’s understandable. What do you need from us right now?”

“Nothing,” I answer, shaking my head. “I just need to ride this through and I’ll be okay. Thanks, though.”

He nods. “Do you want me to leave you alone?”

“I don’t know,” I say honestly. “Yes... no. I’m probably not much fun to be around anyway.”

Blake lets out a huff. “Oh, come on. You’re always a vibe to be around. But it’s about you right now and what you need.”

My eyes drift to the bed, looking at the letter. Slowly, I reach over, picking it up and handing it to him. He grabs it from me, scanning over the letter quickly.

“That’s great news, Ry. Asher worked his magic.”

“You guys helped,” I point out. “And Jenny too I suspect.”

Blake smiles, putting the letter back on the bed. “You deserve a second chance. Look at how far you’ve come now.”

“I don’t know if I want to go back,” I admit. “I wasn’t good at it. But I don’t know how to have a future without a degree. I

can't live here forever on my savings and Mom's money. I need some type of independence."

"I know. You'll figure it out. We're still young. Most people don't even know what they want to do with their lives until they are in their 30s," Blake says. "I don't know what I want to do either."

I let out a dry laugh. "You have trust funds though. You don't have to do anything if you don't want to."

Blake gives me an incredulous look. "Do I really seem like the type to just be a trust fund baby?"

"No. None of you do, not even Asher."

"Let's just focus on the present right now. There's plenty of time to sort out the adulting crisis later," Blake laughs, pushing my hair back behind my ear.

I look at him properly for the first time, my bottom lip quivering slightly as I swallow the emotion back down.

I hate being vulnerable in front of him... in front of any of them. I just want them to see the strong, independent Rylee. Not this person... the girl who doesn't have a future, or can't hold herself together completely.

Blake frowns, watching the wave of emotions cross my face as I battle internal thoughts. He reaches into his pocket, pulling out a key chain.

"I got you a present," he says, distracting me.

I look at the key chain. “Is that pepper spray on the end of it?”

There’s a tiny blue tube on the end of the chain, about the size of a finger. Blake pulls open the top, showing me the spray nozzle.

“Yeah. I figured you could use some extra protection.”

“I already have an IUD but sure,” I say, trying to deflect my misery with humor.

Blake rolls his eyes, smiling. “I mean it. You need to know how to defend yourself, just in case.”

“I know how to throw a punch,” I tell him, curling my fist to show him.

“Good. Just remember to always hit where it’s going to hurt. Don’t try to catch a punch, just deflect and attack. Zayn and I were also talking about the cabin being a safe house, if we ever needed somewhere else to go.”

I nod. “Makes sense. It’s a good idea,” I say, taking the chain from him and inspecting the pepper spray. “Also good for alone time if needed.”

Blake looks at me knowingly, making me laugh. I hold the pepper spray up. “Thank you. I’ll attach it to my house keys.”

“You should really consider getting another car too,” Blake adds. “Just in case one of ours isn’t available.”

I gaze at him sadly. “I don’t have the money for a car, Blake. The only reason I had the Chevy was because of Dad. It

wasn't even insured because of how old it was."

"We could all chip in and help get you a car—"

"No," I say, cutting him off. "I'm not accepting a car from any of you. I don't care if we're somewhat related by marriage and it's deemed family money. I'm not doing that."

Blake looks at me with a blank expression, shielding me from his thoughts. He nods. "Fair enough."

I can't help but feel like this isn't the last we'll be speaking of this, but for now, I take it.

"Where's the others?" I ask.

"Downstairs floating around. I'll keep them out of your hair for a while. Zayn's cooking though so he'll want you to eat. You know what he's like."

I laugh, smiling at him. "Yeah, I do. I'll eat soon. I just want to chill for a bit in here and process my thoughts. Is that okay?"

"Of course it is," Blake says. "Like I said, just tell us what you need. We'll be around when you're ready."

I step in, wrapping my arms around him in a hug. "Thanks, Blake."

He leans down, pressing his lips to mine. It's only a short kiss as he pulls back, immediately giving me space again. I watch as he heads out of the room, leaving me with my thoughts.

I climb onto the bed, staring at the Brightmore College letter every now and again. I'm probably going to regret this, but I pull out my phone, scrolling the contacts list to see if I still have her number. I never could bring myself to delete Jenny out of my contacts, and I have no idea if she even still has the same number from years ago. I could ask Asher, but I can't be bothered.

I shoot off a quick text, waiting to see if she responds. When my phone dings a few minutes later, I'm happy to find I didn't text some random individual.

Taking a breath, I calm my nerves before hitting dial, listening as the line starts ringing.

“Hello?”

“Jenny, hey,” I say, leaning back against my pillow. “I just thought I'd give you a call. Are you free to chat?”

I hear her hesitate slightly on the other end, probably on edge like me. “Yeah, I guess. What's up, Rylee?”

“I just wanted to talk,” I tell her. “It's been awhile since we had a proper chat.”

She laughs nervously. “Yeah. A few years. What's new anyways? How's my ex-boyfriend?”

There's no animosity in her voice, just teasing like we used to do.

I snort. “Asher is just Asher. You know how he is.”

Jenny snorts. “I think you handle him a lot better than me. I’m happy for you guys. If it makes you feel any better, I’m seeing someone new.”

“Oh, really? That’s great news.”

“Yeah. It’s actually Jake.”

The name rings a bell, my mind scrambling to remember.  
“From the cheer squad?”

“That’s the one,” she says. “We reconnected recently. And girl, you should hear some of the drama from the old team...”

# Chapter 17

## Rylee

I never expected it to happen so quickly. It was only a few days ago I saw Phoebe and Ronnie, so when I woke up this morning from a text from her telling me her Dad had passed, I broke down in tears before I had even left the bed.

Zayn rubs my back as I hunch over in the bed, sobbing with my phone in my lap.

“Oh, babe. I’m so sorry,” he says.

I can barely breathe, let alone speak words. Even though Phoebe’s text said he passed peacefully, it was still a blow to the chest.

“He’s... gone,” I finally manage to spit out between cries.

“I know,” Zayn mumbles quietly, pulling me against him.

He reaches over and grabs his phone from the bedside table, sending a quick text – presumably to his brothers to let them know.

A few minutes later, his bedroom door swings open and Asher, Blake and Chuck barge in. Well, Chuck hobbles in slowly behind them, but the three of them rush to my side to check on me.

“It’s fine,” I tell them, waving at them to step back as I feel overwhelmed at them crowding me. I let out a hiccup, brushing my face with my hands to clear the mess on my cheeks.

“Why don’t you just rest today?” Asher says, watching me with concern. “We could set up a movie in here.”

I shake my head. “There’s no point staying in bed. I need to contact Dean Richmond.”

Asher gives me a small smile, making me remember our conversation the other day when I showed him the letter. The golden boy got his way as usual, and he was super proud of himself. I gently reminded him that blackmail isn’t the best way of sorting things out, but I thanked him nevertheless.

I still don’t know what I want to decide, but I figured it was best to discuss my options with the Dean before reaching a decision. I also questioned Asher and it turns out, he had switched most of his courses to online, so he had been doing the coursework in the evenings or early mornings. Apparently, that could be an option for me to consider as well.

“Do you want to go see your friend?” Chuck asks, kneeling against the bed to take the pressure off his leg.



“Phoebe wants to be alone with her family right now,” I mumble. “But she’s going to let me know the funeral day. It’s probably going to be in the next few days. They already started planning it while Ronnie was still alive because he insisted on having a say.”

Blake chuckles. “Sounds like my type of man.”

“That’s because you don’t trust anyone and take all the work on yourself,” Zayn points out. “There’s no ‘i’ in team, B.”

”I couldn’t give a rat’s ass,” Blake snaps back at his brother, before softening his gaze on me again. “Besides, I trust Rylee.”

I laugh, my voice still hoarse from crying. “I’m a very trustworthy person.”

“So am I,” Zayn argues.

Asher and Blake roll their eyes at the same time and I shake my head, throwing back the blanket. They make room for me as I climb out of Zayn’s bed, walking over to the window.

“It’s a nice day,” I say quietly, looking at the cloudless sky. I always hate when things like the weather contradict my feelings. It’s so cruel that when you feel like your world is stopping, the rest of it keeps turning.

I feel a hand on my back, and I don’t need to turn to know it’s Chuck.

“We could always invite Butch and V over for a drink,” he suggests.

“Maybe,” I say, turning around to find the four of them looking at me. “I’ll see how I feel later after I chat to the Dean.”

Zayn jumps out of bed, checking the time on his phone. “I’ll go make you a good decent breakfast. Lots of carbs and sugar. I’ll even wear an apron if it cheers you up.”

Images of a naked Zayn in an apron pop into my mind, my eyebrows shooting up. I feel like he can read my mind because he grins at me, giving me a wink before heading out of the bedroom. Unfortunately, I think Blake is also on the same wavelength because he makes a sound of disgust, shaking his head as he exits the room after his twin.

“I was thinking about the wedding,” Chuck starts, leaning against the wall. “Maybe we should hit up Jer, Jasmine and Carmen while we are there. Or if they are busy, we could invite them down this way when things settle down. I think you need your friends right now.”

I look at Chuck appreciatively. “You’re so sweet. You should invite your brother to come visit again too. I could tell how much you guys missed each other.”

“Ty said he would come back in a few months. Work is busy for him at the moment and he can’t take too much leave.”

I nod. “At least you got to see him. Though, I’m sure we all wish the circumstances were different.”

Chuck rubs my shoulder, over the nearly healed wound. “It all worked out. I like to call it character building.”

“Well, character building can fuck off. I’ve had enough for it for one lifetime,” I grumble, walking past him. “I’m going to go get dressed and head to the college.”

“Do you want me to come with you?” Asher asks as I head past.

I shake my head. “I think I need to do this alone. You got me this far, Ash. But it’s time I handle the rest on my own.”



“Rylee Selwood, here to see Dean Richmond.”

Louise peers up at me from behind her desk, her eyes flashing with recognition as she takes in my appearance. I don’t know why I care, but I dressed up a little more formal than usual. I really couldn’t give a shit what they think of me, but I want to prove to them that I’m not the person they think I am.

She eyes my blazer, obviously suspicious since it’s too warm outside to wear one. “I’ll let him know you’re here, Ms. Selwood. Take a seat.”

I nod, sitting down in the chairs lined against the wall. Everything is exactly the same as before. It feels like I’m in some weird version of the Twilight Zone, swinging back full circle.

I don’t have to wait long before the Dean’s office door swings open and he stands in the frame looking for me.

“Ms. Selwood,” he beckons with a stern face.

I stroll past him into the office, taking a seat opposite him. I wait for him to speak so he can lead the conversation, because truthfully, I still have no idea what to say, what to do, or if being here is even the right decision.

Dean Richmond cups his hands on top of his desk, gazing at me so intensely, I wonder if he’s trying to burn holes into my face.

“I gather you received our letter.”

“I did,” I confirm. “I was surprised to say the least.”

He mutters something that sounds suspiciously like ‘so was I’ but I ignore it.

“And will you be returning to Brightmore?” he asks. His tone is so short and blunt, it’s obvious he’s not pleased about this.

I shrug. “I’m not sure yet. I want to know what’s in it for me.”

Dean Richmond’s eyebrows shoot up. “You receive an esteemed education.”

“And you receive tuition again and avoid a scandal,” I point out. “I mean, I didn’t overly enjoy my time here, if I’m being honest. I wasn’t sure if college was right for me then, and I still feel the same now.”

He looks offended, like he’s gone out of his way to make this happen against his will and I’m denying him. He goes to speak

and I cut him off.

“That being said,” I start. “I want a future. I just need to decide if this is where it begins.”

The perplexity in his eyes makes me want to laugh. He certainly wasn’t expecting this when I walked in. Though, it almost looks like he also has a tad of respect in his face.

“Well, if your previous enrollment is not what you wish to continue, you are eligible to transfer to a new course. The usual application procedure would apply, but they process quite quickly.”

I nod. “Could you please provide me with a list of courses and their length? Preferably options where online study is available.”

The Dean looks pleased at the idea of online enrollment, probably since I wouldn’t have to be at the campus... sucking off support staff.

“I’ll have Louise send you a list by the end of the week to your email. You can review and let us know how you wish to proceed. But Ms. Selwood,” he pauses, face darkening, “we would expect a new level of commitment from you upon your return. The review committee is dedicated to assisting students, but should there be any further *incidents* then it is likely you will not be invited back.”

I push my chair back, standing up. “Don’t worry, Dean Richmond. I don’t play those types of *games* anymore.”

