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BROKEN DEEDS MC

SECOND GENERATION #7

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

ESTHER E. SCHMIDT

Broken Deeds MC:
Second Generation #7

By Esther E. Schmidt

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BLURB

Two couples, two stories; one main storyline.

LOUIE & ALOUETTE:

Louie - Meeting the one woman who lights up my whole world—which leads to a full-on collision and fireworks within hours—is the best thing that ever happened to me. Also, the worst when one misunderstanding causes a wedge between us. Yet, life has a plot twist in mind to make our lives collide once again, and this time it's indefinitely.

Alouette - One moment in time manages to flip my future into a direction I never saw coming. However, my business is a top priority for me. The man I thought I'd steer clear from turns out to be everything I never thought I needed in my life. Especially when the smell of death surrounds my diner.

LUKE & FARAH:

Luke - I've wanted Farah from the first time I laid eyes on her, but my twin and her best friend—who happens to be her boss—collided and caused a month long gap between us. A robbery gone bad allows me to swoop in and take her under my protection. The opportunity is an eye opener to claim what's mine while keeping her safe.

Farah - Why do horrible things manage to play on repeat when it comes to me? Attracting danger is clearly something I was born into. The only one who fully accepts who I am is also the overbearing biker who balances my safety in the havoc the underworld is pulling me back into.

Broken Deeds MC handles cases the government can't close; they take charge and won't stop until justice is served. This second generation is a series where each book is a new couple, handling a new case, and can each be read as a complete standalone with a happily ever after.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[CHAPTER ONE](#)

[CHAPTER TWO](#)

[CHAPTER THREE](#)

[CHAPTER FOUR](#)

[CHAPTER FIVE](#)

[CHAPTER SIX](#)

[CHAPTER SEVEN](#)

[CHAPTER EIGHT](#)

[CHAPTER NINE](#)

[CHAPTER TEN](#)

[CHAPTER ELEVEN](#)

[CHAPTER TWELVE](#)

[CHAPTER THIRTEEN](#)

[CHAPTER FOURTEEN](#)

[CHAPTER FIFTEEN](#)

[EPILOGUE LUKE](#)

[EPILOGUE LOUIE](#)

CHAPTER ONE

– ALOUETTE –

“Impossible,” I murmur, and yet I know it’s futile because I’m staring at the blobs on the black and white screen while my gynecologist points out the fact that I’m pregnant.

Not just pregnant but there’s a double dose in there. Twins. I’m freaking pregnant with twins. This morning when I got out of bed, I never in a million years would have expected to get this news during the health checkup I had scheduled with my gynecologist.

A normal, annual checkup due to my irregular periods. I can go months without one. Hence the reason I wasn’t expecting a pregnancy. Irregular ovulation...harder to get pregnant...right. Holy freaking shit. Twins.

I know exactly who the father is—Louie, the brother of my brother’s girlfriend. Easy enough since I only had sex once in the past few months. Weird, though. I definitely saw him grab a condom and tear it