I hold in a laugh at the look on his face, not keen to clarifying that this whole thing started because of a fucked up version of *Truth or Dare* with my stepbrother-now turned lover.

I don't think he'd be able to handle that.



“How did it go?” Chuck asks as I walk in my bedroom.

I blink at him sprawled out on my bed with snacks. “Just make yourself at home.”

“I am, babe,” he says back casually, popping a piece of dried apricot into his mouth. “I really like your bed.”

Laughing, I crawl onto the bed, laying on my side across from him. I grab a few of his snacks, stealing them and shoving them into my mouth. “It went fine. I still don't know what I want to do. But I'm considering options.”

“Options are good,” he nods. “Just do whatever makes you happy.”

“That's the problem, Chuck. I don't know what makes me happy. It feels like every time I start to take one step forward, I get pushed three steps back.”

Chuck reaches over, grabbing my arm. My eyes trail over his tattoos, following them up his arm until I find his eyes again.

“What makes you happy right now?” he asks.

“Being here with you guys,” I say without hesitation. “You four are the only thing keeping me together right now. Like my anchor in rough seas.”

He picks up the snacks, clearing them off the bed and putting them on the floor. When he’s done, he moves over to me, holding himself above my body. “You were my anchor too when I was in hospital.”

I reach up, resting my hand on his cheek. “I thought I had lost you again. You’re an idiot for pushing me out of the way.”

“I’d take a thousand bullets for you, babe,” he murmurs.

Pushing up with my hands, I kiss him. He moves his lips against mine, still holding his weight up.

“You should be resting,” I tell him, breaking the kiss.

“I’m fucking done resting. I’ve been waiting for you and if I don’t have you soon, I’m going to lose my mind.”

He curls his arm under my back, pulling me up against him before smashing his lips back to mine. I try to argue but he shoves his tongue into my mouth, silencing me.

I give in, kissing him back. Chuck and I have always used sex as an escape, a distraction from our pain. We both need it right now and he’s right, it’s been too long.

My hands grab his shirt, ripping it over his head. He pulls me up onto my knees, pulling back just long enough to push my blazer off my shoulders and take my blouse off.

He kisses my neck, the stubble on his jawline brushing against my skin. I tilt my head, reaching down to his sweatpants. I tug the waistband, slipping my hand inside. I'm too desperate to wait to touch him, my fingers curling around his cock.

Apparently, he's just as eager as me, because he flings me onto my back, shoving my pencil skirt up my legs. It bunches up over my hips, exposing my black thong. He stares at it for a few seconds before grabbing it in his hand, pulling the material so firmly that it rips.

Chuck grabs my thighs, shoving my legs towards my head and dives down, burying his face into pussy. He attacks me so aggressively, his tongue burrowing into my folds and sliding up to my clit.

I rest my feet on his shoulders, my hands grabbing his hair for support as my body shakes.

"Let me touch you," I beg.

"I'm not finished tasting you yet," he growls, digging his fingers into my legs before sucking my clit into his mouth.

I whimper, my hips squirming as he doesn't let up. The sensations shoot through me so rapidly, I can't even think straight. His hands move from my thighs, pushing my hips down as he holds me still.

The lack of movement heightens the pleasure, his tongue going to town on me as I fight against him. I push against his



shoulders, my back arching off the bed but he shoves me down again, my body hitting the mattress.

He swirls the tip of his tongue around my clit, going around and around in circles, until my orgasm flies through me. His hands continue holding me down, forcing me to ride out the wave on his terms.

I feel the pressure of his weight ease up and I kick him back gently, moving forward as I push him onto his back.

“That was mean,” I tell him. “Now it’s my turn.”

Chuck laughs, watching as I rip his sweatpants off, making him fully naked. I grip his cock, stroking him as I straddle his muscly thigh.

He watches me closely, his eyes hooded. I reach between my legs, pushing my fingers into my body. I pump them a few times before pulling out, grabbing his cock with my hand and spreading my arousal over him to make him slick.

He groans, eyes closing as his head falls back. I reach forward, curling my fingers around his throat.

“No,” I say. “Look at me.”

Heated surprise crosses his face as he looks at me, amused at my hand on his neck. “Oh, really?”

I nod, holding his gaze. I slide back, deliberately rubbing my body over his leg as I lay on my stomach.

Holding his cock, I run my tongue up his length, tasting myself.

“Fuck,” he breathes out, eyes darkening as he watches. “Do it again.”

My lips part over the head of his cock, slowly taking him into my mouth. He hisses as I engulf him, reaching for me.

I smack his hand out of the way, digging my nails into his stomach.

“Rylee,” he growls with a warning.

I dig harder, taking him further into my throat until I can't go any more. His hips jolt up slightly but I don't move, just staying still for a few seconds as I hold him there.

Chuck suddenly grabs my arm, ripping me off his length.

“Hey!” I argue, but my words fall short as he shoves me backwards into the bed, straddling me as he pushes my legs apart.

His fingers thrust into my entrance, curling into my g-spot, making me melt. “I'm taking you. I need to feel this pussy around my cock.”

He pulls his fingers out of me, replacing it immediately with his cock as he slams into me. I cry out, cursing as my body adjusts to him.

“Then fuck me, Chuck. Fuck me as hard as you love me.”

Chuck's face darkens before he pulls back, slamming into me with such force that my body flies a few inches backwards. He thrusts into my body deep, pounding into me fast.

I snake my arm around his neck, pulling his head down. Our mouths collide, our hips meeting as we fuck each other with desperation.

“I love you so fucking much,” he growls between kisses. “I’ll fucking kill anyone who threatens to take you from me.”

My heart beats quickly at his words, my body clenching around him. “I love you... so much,” I breathe out between moans.

Chuck’s arms slide up mine, pinning me down as his cock thrusts into me. It’s so intense, our bodies together as one, that we come hard at the same time. We fall over the edge, clinging to each other so passionately that not even God himself would be able to separate us.

“Don’t leave me,” I whisper to him as we lay tangled up together, still joined.

“Never.”

# Chapter 18

## Rylee

“So, Ronnie’s funeral is tomorrow,” I tell the guys as we sit around the mancave. They are all playing video games together while I supervise. It’s the most I can do, since I have no coordination with that type of thing.

“That was quick,” Asher says, smashing the controller keys. “Fucking come on.”

Chuck laughs. “Got you.”

I watch Asher’s character on the screen fall over, making him throw the controller down in frustration.

Blake raises an eyebrow at his temperamental younger brother. “Been a long time since anyone kicked your ass at this game.”

“Asher was the champion growing up,” Zayn tells me when he sees my confused face. “Not anymore though.”

Asher does his weird version of a pout, glaring at Chuck. “I’ll get you next time.”

“Boys are weird,” I mumble. “Yeah, it was quick. I suppose it helps that it was already planned. I think Phoebe and her family want to lay him to rest quickly. Will you guys come with me?”

They all answer a resonating yes, nodding. I smile at them sadly, leaning my head against Zayn’s shoulder. “Thanks. I don’t want to go alone.”

“We’ve got you, babe,” Zayn says. “We just need to speak to Bill in the morning, but it will be really quick.”

“Has anyone heard anything from the Norsemen?” I ask, looking around.

Blake shakes his head. “Radio silence as expected. The crew is currently trying to figure out their whereabouts. They will be laying low, but still around. We don’t expect to see or hear from them for a bit. Hopefully it’s been enough to make them realize they are outnumbered.”

“It would be nice if they would just vanish completely,” Asher grumbles. “Fucking psychos.”

I nod. “I wish they would. It’s probably not that simple though. I don’t think we should get too comfortable.”

“I think we’re safe at the moment. Let’s just focus on your friend’s Dad and we can worry about that later,” Chuck says.

“Speaking of Dads,” I start, looking at Blake. “How did your conversation with Gareth go? Did they leave?”

Blake puts his controller down on the coffee table, sitting back. “Yeah, they have gone back to the ranch. It was a pretty

shit conversation. He lectured us, interrogated us... the usual. But they seemed to be accepting it, I think. I told them to give us some space for a while and we will give them some. Maybe in a few weeks we can all sit down again as a group and talk about it.”

“Accept is probably a strong word,” Zayn laughs. “More like, we told him they had no choice. But he seems pretty happy that we’re staying and not running off again. I think he’s trying to see it as a blessing.”

“I can’t believe they are moving away permanently,” I say. “They must really love that stupid ranch.”

Blake shrugs. “I think they want to start the retirement process and just enjoy themselves. No one wants to live with their adult children. Especially when they are all fucking.”

“You make it sound worse than it actually is,” I snap. “We’re not just fucking.”

Zayn chuckles. “You’re feisty today, babe.”

I sit up, removing my head from him. “I’m not feisty. Gosh, why do men assume women overreact? I’m just saying. This means something to me and it’s being spoken about like it’s nothing.”

“No one is saying that,” Asher interjects with a frown.

I stand up, moving away from them. I have no idea why I feel on edge today. Maybe it’s the lack of sleep lately since the nightmares have returned. Or maybe it’s Ronnie’s funeral. Or

maybe just the fact every single thing in my life seems so complicated.

I'm getting so fed up with being dealt blow after blow.

"It just seems like everyone thinks this is just some usual out of control Rylee thing. I'm sick of it."

I head up the stairs, stomping my feet. Probably not the best reaction after accusing them of thinking I'm overreacting about things.

I hear Asher say '*What the fuck*' all confused and I don't blame them, but I'm still overwhelmed. I wish I could be carefree and so relaxed about everything like they can, but I can't.

"Whoa, hold up," Zayn says from behind me as I head towards the den. "What's going on, pretty girl?"

I ignore him, not wanting to talk about it anymore. He grabs my arm, stopping me.

"Rylee, come on now. Talk to me."

The use of my full name pisses me off too and I tug my arm away from him. "Stop it, Zayn."

Zayn runs ahead of me, standing in front as he blocks my path. "Baby, I know you're stressed but you just need to chill out."

*Oh no. The worst thing you can say to an angry female is to just chill out.*

“Seriously?” I snap. “I don’t want to chill out. Just let me be me.”

“I’m not stopping you,” he says. “I’m just saying you don’t need to take it out on us. We’re here to support you. Nothing is going to change that.”

I throw my hands up in frustration. “I cannot just relax, Zayn. Chuck nearly died, my Mom has moved away, my car is gone, I have no future and I’m about to bury another father.”

“I know,” he replies slowly. “But you can’t change things, especially the past. There’s no point getting worked up over it.”

Zayn reaches out to touch me and I step back. He laughs playfully, not at all fazed.

“Why can’t you just be serious for one fucking minute?” I say loudly. “Not everything is a game.”

He rolls his eyes, smirking. “Babe, be serious. Why don’t you come to my bedroom and we can *talk* about it?”

“No! I’m done talking. And I’m certainly not going to just fuck you whenever you want.”

The words are flying out of my mouth, my brain flashing warning signals in my head. That little rational voice in the back of mind is telling me I’m going too far and that I need to calm down, but it’s like the rest of me is being driven and controlled by something else. I’m hurting – and I don’t want to act like I’m not.



Months of bullshit, drama and heartbreak have piled up inside me, pushing me to breaking limits. I don't even know what I want, or why I'm angry. I just know it's all too much and I can't stop the hurtful things coming out of my mouth.

"This is more than sex. You know that," Zayn says calmly. "You're hurting. You don't need to take it out on us. We're just trying to help."

"Fuck you."

I stalk past him, running up the stairs. I reach my bedroom and slam the door closed behind me, locking it so no one can wander in.

I'm not stupid, just stubborn. I know I'm in the wrong and I'm acting like a drama queen. But I just need to get these feelings out.

I walk into my bathroom, sitting down on the tiles with my back against the wall. Pulling my knees to my chest, I start crying. Partly because of everything happening and partly because of all the mean things I just said to Zayn. He didn't deserve that. He's always the one who keeps the mood light and never does wrong.

They deserve better than the person I am right now. I don't like her. I'm better than this. At least, I thought I was.

All the past words from people start playing in my head – the comments about me being selfish, reckless, damaged, fucked up.

I believe them. Who would even want me when I'm broken? I've tried so hard to fix myself the past few months, and I'm back where I started.

I spend the rest of the day hiding in my room, avoiding the guys. I even sleep alone because I don't deserve comfort right now.

I don't get a wink of sleep, my mind doing endless loops and spirals while I try to glue the pieces of my heart and mind back together.



It's comforting to see the guys waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs the next morning when I finally emerge for the funeral.

I managed to throw on a black dress and put my hair in a bun, but that's the extent of my outfit. My eyes are puffy and red from last night, so at least I'll fit right in today.

"Where's Zayn?" I ask in a hoarse voice when I reach them, noticing his absence.

All the guys are dressed in black suits, even Chuck. I suspect he's borrowed the outfit from one of the brothers as I find it hard to believe he would even own a suit, let alone be carrying one around when staying at someone else's house.

"He's just ducked out to see Bill. He will meet us there," Blake says, offering his elbow to me.

I hesitate for a second before taking it, letting them be nice to me. I'm sure Zayn filled them in on my outburst yesterday, but I have to hand it to them, no one mentions it.

“Let's just get this over with,” I murmur, heading out to the car.

The guys flank me as we head out to Asher's car. I notice the Jeep is missing, a reminder of Zayn's absence.

We drive in complete silence, no radio or talking. I can sense the guys are on eggshells around me, probably just following my lead.

Ronnie's funeral is being held in the mountains, the same direction that Phoebe got married. He loved being outdoors and was always going on adventures.

There's a small field near a pond up in the mountains, where campers and hikers frequent. As we pull up next to other cars on the gravel, I can spot Phoebe and Connor near the small gathering of people.

Chairs have been set up overlooking the water, under the shade of some trees. There's an officiant dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and I snort, realizing Ronnie even picked the outfit.

I look around at the parked cars when I step out of the Aston Martin, frowning when I don't spot the Jeep. Blake slides his hand into mine, leaning down to my ear.

“I'm sure he'll be here soon. But for now, you have us.”

I give him a little nod, trying to hide my disappointment. I want nothing but to apologize to Zayn and give him a big hug.

I had expected him to try to come and talk to me last night, but he didn't. Either I hurt him really bad or he's truly just giving me space.

Phoebe looks up as I approach, her face hidden by sunglasses. She's trying to hide her red eyes, but her cheeks are puffy and tear stained. I pretend not to notice, giving her a squeeze.

"Hi, Phoebes. I'm so sorry," I say quietly.

"Thanks, Ry. I'm happy you're here," she replies sadly, looking behind me to Asher, Blake and Chuck. "Thanks for coming."

I nod. "I wouldn't be anywhere else. We're here if you need anything."

Phoebe's mom and sisters come over, giving me a quick hug as I mutter my condolences. I introduce them to the guys briefly before letting the family move on to other guests.

Asher grabs my hand, leading over to some seats. "Are you okay?"

"No," I answer honestly. "But I will be."

I sit between Blake and Asher while Chuck stands off to the side, leaning against a tree. My eyes keep darting to the field entrance whenever I hear a vehicle approaching, my heart aching in disappointment every time it's not the Jeep.

"He's not coming," I mumble to Blake. "Is he?"

Blake frowns. "I'm sure he's just been caught up and is on his way."

He tries to reassure me but I can see it on his face and hear it in his tone that he doesn't believe it either.

The officiant motions for everyone to take their seats so we can get started. No more vehicles arrive and as he starts talking about Ronnie's life, pointing to the urn next to the podium, tears slip down my cheeks.

We cry for all we've lost, for everything we've known and loved.

I cry for Ronnie... for Phoebe... for her family.

And I cry for all I've lost, realizing I've pushed away one of the most important people in my life. The reminders that life is too short, fill me with guilt.

Phoebe and her sisters stand, heading to the urn. They take it down to the water, letting him fly free in the wind. And I realize something else.

The guys have always let me be free, not holding me back.

I'm going to make it right with all of them, especially Zayn. I nearly lost Chuck before he could tell me he loved me. I'm not going to waste another second because as I watch Phoebe's heart break, I know I still have time with the people I love, a luxury that can be taken away by life so quickly.

# Chapter 19

## Zayn

I watch Rylee run away, her hands curled into fists as she bolts up the stairs. The door slams shut after her, echoing through the house as footsteps approach the den.

“What the fuck was that about?” B asks, looking towards the stairs.

I turn, giving him a small shrug. “She’s just a little stressed. Best we give her some space.”

Blake raises an eyebrow before nodding. “Tomorrow is going to be a hard day for her. Will you be back in time?”

“It should be fine,” I answer casually. “I shouldn’t be too long. Bill knows we have plans.”

I go to walk past him to head back downstairs but he grabs the top of my arm.

“Are you okay?”

I grin at him. “I’m fine, brother. Don’t stress.”

I give him a pat on the shoulder and continue on, ignoring the hurt. I know she didn't mean it, but it pains me to see her so upset. Life keeps shitting on all of us and it was only a matter of time before it all bubbled to the surface.

Blake probably assumes I'm upset with Rylee, but I'm not. I see past the words – they are empty and meaningless. The truth is written in her eyes, the pain and agony ripping her apart slowly from the inside out.

We just need to take it day by day. It will get better.

I want to go to her and comfort her, but I know she needs time to process everything. For now, I'll stay focused on other things.

Bill asked to meet so we can go over any new findings and reports. I volunteered, wanting to give Blake a break from it all. He's slowly being pulled back into rank, something neither of us want. So, I'm taking some of the burden. We didn't fight our way out of duties, just to have to step back in because of some assholes on bikes.

I get up early the next morning, throwing my suit in the Jeep in case I don't get home in time to change. I've given myself plenty of time to get to the funeral but I'm not going to take any chances. It's the one day where everything needs to go right.

I need to swing by the cabin first to collect something before I meet Bill. I bought Rylee a gift a few weeks back and I've been waiting for the right time to give it to her. I decided since she spends a lot of time in my bedroom, it would be better to

hide it in the cabin for now. I'm glad she didn't find out during our last trip to the cabin, which was part of the reason I took her outside to play.

It's a good day to give it to her. She needs something to brighten up her day.

I blast some rock music through the speaker of the Jeep, putting my sunglasses on as I cruise towards the cabin. As I pass Wheels, I glance over at it, the outside walls still covered in bullet holes. I swear I see the bar door open slightly, but I'm driving too fast to check again.

I make a note to slow down on the way back. I'm sure it was barricaded up. Bill mentioned everything was boarded up with wooden panels to keep it secure until the owners decided what to do with the place.

I'm pretty sure a place like that wouldn't be insured. As far as I know, some old retired bikers own it but they don't live around here anymore. They were just letting it run, employing a few people to take care of it for them. Now that it's useless, they probably can't give two fucks about it.

I whistle as I trot up the steps of the cabin, quickly heading in to fetch the box from under the couch. I inspect it quickly before tucking it inside my pocket and head back to the Jeep.

Still plenty of time to get to Bill then head out to the mountains to the funeral. At least Rylee has the others with her so she's not alone.



As I head back towards Wheels, I slow down to get a good look at the place. Bill was right – it was barricaded. Except, the wooden boards have been placed against the side of the building, the door ajar.

There's no bikes or cars in the parking lot, so I pull in. I'll just take a quick look to see what's happened. Bill will want to know if anyone has been lurking around.

It's likely it's just some teens using the abandoned place for a hangout, or perhaps some people shooting themselves up for a quick fix. Either way, best to be on the safe side.

My boots crunch the gravel as I head out of the Jeep and head towards the bar. I stop outside the door, pushing it open slightly to just pop my head in.

It's not a pretty sight, and I curse whoever has been using it for their benefit. I also feel pity for them. You would have to be desperate to want a quiet space when it looks like *this*.

Tables, chairs and booths are knocked over everywhere – broken into pieces with shards of wood and glass covering the floor. There's still white chalk markings on the ground where police marked bodies and evidence, as well as dark red stains from all the blood spilled.

It's empty, and I can't see any discarded needles or booze bottles so I go to leave when I hear something fall over from inside. Pausing, I listen closely, realizing it's coming from one of the back rooms.

Probably an animal, I decide, figuring it's best not to go inside.

I get ready to leave when I spot something shiny poking out from the back of the building. It's barely visible, but it's obvious.

Walking towards the back of the building, I glance at the motorcycle as it comes into view. I don't recognize it, but I find it strange that there's still a bike lingering around. I assumed the police would have taken any leftover bikes and vehicles into evidence if they weren't claimed.

I frown as I look at the bike. Considering the time that has passed from the shooting, the bike looks like it has been recently washed.

The sound of gravel crunching behind me catches my attention, and I swing around quickly to check who it is.

Unfortunately, I'm too slow. Pain shoots through my head as a glass bottle gets smashed over my head, sending me to the ground.

I catch a brief glimpse of leather boots stopping near my head before suddenly, everything goes black and I pass out.



When I was sixteen, I snuck into an old abandoned warehouse with some friends and drank so much beer that I stunk like a brewery for a week.

It was the most I had ever drank at that point and I tripped over on the cement and busted both my knees and my forehead. I had a headache for two days straight and every single muscle ached.

Even still, that pain was nothing compared to the raging migraine I have right now.

*What motherfucking asshole hit me over the head with a glass bottle?!*

I can feel dried blood stuck to the side of my face and I try to reach up to swipe at it, but I can't move my hands. I blink, the blurriness starting to fade as I look around.

My hands are tied behind my back and I'm stuck in a chair in the middle of the room. There's not much in the room, just some chairs and an overturned poker table.

"He's awake."

I follow the voice, staring into the dark corner of the room. I can just make out the outline of someone sitting there, a lit cigarette in their hand.

"You're an observant one," I praise sarcastically.

There's a grunt in reply before they stand up, walking over to me. Light hits their face and I laugh.

"Ahh. Good to see you, James," I grin. "You're looking old."

Jimmy flicks the cigarette at me, the red-eye bouncing off my arm. I hiss slightly, jolting as it burns my skin.

“You couldn’t leave well enough alone, could you?” he says coldly.

“You’ll have to be more specific,” I tell him. “Did someone shit in your cereal this morning?”

He narrows his eyes at me before lifting his leg and booting me in the stomach. The chair topples over backwards, my head hitting the sticky floor. Argh – God only knows what I’m laying in.

“Fuck you,” he snares at me. “You and your pathetic club burned our clubhouses down.”

I lift my head despite the agonizing pain. I refuse to show him what he wants to see.

“Oh, was that your clubhouse?” I tease. “I thought it was abandoned. It looked like shit. I mean, I like what you have done with it. Well, *liked*.”

Jimmy laughs coldly. “Bit rich of you to have an attitude right now, cunt.”

I shrug, staring up at the roof. “I’m just wondering why you are mad at me. I didn’t piss in your drink.”

“I never did believe in karma much,” he says casually. “But after seeing you at the gas station after we heard the clubhouses were on fire, it cemented our suspicions that you guys were responsible. I was already planning on how to make you pay when you just so happen to fall into my lap today.”

I think back, remembering the rider at the gas station. Well... that kind of blows.

“I don’t do lap dances, if that’s what you’re after,” I joke.  
“Weird of you to hang out in places like this.”

Jimmy walks to my side, staring down at me. “I think it’s fitting. We’re responsible for all the deaths here. It’s a victory for us. Wish I could say the same for you.”

“You have a fucked up idea of victory.”

He swings his leg out, his boot connecting with the side of my face. I can’t stop the groan of pain as my head knocks to the side, more pain engulfing my already raging migraine.

“Can you fucking leave my head alone?” I say through clenched teeth. The pain is blinding, making everything spin.

Through the fog, I make him out as he leans down. “Don’t worry. You won’t be in pain for too long. Just long enough for your prez to realize what’s going on. I’ll be sure to send him a souvenir. Maybe a finger...”

“They aren’t going to give you territory for a finger,” I mumble, amused.

“Maybe not,” he agrees. “But it will be sweet killing you regardless. Two birds, one stone. I heard you guys made up with the Rebels again. Not sure why you thought that would scare us off.”

I shrug. “Ask them. It wasn’t my idea.”

Jimmy straightens up, the sound of footsteps outside the door making their way to the room. The door opens, filling the room with light. I tip my head back, staring upside down at the newcomer. I recognize him as another Norsemen, though his

name escapes me right now. It's hard to focus on anything with the pain.

"I'm ready when you are," he tells Jimmy, looking at me coldly.

"Aw, you guys leaving so soon?" I mutter, giving them a small grin.

Jimmy pulls out his cigarettes from his pocket, lighting another one. "Soon," he says. "Leo has just finished pouring gasoline around the building. We'll be torching it shortly... with you inside."

# Chapter 20

## Rylee

I frown as we pull in the driveway, the Jeep still absent.

“He’s not here,” I mutter sadly.

We step out of the car, Blake fishing into his suit pocket for his phone. “I’ll check with Bill to see if they got held up. He’ll be back, Ry.”

Asher grabs my hand, hitting the lock button on his key fob. “Want to go take a shower?”

“Soon, maybe. I just want to go hang by myself in my room for a bit.”

He nods, leading us through the front door. “I’ll be down in the mancave if you need me,” he says, putting his keys on a hook near the front door. He leans down and kisses me, looking at Chuck. “Round two?”

Chuck laughs. “I’ll kick your ass again. Come get us if you need us, babe,” he murmurs, kissing my forehead.

The two of them disappear down the stairs to the basement as Blake heads upstairs on his phone. I linger in the foyer for a few seconds, the feeling of worry making me sick.

I start to head towards the stairs when my phone starts ringing in my hand. I quickly pause, checking the caller ID, hoping to see Zayn's name flash up. I sigh in disappointment, but answer the call anyway.

"Hey Volts," I mutter, trying to hide my frustration.

"Hey Ry," he says. "I'm sorry to bother you."

"It's fine. You're never a bother," I tell him.

He pauses briefly. "I saw something weird."

I frown, wondering why on Earth Volts is calling to tell me he saw something weird. "Okay?"

"I was just driving past the bar and noticed someone removed the boarding. I didn't think much of it but I'm pretty sure I saw your friend. At least, I think it was your friend."

My friend?

"Who?" I ask.

Volts mutters something to someone in the background before speaking again. "I can't remember his name. Tall, brown hair... my friend said he was in a Jeep or something. Just thought it was weird he was lurking at the door of the bar. We didn't stop so we didn't get a good look."

My heart starts racing. Zayn was at Wheels? Why the fuck would he go there?



“When was this?” I ask quickly.

“About twenty minutes ago.”

I turn around, grabbing Asher’s keys off the hook. “Thanks, Volts. I’ll check it out.”

I hang up the phone before he can reply, spotting my house keys hanging up with the pepper spray. I decide to grab them just in case, heading out the front door. I feel like a bit of a stalker – hunting down Zayn when he probably doesn’t want to speak to me right now. But I’m so fucking stressed about our fight, I just need to see him.

I should probably tell the guys but they are busy, and I want to speak to Zayn alone so we can sort it out. Perhaps, I’ll just go for a quick drive past and see if the Jeep is there. If not, I’ll turn around and come back home.

Hitting the key fob, I slide into the driver’s seat, putting my seat belt on. I do my best to calm my nerves, my mind picturing the conversation with Zayn. You know that thing your brain does when you’re stressed and you start making imaginary scenarios in your mind? Usually the worst case – yeah, my mind was doing that. In my head, Zayn was laughing at me, telling me he’s done with my bullshit and that he doesn’t want to talk.

It’s almost enough to make me stay put, but I can’t. My anxiety and need to see him battling out rejected Rylee.

I do my best to stick to the speed limit, resisting the urge to speed. The last thing I need right now is a speeding ticket.

Wheels is only about fifteen minutes away with traffic, but it feels like a lifetime. Every time I get a red traffic light, I curse.

I'm just about to turn the stretch of road that leads to Wheels when my phone starts ringing. I look down at the screen, grimacing when Blake's name flashes at me.

He's probably mad that I've left without telling them. I answer the phone, putting it on speaker.

"Sorry, Blake. I'm just out for a short drive. I won't be long," I tell him, trying to reassure him I'm not going on some suicidal mission.

"Rylee," Blake says sharply. "Where are you going?"

I pull an embarrassed face, thankful he can't see it. "Volts thought he saw Zayn, so I'm just going to see if it was him so we can talk. I feel terrible about yesterday. I'm not even mad about the funeral-"

"Rylee!" he interjects.

"What?" I snap, annoyed that he's cut me off.

"Zayn didn't make it to the meeting," he replies. "Bill said he never showed."

I tense up, a cold shiver running through my body. "What?" I ask again quietly.

I can hear movement in the background as Blake moves around. "Where are you going?" he demands and I hear the jingle of keys.

"Wheels... I'm nearly there."

“Fuck. Listen to me, Ry. Do not get off the phone to me. I’m on my way.”

I squint my eyes as Wheels approaches, my heart jolting when I spot the Jeep. “I’m here. His car is in the parking lot,” I tell Blake.

I hear the sound of his bike revving in the background. “Do not go inside! I don’t care how stubborn or curious you are. Do you understand? You wait for me.” he snaps.

“Okay...” I trail off, spotting someone walking around the side of the building. “There’s someone here.”

The sound of whooshing air comes through the call, Blake’s voice barely audible. I park across the road, gazing through the tinted windows of the Aston Martin.

It takes me a second to focus on the figure, but my blood runs cold when I realize who it is.

“Fuck... fuck... fuck!”

Blake yells something down the phone, but I can’t make out what he’s saying. My hand pauses on the door handle, my eyes wide as I watch.

*Stay in the car, Rylee...* I tell myself.

My foot bounces nervously, a gasp escaping when I spot Jimmy exiting the bar to speak to Leo.

Fear starts paralyzing me, making me want to speed away. But I can’t... Zayn might be inside with them.

“Blake will be here soon,” I whisper to myself, my hand wrapping around my house keys.

I watch with wide eyes as they walk around to the front of the building, pausing as they spot my car. I lean back into the seat, even though I’m sure they probably can’t see me through the tinted windows.

Jimmy takes a step in my direction but stops, apparently deciding not to bother. He mutters something to Leo, who nods.

I let out a sigh of relief when they turn away from my direction, but my relief quickly disappears when I spot a flash of silver in Jimmy’s hand.

It may be small, but my brain connects two and two together when I spot the knocked over jerry can on the ground nearby.

*They’re going to burn Wheels down.*

My panicked gaze looks at Zayn’s Jeep and I don’t know how but I know without a doubt... he’s inside. Something in my gut tells me...

The fucking psychos are going to burn Wheels down with Zayn inside.

Before I can think rationally or even stop myself, I fling open the door, sprinting across the road in my black funeral dress. The sound of the car door slamming shut behind me gets the Norsemen attention, the two of them turning. A flash of recognition crosses their face and I stop at the entrance of the parking lot, keeping a distance between myself and them.

I freeze... fear taking over again. I can't speak, my eyes just staring at the two of them as I realize I've put myself in a horrible, horrible position.

"You," Leo growls. "For fuck sake."

"What are you doing?" I manage to stumble out, sounding like a complete idiot.

Jimmy snorts, playing with the lighter in his hand. "Get out of here, bitch. We're dealing with bigger issues right now."

"No," Leo snarls. "She still owes me."

"Let it go," Jimmy growls back at him. "We have other things to worry about."

I look at the Jeep again, the two of them noticing me staring at it.

"He's inside," Jimmy says casually, taunting me.

"Please don't do it," I beg, glancing at the lighter in his hands.

Leo rolls his eyes, kicking the gravel with his boot. "Maybe this can be your payback."

"You want money?" I ask. "I'll give you money right now," I offer, desperate to get them to stop.

Leo pretends to think for a moment. "Nah. I'm good with this. Jimmy, hurry the fuck up before someone else comes."

"Wait!" I yell, stepping forward. "What do you want?"

"What do we want?" Jimmy asks with a scoff. "Retribution, you stupid bitch. Tell you what though, I like to think I'm a

fair person...”

I stay quiet, watching him carefully. Leo looks at him confused, a scowl on his face.

Jimmy smirks at him before turning back to me. “If you want your friend, you can go get him.”

“Really?” I ask, relieved and in disbelief.

He nods. “Sure. I hope you’re fast though.”

I yell as he flicks open the Zippo, his finger spinning the flint wheel and igniting the flame. He throws it over his head, the metal bouncing off the wood of the bar before flames erupt.

I stare in horror as fire starts spreading around the outside of the building, lighting up a trail of gasoline.

My legs start moving before my brain can even register what’s going on. I dart past the two laughing men, launching myself into the bar.

I look around wildly, vomit threatening to spill out of my mouth at the sight of the bar. Memories flash back, haunting me as I spot the ground where Chuck once lay, bleeding out in my arms.

“Zayn!” I scream out, panic filling me as smoke starts billowing around the room. Flames are slowly peeking through the wood from the outside and I’m so consciously aware that between the gasoline outside, and the broken booze inside, this place is about to light up quickly.

I hear the sound of revving bikes as Jimmy and Leo speed past the door and head out of the car park, leaving me alone in here.

I run across the room, searching for any sign of Zayn. My head turns towards the poker room, the door ajar. I run towards it, tripping over a broken chair as I struggle to stay upright.

Reaching the room, I shove open the door, my heart screaming as I spot Zayn on the floor, eyes closed, tied to a chair.

“Zayn!” I bolt over, dropping to my knees. His face is covered in blood, his left cheek swollen and bruised.

I grab his face in my hands, shaking him.

“Zayn! Zayn!” I yell again, fear flooding through me as smoke follows me into the back room.

He lets out a groan, his eyes cracking open. “Oh hey, pretty girl,” he mumbles. “Fancy seeing you here.”

I let out a cry of relief, the feeling quickly vanishing. “We need to get out of here,” I tell him. “The bar is on fire.”

Zayn tips his head back, looking out the door. His expression sobers up quickly.

“Rylee, get out of here. Now.”

“I’m not leaving you,” I argue, standing up. I grab the back of the chair, trying to push him upright so I can get to his hands. It barely budes, my feet slipping on the floor.

Smoke starts filling the room, making me cough. Zayn throws his body weight, trying to get to his side. I try to grab the side of the chair to help pull him, the momentum sending us both crashing back to the floor.

“Babe, leave me,” he says urgently. “Get out of here quickly.”

“I’m not going without you,” I yell.

He mutters a curse, swinging the chair again. He manages to get it on its side and I hurry around, my hands fumbling with the rope as the room starts to get dark from the smoke.

The two of us cough, the smoke starting to suffocate us. I can feel the heat starting to rise, my body starting to feel weaker from the lack of oxygen.

“Rylee!”

I whip my head around, trying to find the voice. “Blake! Blake, we’re in the back room!” I scream out desperately.

My hands continue to pull at the ropes frantically, my head spinning. Suddenly, hands cover mine, tugging at the rope.

“Put this over your mouth,” Blake says through the dark smoke, handing me some type of cloth.

I cover my face, reaching for Zayn’s leg. I give him a squeeze to let him know I’m still there.

“I’ve got him,” Blake yells, helping Zayn to his feet.

Someone grabs my hand, tugging me towards the door. I follow blindly, my eyes burning and stinging.



I try to hold them open, scared to trip over something. I can't see anything, except for orange flames and a small crack of daylight.

I'm shoved through the bar door, my knees buckling as I fall onto the gravel, coughing wildly. I turn around, checking for the twins.

Blake and Zayn stumble out after me, taking in big gasps of air.

"Oh, thank fuck," I mumble, rubbing my eyes.

Blake walks over, picking me up by the arms and dragging me to my feet. "We need to get away from here in case it explodes."

The three of us stumble back through the car park, staring at the burning building in disbelief. I have no idea how we managed to escape, but I'm so fucking thankful Blake was so quick.

"I might need one of you to drive," Zayn groans, clutching his head. "Motherfucker got me good."

I throw myself at him, wrapping my arms around him. He lets out a pained grunt before snaking his arms around me.

"I'm fine and dandy, babe."

"No, you're fucking not," I mumble into his chest. "Come on, I'll drive you."

My feet stumble slightly and Blake swoops down, grabbing the keys from my hand.

“You’re not driving. I’ll drive. The Jeep and bike can stay here.”

“But they will come asking questions,” I argue, coughing from the smoke still.

Blake looks at me sternly. “I don’t give a fuck. You’re not in any condition to drive. Neither of you are.”

“You inhaled a heap of smoke too,” I point out. He gives me a ‘*do not fuck with me right now*’ glare.

I give up, linking my arm through Zayn’s as I help him walk across the road to the Aston Martin. Blake and I help him into the front passenger seat, and I climb in the back, staring out the window as Wheels burns to the ground.

I can hear sirens heading our way and I know we’re going to have the police on our doorstep, but that’s a problem for later. Right now, the only concern I have is getting Zayn home to safety.

# Chapter 21

## Rylee

“What did the police say?” I ask Blake as he walks into Zayn’s bedroom.

Blake looks at all of us, exhaustion evident on his face. “They wanted to know why our vehicles were there and if we started the fire. I just told them the truth – well, most of it.”

It didn’t take long after we got home for the police to turn up, them tracking down our details from the registration plates of the Jeep and bike.

Asher runs his hand through his hair, frustrated. “This is getting out of control. Seriously.”

I stretch my legs out, my feet brushing against Zayn’s as I lay curled up alongside him. “I’m just glad you got there in time,” I say to Blake.

Blake shakes his head, letting out a sigh. “I can’t believe you took off. I could have lost both of you.”

“Aw, give her a break, B,” Zayn says, rubbing my back. “She did what you would have done too.”

“Only you would run into a burning fucking building, Rylee,” Asher grumbles. “I’m hiding the keys next time.”

I roll my eyes. “We all know you hide them in your bathroom cupboard, Ash.”

Asher narrows his eyes at me, but softens them quickly after. “Stop doing stupid shit, please. But thank you for saving my brother.”

“If it helps, I took the pepper spray,” I argue. “I just decided not to use it.”

It did occur to me that I should have sprayed them, but in the moment, I was more concerned about getting Zayn out and not having them anywhere near us. I let them get away, choosing the lesser of two evils. Sure, I could have sprayed them before Jimmy threw the lighter, but when faced with decisions in life or death situations, it’s insane how your mind turns off and you fall into survival mode. For me, all I wanted was to get Zayn out without them trying to stop us.

“What did Bill and Mack say about it?” Chuck asks, sitting in a chair next to the bed with his legs propped up on the mattress.

“They’re pissed,” Blake says. “They have riders out patrolling the streets at the moment looking for the Norsemen. They have fully declared war and placed an order out to attack if need be. They are going to try to wipe them out.”

Zayn smiles down at me. “Look at them defending my honor.”

“Wipe them out?” I repeat slowly. “Like, kill them?”

Blake gives a sharp nod. “If it comes to that. It’s obvious they aren’t going to back down. So, the Norsemen either disband or we take matters into our own hands.”

Asher and I stare at each other, horrified. It seems so unreal that there’s a biker war underway, to the extent that people are dying. I don’t want any of us to have blood on our hands. Despite all the shit they have put us through, I couldn’t imagine taking another human life. The whole situation makes me feel sick.

“How’s your head now?” I ask, changing the topic as I touch the skin under the gash on his hairline.

“Better now that you gave me some of your Mom’s painkillers. Doesn’t hurt a bit,” he grins.

I glance over him, concerned. His face is bruised, but you’d never know he was even hurt if it wasn’t for the visibility of his injuries.

I still haven’t had a chance to chat to him alone. I’ve been desperate to talk about what happened, but I’ve been waiting for the right moment. I look over at the other three, giving them knowing glances.

“Could you guys give us some privacy for a bit?”

They nod, standing up. I watch as they head out of the room, leaving Zayn and I alone on the bed.

“Ready to jump me already?” Zayn laughs.

I smack his chest playfully. “I’m not having sex with you. I just wanted to talk.”

“Damn,” he mutters. “You don’t need to walk on eggshells around me. I’m fine, I promise.”

Sitting up, I cross my legs, facing him. “I know you are,” I say softly. “But I can’t stop thinking about the fight.”

Zayn chuckles. “You think that was a fight, babe? You were just a bit upset from all the stress. I wasn’t fazed at all. I was just worried about you.”

“I said some pretty horrible things,” I murmur.

“Nah, you didn’t. I knew you were just stressed. We’re fine, I completely promise.”

I nod, not feeling entirely better about the whole situation.

Zayn sits up, digging into his pants under the blanket. “In fact, I have something for you.”

My eyebrows shoot up. “Is it your dick? Because I’m still not fucking you right now. You might have a concussion.”

“I’m glad to know you think my cock is a gift. But no,” he pauses, pulling out something and hiding it in his hand. He reaches over with his other hand, grabbing mine. “Close your eyes.”

I frown, squeezing my eyes shut. I wait for him, feeling him open my hand and turn it palm-up. Something light gets placed on my palm and he tells me to open my eyes.

I glance down at my hand, eyes widening at the closed ring box. “Zayn?” I ask, unsure.

He opens the box up, my eyes poised on the piece of jewelry inside.

Inside the box there’s a ring with a sapphire stone. The light blue rock shimmers in the light, the silver band shiny.

“What... what is this?” I mutter, a little panicky.

Zayn plucks the ring out with his fingers, closing the box and putting on the blanket beside us. “It’s not what you think,” he laughs. He lifts my right hand, sliding the ring onto my index finger.

“It’s just a gift,” he says casually. “A promise that I’ll always be yours. You deserve something shiny, because that’s what you do for all of us. You shine bright.”

I hold my hand up, inspecting the ring. It’s so beautiful that it takes my breath away. I don’t think I’ve ever had a piece of jewelry this nice.

“It’s beautiful,” I tell him, softly. “Thank you.”

Zayn leans down, kissing the top of my hand. “You’re so special to all of us, especially to me. I love you so much.”

“I love you too,” I mumble, pushing onto my knees to hug him. He wraps his arms around me, squeezing me tight.

“Now, stop thinking I’m mad at you. I’m just disappointed I didn’t make it to the funeral,” he mutters into my hair. “And

I'm so fucking lucky you came and found me. Though, only you would do something so stupid like that."

I pull back, rubbing my neck sheepishly. "Probably wasn't the brightest idea, but I have no regrets. I would run into a thousand burning buildings for you – for any of you."

"Let's hope it doesn't come to that again," he says, laying back on the bed and dragging me with him. "Now, are you really going to deny me sex or can I perhaps change your mind with my tongue?"



I pull open the front door, my smile lighting up from ear to ear. "Butch!"

"Hiya, Lee," he says warmly, stepping inside. "I heard about what happened."

I close the door behind him, grimacing. "Nothing stays secret for long around here. Let me guess... Chuck? Mack? Volts?"

Butch chuckles. "Several people, actually. Everyone knows about it. We're not surprised they torched Wheels. The Norsemen wanted to make a statement."

"It's really sad," I say. "I loved that place."

"Me too," he replies, looking up at the sound of footsteps.



Chuck gives him a nod, walking over and shaking his hand.  
“Hey, Butch. Are you feeling okay now?”

“Better than ever,” Butch confirms. “Mack sent me over to check on you. And you,” he says, looking down at me.

“I think we’re proving we’re tougher than we look,” I joke.

Chuck stands behind me, pulling me against him as he wraps his arms around me protectively. “You *are* tough,” he says. “But that should never have happened.”

Butch nods. “The fact they were willing to kill someone proves they need to be stopped. I trust you received the club information from Mack.”

“Yeah,” he confirms. “We’re going to take Rylee out soon to show her how to shoot.”

I stiffen, looking back at him. “Shoot? A gun?”

He nods. “That’s right. Just in case.”

I let out a dry laugh. “Look, I totally understand the whole ‘*we need to stop them*’ thing. But I’m not going to be able to shoot someone.”

Butch folds his arms, tilting his head as he looks at me closely. “It’s not for you to kill anyone, Lee. It’s to protect yourself. I think it’s a good idea.”

“Me too.”

The three of us look over at the voice, Blake walking in from the kitchen.

“You’re okay with it?” I ask him.

He stops in front of us, nodding. “It was my idea. We’re going to go out the back to the meadow. Asher is coming too. Both of you need to be prepared. Pepper spray is only going to get you so far now.”

“How’s your brother?” Butch asks Blake.

“He’s fine,” Blake replies coolly. “Nothing fazes him. Not even a concussion or nearly being turned into a pile of ash.”

Butch smiles, turning back to me. “At least you’re in good company, kiddo.”

“Did you bring it?” Blake asks him.

“Bring what?” I repeat.

Butch reaches into his leather jacket, my eyes widening as I stumble back into Chuck as he pulls out a gun of some type.

“Oh, we’ve progressed to guns as gifts,” I joke.

“It’s for you,” Butch laughs, handing it to Blake. “An extra weapon is handy to have.”

I look at Blake accusingly, my mind connecting the dots that he orchestrated this. “I’m not keeping that thing in my pocket.”

“You don’t have to,” he says. “Just keep it in Asher’s car. We will show you how to use it safely.”

Butch digs into his pocket again, pulling out a sealed envelope. He hands it to Blake. “From Mack.”

Blake takes it, obviously aware of its contents as he tugs it casually into his pocket. “Thanks. Any sight of them yet?”

“No. But we’re going to move quickly on this.”

I swallow hard, tensing up. Chuck runs his hand down my side soothingly.

“Don’t stress,” he tells me. “It’s just business.”

“You say it like it’s not a big deal,” I murmur. “Just another day at the office.”

Blake puts the gun away, his lips twitching as he fights a smile. “It is. But at least things should go back to normal when it’s all taken care of. You’ll be back to playing games in no time.”

# Chapter 22

## Rylee

“I can’t do it!” I groan, frustrated.

The five of us are in the meadows where Blake and I visited, aiming for soda cans with the gun. I was always pretty good with Nerf guns and carnival games, but turns out, I’m a bit of a shit shot with the real thing.

“It just takes practice,” Blake says, standing behind me with his hands on my hips. “That one was really close.”

I hold the gun by the handle and turn to Asher. “Your turn.”

Asher turns up his lips, looking at the gun. “I don’t want to touch it. My fingerprints will be all over it.”

My eyes widen as I stare at the gun. “Mine are all over it. Asher, take the fucking gun.”

He grumbles, walking over to pry it from my fingers.

Blake and I move out of the way so Asher can stand in our spot. He lifts the gun, aiming at the cans on the rock. He cocks the gun, repositioning again before pulling the trigger.

The can of Dr. Pepper flies backwards off the rock, the ting of metal sounding his success.

“Are you fucking kidding?” I complain.

Asher smirks at me. “Oh, look. I hit it. First time too.”

Zayn snorts from my left, watching from behind sunglasses as he leans back on a boulder. “Beginner’s luck. Ten says you can’t do it again.”

“I’ll take that bet,” Asher says, aiming again. He fires off another shot, missing this time.

“Told you,” Zayn laughs. “Don’t get too cocky, Ash.”

I snort, leaning back against Blake. “Serves you right, Asher.”

“Come on, Ry. I’ll challenge you to a shoot off,” Asher grins, eyes flashing.

Argh. More damn games. He knows I can’t resist – I’m way too competitive.

“Fine,” I snap, pushing away from Blake. “Give me the gun.”

I take it from Asher, looking at the remaining cans. I follow the process again, reminding myself of Blake’s instructions. Asher stands next to me, arms folded as he watches.

I miss the first one again, handing the gun to him. Asher misses too, the two of us annoyed.

When it’s my turn again, I take my time, cocking the gun and aiming. I hold, keeping the gun steady before finally

pulling the trigger.

*Ping.*

“I did it!” I yell, jumping up. “Did you see that?” I ask Asher, grinning.

“Lucky shot,” he says, grabbing the gun. “My turn.”

The sneaky bastard lands another one, the two of us getting better with each shot.

Asher lines up the gun and I move closer, pressing into his side. I lean up, whispering into his ear. “If you get this one, I’ll suck your cock right here.”

He fires the gun, missing the cans by at least a foot.

“That’s not fair,” he says through clenched teeth. “You did that on purpose.”

I snort, taking the gun from him. “Oh, well. We never did play fair, did we?”

I hold the gun up, aiming again. Asher stands behind me, putting his hands on my hips as he pushes his pelvis into my ass.

“Go on, Rambo. Show me what you have,” he mutters softly. “If you get it, I’ll bend you over one of the boulders and fuck you.”

I grind my teeth, determined not to let him get to me. I hold steady, firing.

The bullet brushes the edge of another can, barely touching it, but it’s enough to knock it off. I grin victoriously, rolling

my ass back into him.

“Who said I’d let you?” I tease.

“Blake,” Asher says loudly. “Come take the gun, please.”

I glance over my shoulder at Blake. “Don’t listen to him. I won that fair and square.”

Blake lifts the gun from my hand, putting the safety on. “He told you his terms and conditions. You still took the shot, therefore accepting it.”

“What?” I argue. “That doesn’t count. It’s technically a reward for Asher and he didn’t win.”

“It’s a reward for you too,” Asher says, picking me up and flinging me over his shoulder.

I let out a squeal, bouncing as he walks us over towards Zayn. “Don’t you dare drop me, Asher Taylor.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it,” he says, lifting me off his shoulder and putting me on my feet next to Zayn.

Zayn grins at me, watching as he leans back. I’ve barely locked eyes with him when Asher puts his hand on my back, bending me forward over Zayn.

“This brings back memories,” Zayn laughs, tilting his sunglasses down to peer over them at me.

I blush, remembering the changing rooms at Macy’s. “You’re not helping, Zayn.”

Asher reaches around my body, quickly unbuttoning my shorts and pushing them down with my underwear. I look over

my shoulder to scowl at him, my gaze caught on Chuck and Blake as they stare at us. Judging by the expressions on their faces, they aren't about to intervene.

“Asher,” I start, but he runs his hand over my ass, his fingers spreading my folds.

“A deal's a deal, Selwood. Now, shut up and take me.”

He slides his finger into my pussy, moving it slowly. Zayn grabs my hands, putting them on his thighs.

“Here... you can lean on me,” he muses.

“You're so sweet,” I mutter sarcastically, groaning as Asher adds another finger.

Zayn runs a hand up my arm, putting his sunglasses on the top of his head. “This is the best view ever. No wonder you enjoyed it so much.”

I clench my teeth as Asher removes his fingers, replacing them with the head of his cock. He slides it up and down between my thighs, teasing me. I close my eyes, knowing what comes next.

He pushes forward, his cock inching in slowly. My arms shake slightly so I dig my fingers into Zayn's legs, holding on.

“Fuck,” Asher groans from behind me. “You're right. It is a nice reward for me.”

“You lost,” I point out, shoving my hips back, making him go deeper. “Just remember that.”



Asher pulls back slightly, slamming into me. “Maybe I let you win.”

I fall forward with his thrust, Zayn catching me as I land against his chest. He leans down, capturing my lips as he grips my chin.

“I don’t care who won,” Chuck mumbles from somewhere behind me. “It’s a win-win.”

Asher laughs in agreement, grabbing my hips as he pounds into me. “It’s definitely going to be a win for her.”

Chuck pushes off from his seat, walking over until he comes into my view. I break the kiss with Zayn, turning my head to look at his amused face.

“Enjoying the show?” I ask in between breathy groans.

He raises an eyebrow, leaning over to whisper something in Asher’s ear. Asher slows his pace, nodding.

*What the fuck are they plotting?*

Asher stills, moving back slightly, but not removing his cock from inside me. I nearly break my neck trying to turn to watch what he’s doing.

Chuck squats down, moving under my body to press his back against the boulder. I straighten my head, looking under my body. “What are you doing?”

He looks back at me, smirking. “I think you already know, babe.”

Chuck shuffles down, his face perfectly positioned in front of my pussy. He closes his mouth over my clit, his tongue rubbing against it as Asher starts moving again.

“Fuck... fuck!” I yell loudly, body buckling into Zayn.

Zayn wraps his arms around my back, holding me as he watches Asher fuck me from behind as Chuck eats my pussy. “You better come all over them, pretty girl,” he says, forcing my face towards him as he slams his lips back to mine.

I moan into his mouth, shaking as pleasure fires up every nerve in my body. I can't fight my body, the feeling too overwhelming as my orgasm builds quickly, sending me barreling over the edge.

Asher leans down, his fingers trailing around the base of his cock where my pussy clenches around him. He hums, slowly pulling out as he steps back.

I'm too distracted by Zayn, his fingers gripping my face as he continues to kiss me. I feel Chuck move out from underneath me and I whine into Zayn's mouth, disappointed.

Zayn hooks his arm around me tighter, lifting me up as he stands. I wrap my legs around his waist, our tongues still stroking against each other as he walks us.

I break the kiss, looking around to figure out what's going on when I spot Asher sitting spread-eagle on a boulder, completely naked. My mouth dries as I stare at him, his gorgeous figure almost dazzling in the sun. His muscles ripple as he strokes his cock, watching me.

Zayn lowers me to my feet, giving me a little nudge towards him, but I don't need it. My feet move on their own accord towards the God of a man.

Without waiting for direction, I pull off my shirt, straddling Asher. He runs his hands along my sides, smiling up at me.

“If it gets too much, say the words ‘*vicious games*’ and we’ll stop,” he mutters.

I snort, reaching down to grab his cock as I lower myself onto him. “I can take it.”

“I hope so,” he says, groaning as I bounce up and down on him.

Chuck walks up behind me, putting his hand on my back, motioning for me to stop. I pause, looking at him.

Asher lifts me up, making his cock fall out and immediately, Chuck takes his place, pushing inside of me. I moan, rocking my hips back against him as I brace myself on Asher.

Suddenly, Chuck pulls out, confusing me. Asher lines himself up, impaling me again. I go to move but he holds me still, shaking his head.

I tilt my head, bewildered, when Chuck moves closer behind me again.

I gasp when I feel the head of his cock against my already filled pussy, looking at Asher with wide eyes.

“Relax,” he says encouragingly, cupping my face.

“What are you doing?” I ask the two of them as Chuck gently rolls his hips, his cock brushing against Asher’s.

I let out some type of strangled noise as the head of Chuck’s cock pushes inside of me, stretching me beyond anything I’ve ever felt before.

I can’t speak, barely able to focus on my breathing as he slowly inserts himself into me on top of Asher.

“Relax, Ry,” Asher says again, kissing me.

I really don’t know how, but I kiss him back anyway, letting them take control. The pressure is intense, my body struggling to adjust as the two of them fill me together.

It’s really a serendipitous moment – Asher and Chuck taking me as one, after all the jealousy and bullshit we’ve been through.

“You’re doing so well,” Asher whispers into my mouth. “You’ve got this.”

I moan, the two of them taking it as an indication that I’m doing okay. Chuck starts moving, his cock slowly moving in and out, stretching me as he fucks me. Asher remains still, content with kissing me, but his groans reveal his enjoyment.

“You can move too,” I tell him, giving him a reassuring smile. Beads of sweat trickle down the sides of my face, my skin making me slide on top of him.

Asher nods, pushing up with the balls of his feet as he thrusts slowly in unison with Chuck. The three of us groan together, the feeling out of this world.

The twins move behind Asher, standing there as they look down at me.

“Fuck,” Zayn groans. “Your body was fucking made for us, pretty girl.”

“I’m going to fucking come,” Asher warns me, his mouth colliding with my neck as he sucks and tugs my skin between his teeth.

He lets out a guttural groan, stilling as hot liquid spills down my thighs.

“Fuck, fuck... fuck.”

Chuck hisses, his cock slamming into me unexpectedly as he falls over the edge too, his nails digging into my back. I cry out, the pain feeling good as my head starts to spin.

I can barely see straight and Chuck pulls out first, stepping back to give us room. Asher gently lifts me off him, helping me to my feet.

My legs shake, my hands gripping his shoulders as I try to find balance as their release runs down my legs.

Blake motions for me to walk over, beckoning me with his index finger. I saunter over, letting him hold me upright when I’m within reach. At some point, the two of them have stripped their clothes, naked as the rest of us.

“Ready for more?” he asks, tipping my chin up to look at him.

I nod slowly. “Yeah.”

Zayn moves behind me, sandwiching me between him and Blake. He kisses my neck, grabbing my throat from behind and pushing my head back. Blake's hands cover my breasts, his thumbs flicking over my nipples before tugging them slightly.

Blake leans down, curling his arms around my legs before lifting me up. I lean back against Zayn as Blake lines his hard cock up with my entrance, thrusting in.

I'm pulled flat against Blake, my legs wrapping around his waist as he spears his hips upwards into me. Zayn drops to his knees behind me, spreading my ass cheeks apart.

I let out a gasp as I feel his tongue on my ass, teasing me. He holds my cheeks apart, spitting on my asshole before his finger massages it. He pushes his thumb inside, slowly stretching me.

"God, I've been thinking of this ass way too much," he muses. Using his other hand, he reaches around to my clit, rubbing it as he makes his fingers wet. He strokes it onto his cock, glistening it up before he stands up.

Blake pauses, holding me upright as Zayn presses his cock into my asshole, inching in slowly as the two of them take me together. It's another pressure feeling again, different from before with Chuck and Asher, but just as intense.

The two of them almost link arms, holding me together as they start fucking me in unison. I'm left helpless, my legs still wrapped around Blake, as I can do nothing but let them take control.

“Reach down and touch yourself,” Blake commands, smashing his lips against mine.

I snake my hand down between our bodies, moaning into his mouth as his hips move against my hand. I manage to find my clit, the tips of my fingers brushing against it as I do my best to stroke myself to the edge of bliss.

The feeling of them in me, with the memory of the other two before, sends me spiralling into my climax, my entire body tensing and clenching as I scream. The sound echoes around the meadow, their grunts and groans following as they both come in me.

They hold me upright for a few seconds before slowly helping me to my feet, but my legs buckle and I drop to the grass, sitting back on my calves. Zayn lays down beside me, sprawled out in the grass as he catches his breath.

I lay down with him, covering my face from the sun. “I love you guys so much,” I mumble weakly.

I hear the others move near me and I peek out from behind my arm, smiling as Blake, Chuck and Asher lay down in the soft grass as well. The five of us lay side by side, staring at the clouds in silence, listening to the sounds of the trees dancing around us.

# Chapter 23

## Rylee

The days that followed our little shooting session in the meadow were quiet – *too quiet*.

The Rebels and Nomads were out hunting the Norsemen, but despite the fact there were little glimpses here and there, they had practically vanished.

But no one was fooled. There's no way they would just bow out now. There was too much at stake.

Every time one of our phones dinged with a text or rang with a call, we were all on edge. Bill and Mack were checking in constantly, as were Butch and Vito, but otherwise it was just a big bunch of fucking nothing.

*And I hated it.*

It was like waiting in the calm before the storm. We could sense something was brewing, but no one knew when or where it was coming. All we could do is play it safe and smart, and let the bikers do their job.



We had managed to get the Jeep and Blake's bike home. Thankfully, the fire department had gotten to the scene fairly quickly and managed to contain the blaze before it could wipe out anything else. Except Wheels was gone. All that remained now were the burnt out ashes of a place I used to call home.

Secretly, even though I was sad it was gone, it was also a relief. It *was* once a home for me – until the shooting.

I'm not sure I could handle driving past the building – whether burned or boarded – and not remember the loss and tragedy that clung within the walls. Sometimes a fresh start is the way to go. What do they say? You rise from the ashes like a phoenix? I guess that's one way for us to look at it.

Home is where you make it. We didn't need some tiny, dilapidated bar to have good times. We would make new memories elsewhere.

*One day.*

“Gosh, I haven't seen it rain in ages,” I say to the guys as I peer out the kitchen window. “You can tell the season is finally shifting.”

“It's meant to stop today, then pick up again later on in the week,” Blake replies, sipping coffee at the table.

I have no idea how or when we managed to convert him to coffee, but lately, he's been drinking it more than me. I suspect it's to help combat fatigue. He barely sleeps lately, always on the look out or talking to other club members. He's taking on

way too much again, but he keeps assuring me it's just temporary until things settle down.

My phone starts buzzing on the counter, lighting up with a call. The four guys pause, looking, but I wave them off.

"It's just Phoebes," I tell them, hitting the answer button and putting the phone to my ear. "Hey, Phoebes."

"Hey, Ry," she says, sniffing. "Are you free to chat?"

I motion to the guys that I'm going to take the call in the living room, walking out to give us some privacy. "Yeah, of course. Is everything okay?"

It's not the first call I've received recently from her like this. Since Ronnie's passing, she's been struggling. She took some time off work, but I know she's starting to feel the pressure. Her Mom and sisters are struggling too, trying to continue life in a way they never expected.

We all like to believe we'll live forever, and even though we know we won't, you can't picture your life without certain people in it. I remember when Dad died, life just kind of stopped for me. You never expect to bury your parent at such a young age, and my life didn't make any sense without him in it.

I think that's what's brought Phoebe and I closer lately. I hate it, the bond we now share after losing our Dads. I'd do anything to bring them back, even just to spend one more day with them.

"I don't think it's okay," she mumbles, holding back sobs.

“What’s going on?” I ask, sitting down on the couch.

I hear her cry a little louder, my heart breaking as I listen helplessly. She manages to pull herself together for a few seconds.

“Con’s at work. I just went to the bathroom and I’m bleeding.”

“What?” I breathe out. “Is the baby okay?”

She sobs again. “I don’t know,” she mumbles.

“What do you need me to do?” I ask, tears welling up in my eyes.

“I need to go to the hospital and get checked out. But Con’s at work and I don’t want to bother him because we need the money. And I can’t ask Mom or my sisters because they are not having a good week.”

I stand up, nodding to myself. “I’ll come,” I tell her. “I’ll come get you right now. It’s no problem at all.”

“Is that okay?” she whispers. “I don’t want to be alone right now.”

“Of course it’s okay. Go get ready and I’ll be there in fifteen minutes.”

I hang up the phone, racing into the kitchen. The guys look up from the table, panic falling over their features as they take in my facial expression.

“I need to take Phoebe to the hospital. Ash, can I borrow your car?”

Asher nods, standing up. “Do you want me to come with you?”

I shake my head. “I think it’s best if I go with her alone. It’s about the baby.”

He frowns, looking at his brothers. Blake glances over, his face tight.

“You shouldn’t be going out alone. It’s dangerous,” he says.

“It’s pretty much the middle of the day, it’s raining and I’ll be at the hospital,” I reassure them. “I will literally text you when I get to her house, then when I’m at the hospital, and when I’m heading back.”

Zayn taps his fingers on the table, sharing a look with Blake. “It should be fine,” he says to Blake. “We’ve got people out patrolling. Let’s contact them so they can keep an eye out.”

“Look, you do what you need to do. I have to go, but I’ll text you. I’ll take the pepper spray!” I yell, power walking to the foyer to grab Asher’s keys from the hook.

I nearly slip going down the steps, but manage to compose myself, diving into Asher’s car to escape the rain. I make sure I have my pepper spray and house keys before putting the key into the ignition, pulling my seat belt on and taking off down the driveway.

I beep the horn out the front of Phoebe’s house when I arrive, taking a second to send Asher a text message letting him know I was there.

Phoebe's front door opens and she rushes out towards the car, covering her head with her purse. She climbs into the passenger seat, her face red from crying.

"I'm sure it's okay," I tell her, giving her hand a squeeze. "Did you let Con know?"

She shakes her head. "I don't want to worry him at work until I know for sure."

"Okay," I murmur, pulling out onto the road. "Let's go see what's going on with bubba."



"Mrs. Sloane, your baby is fine," the doctor says, heading back into the room.

We've been sitting here for what seems like a lifetime, waiting for answers. They rushed us in fairly quickly, taking Phoebe for a blood test and ultrasound. But after that, the doctor got called away to deliver a baby, and we've been stuck waiting in this weird smelling purple room.

"Baby is okay?" Phoebe asks, relieved. "What about the bleeding?"

The doctor nods, sitting down on a chair. "You have what's called a subchorionic hematoma. It causes bleeding in pregnancy, but the baby is fine. They have a nice strong heartbeat and your hCG levels are doing great. You may

experience more bleeding, but it's nothing to be alarmed about. Just remember to only use sanitary pads though."

"See, I told you it was okay," I say to her, smiling.

Phoebe puts her head in her hands. "Oh, thank God. I thought the stress of losing Dad had caused me to miscarry the baby."

The doctor looks at Phoebe's chart. "You should undergo bed rest if you have any more bleeding. I'd recommend resting for a few days now and following up with your regular doctor if it doesn't ease up."

"And here I thought I wouldn't have to deal with blood for nine months," she mumbles, letting out a nervous laugh. "Thank you."

The doctor hands over a printed picture from the ultrasound. "Here's your little squish. Now go get some rest."



"At least the rain has stopped," I say, pulling up in front of Phoebe's house again.

She nods. "Do you want to come in for a bit?"

"I better get back home," I reply sadly. "The guys will be worried. And you need to rest. Go put on a movie and lay in bed."

Phoebe smiles. “Con should be home in an hour or so. Thanks for coming with me. I really appreciate it.”

“Always, Phoebes. I’m here if you need me anytime.”

She waves goodbye, climbing out of the car. I wait until she’s safely back inside, sending another text message to Asher to let him know I’m heading back now.

I’m feeling much more relieved now, knowing that Phoebe and her baby are okay, so I put some music on. I’m thankful that Ash connected my phone to his car’s Bluetooth system yesterday, making things a lot smoother since I’m starting to borrow his car more often. I really need to sort out another car as soon as possible, but that probably means asking Mom for help, and I’m not quite ready yet. I know the guys would help if I asked, but I don’t want to have to rely on them.

Traffic is light as I start to drive back towards the house, the sun breaking through the clouds again and starting to dry up the road. I’m too busy singing away to my tunes that I don’t notice the motorcycle pull up beside me at the traffic lights.

The light turns green and the rider revs their bike, taking off in front of me. I stare at the back of them, checking their leather jacket for any club patches but finding it empty. You can never be too careful and despite the fact I know I’m safe, I can’t help the sickening feeling in my stomach at seeing the rider.

But it’s just a random, everyday normal motorcycle rider, just going about his day.

Or at least, that's what I thought. He slows down in front of me as we pass through an industrial estate and I touch the brakes lightly, my eyes burning holes into the back of him.

The sound of revving bikes reach my ears and I look around wildly. It sounds like it's all around me.

And then I realize... it is.

Half a dozen bikes pull out from either side of me from industrial warehouses, flanking my car. The rider in front of me almost comes to a stop, flicking up his visor.

I don't need much to recognize those eyes. They haunt me way too often.

It's Jimmy.

And he's smirking at me.



# Chapter 24

## Rylee

I look at the other bikers, noticing they are all wearing plain leather jackets too. They have disguised themselves, making them look like normal riders. The warehouses are operational as far as I know – there's vehicles parked there, so we wouldn't have thought to check places like this.

They hid in plain sight... literally.

The car has come to a complete stop and my fingers brush against the lock button, the sound of the doors locking ringing throughout the car. I keep my eyes on Jimmy, my finger hitting the screen and calling Asher.

It only rings twice before Asher answers.

“Ry, are you on your way?” he asks, his voice a little uneasy.

“We might have a slight problem.”

Asher pauses for a second. “What problem?”

“Put me on speaker,” I tell him, my hand brushing the side to make sure my seat belt is definitely clicked in.

“Okay, you’re on speaker,” I hear Asher say, the audio changing as he sounds more in the background now.

I take a breath. “I’m near Kennedy Street, where the industrial warehouses are. I’m surrounded by Norsemen.”

I’m quite surprised at how calm I am, despite my heart pounding in my chest. For a moment, no one says anything. Suddenly, all four of them launch into speech, yelling down the phone at me.

There seems to be a bit of a scuffle as Blake suddenly has the phone to his mouth.

“What’s happening? I’m contacting Bill now. Chuck – get Mack on the phone too.”

“They have me surrounded. There’s ... six of them,” I say, counting. “Jimmy is here. I’m not sure who else. They are all wearing plain leather jackets.”

Blake curses, the sound of them all rushing around. “We’re coming. Others are coming. Don’t move.”

I twitch as Jimmy revs his bike before swinging his leg over as he climbs off. “That... might be a little hard. They are about to walk over.”

“Don’t do anything stupid!” Asher roars. “Get in the fucking Jeep,” he snaps at someone.

“I know what I need to do,” I say calmly, hearing the Jeep’s engine come to life. “I’m going to head your way. Tell the Rebels and Nomads.”

I grip the steering wheel, raising an eyebrow as Jimmy smirks. He recognized the car, no doubt from the other day.

Flashbacks of the car accident shoot through my mind, but I push them aside.

I'm not going to let that happen again. This time, they don't get to own my fear.

"Whatever you are thinking of doing, don't!" Asher barks at me.

I ignore him, tilting my head up at Jimmy as he gets closer.

"Game fucking on."

I smash my foot into the gas pedal, the Aston Martin blasting to life as the wheels spin. I nearly burst out laughing as Jimmy's face drops, his feet stumbling as he quickly dives out of the way of my speeding car.

I race past him, the sound of bikes revving behind me as they give chase.

"What the fuck is happening?" Blake yells.

"I have Mack on speaker," Chuck says, and faintly in the background, I can hear another voice.

I slide around a corner as I rip out of the industrial area, speeding through a red light. The bikes behind me dodge around cars, not letting up.

"I'm heading towards Queen Street now," I tell them, my knuckles white as I grip the wheel tightly.

“You’re doing good, baby,” Zayn says warmly, making me smile. Trust him to be the cool headed one, right now.

The bikes gain on me quickly, moving to both sides of the car. I don’t glance at them for even a second, focused on the road ahead.

“We need to get them away from the main streets,” I mutter, noticing pedestrians walking around, looking at us in confusion and bewilderment.

“Rylee, no!” Asher yells.

I bite my bottom lip. “It’s fine, Ash. We’ve got this,” I say calmly. “I’m heading towards Wheels, we’ll take them down the mountain in the woods.”

It goes eerily silent on the phone, and I know what they are thinking. They are remembering my car accident, the Chevy tumbling down the side of the road into the trees.

*I’m basically doing the same thing again. Deliberately.*

“Ry... there’s Nomads heading your way behind you. Don’t go down that road,” Blake orders sternly. Through the command in his voice, I can also hear him begging, the sound breaking my heart.

“I’m going to be okay,” I tell him. “Let’s fucking deal with this, once and for all.”

Houses start disappearing from the road as I head into the trees, the road climbing higher as I hit turns. I pass the spot where the Chevy died, a new metal barrier installed. I swallow hard, shaking my head slightly to clear my thoughts.

The bikes move behind me as a few random vehicles drive past on the other side of the road. I spot the dirt track in between the trees that leads to the cabin and I smile softly.

I'm not done with that place yet. This isn't going to be the end of my journey.

"There's a few Rebels heading your way babe, from the other direction," I hear Chuck say.

Asher growls. "There's nowhere she's going to be able to stop."

"Yeah, there is," I tell him. "What about the State Park entrance? That's a wide enough area."

Blake sighs. "It's going to be our best option. How far away from it are you? We're just going past Wheels."

"About two miles," I guess. "I think I see the Rebels up ahead."

Chuck grabs the phone. "Okay, they are going to try to separate them from you. Slow down as they get closer then speed up to create a gap between you and the Norsemen."

I nod, even though they can't see it. The line falls silent, everyone holding their breath.

My gaze narrows on the bikes ahead as I try to recognize anyone. They flash their lights at me, and I know it's them. I tap the brakes, slowing down.

The Norsemen surround them, not noticing the bikes ahead. I count down, watching carefully, before slamming my foot on

the gas again.

The Aston Martin roars loudly, pulling away as the Rebels get closer. They split apart, letting my car go in the middle of them.

I quickly check the rear view mirror, watching as the Rebels cut in front of the Norsemen.

“Holy fuck!” I yell.

“What?!” comes four terrified voices through the phone.

I stare wide eyed, quickly turning my attention back to the road. “I think... I think I just saw two Norsemen fly down the embankment off the side of the road.”

“Are there any still following you?” Blake asks sharply.

I check the mirror. “Yeah, there’s two of them. I’m not sure what happened to the other two. Maybe they went off the road too.”

“Butch has them,” Chuck says. “Don’t turn back. They are brawling on the road.”

“Butch is there?” I ask, panicking.

“Rylee, focus!” Blake snaps. “Let the Rebels handle that. You need to get rid of the last two Norsemen. The Nomads just passed the Rebels. Are you nearly at the entrance?”

I check the signage. “Yeah. I’m about half a mile out.”

The Norsemen tail me, hitting the back of the Aston Martin. The car jolts slightly, my hands gripping the wheel.

“What the fuck?” I yell. “Are they insane?”

“Talk to us,” Zayn says. “What are they doing?”

I gulp. “They are ramming the back of the car.”

Asher curses. “Those motherfuckers better not fuck up my car. Rylee, get ready to hit the brakes and pull in.”

“I...” I freeze. “They will run into me.”

“Who fucking cares?” Chuck says. “Do it!”

I bite my tongue, spotting the entrance approaching fast. “Fuck my life...” I mumble, hitting the brake. The car tires squeal as rubber burns on the road, the Aston Martin jolting forward as one of the bikes collides with the rear bumper.

I turn the steering wheel sharply, my elbow hitting the door as I drift along the dirt. My heart pounds in my chest, the car spinning around in circles as trees whip past me in a blur.

I’m too terrified to scream, my body tense as I brace, waiting for the car to hit something.

Suddenly, I slow down, the car coming to a stop, facing the road. In front of me, Jimmy is parked on his bike. He rips off his helmet, throwing it to the ground in anger.

“Guys...” I mumble, eyes wide.

“What’s going on?” Asher asks urgently.

Jimmy moves off his bike, pulling a gun out of his jacket. He points it to the car, directly at me.

Oh fuck. I guess this is it...

I can hear the guys yelling through the phone, calling my name but I’m too busy staring at the barrel of his gun. He

cocks the gun, finger poised over the trigger and I quickly duck, putting my hands over my head.

*BANG.*

I let out a scream, waiting for the bullet.

“Rylee!”

“Rylee, answer us!”

My heart pounds as I wait. When nothing happens, I peek up slowly, noticing the windscreen still intact. I hear footsteps on the gravel outside the car, heading towards the driver door.

No... no, I'm not going down like a coward. I'll run the bastard over if I need to.

I sit up quickly, ready to slam the car into motion when I notice someone laying in the dirt.

Jimmy is face down, a pool of red blood forming underneath him on the dirt as he lay motionless. I spot another leather clad body, lowering his gun.

I rip my seatbelt off, throwing open the car door.

“Butch!” I yell, running to him.

Throwing myself at him, I hug him as he puts his gun back into his pocket.

“Lee,” he says, squeezing me. “Are you okay?”

I don't get a chance to answer as bikes start to rip into the park entrance, stopping next to us. I look around, spotting familiar faces of the Nomads.



“How did you get here so quickly?” I ask Butch, relieved.

He gives me a tight smile. “My guys have it handled down the road. Are you alright?”

I nod. “Yeah,” I say, voice shaking. “You got him.”

We look over at Jimmy, bile rising in my throat. I’ve seen enough dead bodies to last me a lifetime.

The squeal of tires scares the shit out of me, making me jump. I instantly relax when I spot the Jeep screeching to a halt behind the bikes.

Asher, Blake, Zayn and Chuck jump out of the vehicle, rushing between bikers towards me. Asher reaches me first, slamming me into his chest.

I stumble back, holding onto him as he hugs me tight.

“Thank God, you’re okay,” he says.

“Ash, I can’t breathe,” I manage to mutter. He pulls back, checking me over.

Zayn kisses my forehead while Blake grabs my face, turning me to look at him. His grey eyes check over me, relief flooding his face.

“I’m okay,” I tell them, leaning into Chuck as he wraps his arms around me from behind. “I’m fine.”

“If he wasn’t already dead, I’d put a fucking bullet in him myself,” Blake growls, glaring down at Jimmy.

I close my eyes, taking a moment to focus on the present. When I open them again, I look over at Butch, who’s speaking

into his phone.

He hangs up, turning to the other bikers.

“Mack and Bill are in the industrial area. They have found some of the other Norsemen. Head that way. Some are apparently fleeing.”

There’s murmurs between them as they mount their bikes, all of them taking off in a line of progression. Butch stays behind, lingering to the side.

“We’ll get this cleaned up,” he says, motioning to Jimmy. “My guys have two others down the road. A few went down the mountain. Dead, I presume.”

“Are the other ones alive?” I ask slowly.

Butch keeps a straight face. “Best you don’t know, Lee.”

Asher walks over to his car, inspecting it. “Fucking bastards. They fucked the back up.”

“Small price to pay,” Zayn muses, kissing my knuckles. “Come on. Let’s get you out of here.”

Chuck heads over to the Aston Martin. “I’ll come with you,” he tells Asher.

Asher looks at me, hesitating like he wants to stay with me. He nods, giving me a small smile before turning to Chuck. “Okay, brother.”

My heart swells a little, Chuck giving him a smile as they climb into the Aston Martin as Zayn and Blake lead me over to the Jeep. I look back at Butch, concerned.

“Are you going to be okay here on your own?”

Butch nods. “I’ll be fine. Go home, Lee. We’ll take it from here.”

I climb into the back of the Jeep, surprised when Blake climbs into the back with me. Zayn pouts for a moment, before resigning and slipping into the driver’s seat.

“I just need to be next to you,” Blake says quietly, linking his hand with mine. “I need to hold you.”

“I’ve got no problem with that,” I smile, leaning against him.

Zayn pulls the Jeep onto the road, driving carefully. We pass a group of Rebels and Nomads, the metal barrier wrapped on one side, and two fallen bikes on the other as they surround what I can guess is the Norsemen. I swallow, closing my eyes to shut out the scene.

It feels like the longest drive home, but I feel at ease finally, knowing we survived this time.

We barely survived last time, so a few bumps and scratches is a small price to pay.

“You’re shaking,” Blake says.

My eyes shoot open and I look at my hands, noticing the tremor. “Oh.”

“Adrenaline,” Zayn chips in from the front. “We’ll get you a strong drink when we get home. I know I could use one.”



“They managed to corner the rest of the Norsemen,” Blake says, looking up from his phone.

I’m a little buzzed, a bottle of white wine in my lap. I decided to drink straight from the bottle, because I’m classy like that. The five of us are sitting downstairs in the mancave, drinking while we wait for news.

“And what’s the verdict?” I mumble, a little slurred.

“Norsemen have officially disbanded. The ones who tailed you were the higher ups. Once the rest of the club found out, they either bolted or asked for a truce. They agreed to disband and leave the area immediately.”

I look at him, surprised. “Wow, bikers have mercy. Who would have known?”

Chuck laughs, putting his feet up onto the coffee table. “You know we do.”

“So, it’s over?” I ask, my toes digging into Asher’s lap as he rubs my feet.

Zayn grins. “It’s over, baby. We won.”

“I do love to win,” I say, feeling like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders.

“So do I,” Asher murmurs. “How about we play a little game, Ry? Winner takes all.”

I smirk at him, putting the wine bottle on the ground.  
“You’re on, Asher. Come on – do your worst.”

# Epilogue

## Rylee

### *Six Months Later*

“You made it!” I grin excitedly, my eyes widening.

“Of course, I did, doll. I wouldn’t miss this for the world,” Tara says, looking around. “You’ve done good. I’m a proud mama bear.”

Mike gives me a fist bump. “You won’t believe what the old girl has been up to,” he teases, wiggling his eyebrows.

I look at Tara suspiciously. She rolls her eyes, sending a death glare at Mike.

“Dev and I got engaged.”

“What?” I gasp, looking down at her hand. There’s a simple gold ring on her finger that she hides out of view.

“I told you, I don’t want to make a big deal out of it,” she scolds Mike. “Courthouse wedding, that’s all. Nothing too big, like George’s was.”

I grin, remembering his wedding from a few months back. “I’m sad he couldn’t come tonight, but I’m so happy he’s away travelling with his wife.”

Tara looks around the room, nodding. “He would have loved it. So, your very own bar...”

I glance around, smiling. “Yep. As you can see, I’ve taken a little inspiration from Febri’s, as well as the bar that used to be here.”

I finally decided a few months ago that college wasn’t for me. I couldn’t dedicate myself to years of study again, but I did manage to spend some time learning about business management on the internet. After missing Wheels and having somewhere to hang with my friends, I thought ‘*fuck it*’ – I’m going to open my own bar.

The owners of Wheels were more than happy to sell me the land, after we tracked them down through mutual contacts. The hardest part though was getting a loan for the sale and the rebuild. The banks didn’t want to touch me because I had no savings, no job and no assets. When Blake offered to give me money, I argued firmly – the two of us finally agreeing on making it a loan. We got attorneys involved, drafting up contracts so I could make sure it was all done properly. Once I had the investment, it was just a matter of engaging a builder and designer.

And four months later, my baby is finally ready for opening tonight.

“Where did the name come from?” Tara asks, looking at the neon sign on the wall. “Bobbie’s.”

“My Dad,” I smile. “His friends used to call him that. Speaking of, I just spotted some of mine. I need to say hi too. Please grab a drink from the bar. Volts will look after you.”

I rush past them, squealing as I tackle Carmen, Jeremy and Jasmine.

“Rylee!” Carmen laughs. “Argh, it’s been too long.”

“Way too long,” I agree. “I’m so happy you guys made it. Hopefully the drive wasn’t too long?”

Jeremy laughs. “Have you seen the way Jas drives? She practically cut the time in half.”

Jasmine hits him playfully. “I was not speeding. You’re just being a baby.”

He rubs his shoulder. “No, you were speeding. Anyway, why are there so many bikers here?” he asks, looking around. “Friends of yours?”

I nod. “They sure are. Don’t worry, you’ll love them. Chuck is lingering around if you want to say hi.”

“I’m here,” comes a voice from behind me. Chuck kisses my cheek, resting his head on my shoulder. “Good to see you guys again. It’s been awhile. Ry, your Mom is looking for you.”

“I better go and check on her. Bars aren’t really her thing,” I laugh. “Look after them for me,” I say to Chuck, waving goodbye to my old roommates.



Mom is pretty easy to spot, her blonde hair sticking out like a sore thumb in the corner of the room. She's huddled in a booth with Gareth, clutching a glass of wine.

I make my way over, resisting the urge to laugh at the look on her face. She spots me approaching, quickly masking her expression.

"There you are," she says, sipping on her wine. "Congratulations, Rylee."

"Thanks, Mom," I reply, raising an eyebrow at her clenched fist. "You don't need to be stressed."

She looks at me accusingly. "I'm not."

Gareth laughs. "She's a little stressed. We're fine though. Asher is bringing her drinks often."

"He's a good man," I snort. "Stop stressing, Mom. No one is going to rob you or shoot the place up."

Mom stares at me with wide eyes. "That's not funny. But... you have insurance on the place, right?"

I nod. "Yes, I have insurance. We have it all sorted. Just... keep drinking. You'll be fine. And the bikers don't bite."

Her gaze flickers over the numerous leather jackets floating through the crowd. She swallows, taking a large gulp of wine. "I know. We'll stay for a bit then we are going to spend the night at the house before heading back to the ranch tomorrow. I hope that's okay."

“You’re always welcome at the house. It’s still yours, at least until I can buy it from you when I make enough money from the bar,” I tell her softly. “I’m just happy you came.”

“I’m proud of you,” she says softly. “For all of you.”

I smile at her, proud of the way our relationship has grown the past few months. They have finally come to accept the relationship I have with the guys, and we make a point of calling each other once a week. I even promised to visit at Christmas and ride a stupid horse, just for her.

Phoebe couldn’t believe it when I told her. She found it absolutely hilarious that I was going to go to the ranch, knowing I’m not a country girl in the slightest. She was meant to be here tonight with me, but I received a panicked call about an hour before opening, telling me she was on the way to the hospital with Con as her water had broken. I guess my new little nephew and I are going to share a special date in common.

“Asher mentioned he has a new job as well,” Gareth chimes in. “Assistant coach to the college football team.”

“Yeah,” I nod. “Then he will probably take over as coach when he finishes his studies next year. That’s the plan anyway.”

“What’s the plan?” Zayn asks, suddenly popping up next to me.

I jump, whacking him in the ribs. “Don’t scare me like that.”

“Ow. See the way she treats me,” he groans to Gareth, before breaking out in a grin. “I love it when you’re rough,” he whispers into my ear, making me blush.

“Where’s Blake?” I ask him, looking into the crowd.

Zayn waves his hand behind him. “He’s mingling, keeping the employees in check. I think he was helping them with the new point of sale system at the bar. You’re going to regret making us business partners. Blake will be a nightmare wanting to control everything.”

“He’s the smart one,” I laugh, watching Zayn’s face fall. “You both are. I need the brains to help run the place.”

“That’s what we are here for. Dad, I wanted to show you a picture of the new motorcycle I just got.”

I slip past him, heading to the bar. Various bikers greet me warmly as I walk past – giving me congratulatory pats on the shoulder. It’s a full house tonight with the Rebels and Nomads here together, the two clubs friendly. They gave up their past animosity after the incident with the Norsemen, deciding to extend their brotherhood – from their own clubs, of course.

As I approach the bar, I hold in a snort. Right on cue, I spot Blake standing with Volts, pointing to the screen as my purple-haired friend makes drinks beside him.

“I like your new color,” I tell Volts, leaning against the bar. “Suits you.”

Volts looks up, grinning. “I thought so too. Next time, I’m going for blue. I’m going to work my way through the

rainbow.”

“Is he stressing you out yet?” I ask Volts, motioning at Blake.

Blake glances up, deadpanning. “I’m just showing him the system. Why? Did Zayn say something?”

“Nope,” I lie, shaking my head. “Nothing at all.”

He narrows his eyes at me suspiciously. “Bullshit. I’ll deal with him later. In the meantime, can you head to the back room? You’re being summoned.”

“Like the demon I am,” I breathe out, pushing away from the bar. “I’ll be back.”

I swerve through the crowd of people, heading towards the back room. I may have designed the bar to look modern and warm, the dark blue walls a homage to my Dad, but I kept some things the same – including the back room.

The layout was similar to Wheels – the bar in the middle of the room and booths lining around the outside. But everything had a fresh look to it, a modern touch to my old home – in the style of Rylee, of course.

I push open the door to the back room, leaning against the door frame. My gaze hovers over the men sitting at the poker table, taunting each other as they throw in chips.

The light catches their attention and they look up, giving me a warm grin.

“There she is,” Vito announces. “Someone to put you on your ass finally, Butch.”

Butch chuckles, standing up. He walks around to an empty chair, pulling it out.

“Come join us, Lee,” he says, tilting his head towards the chair. “We’ve saved you a seat.”

**THE END**

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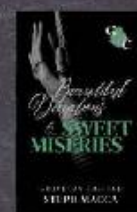
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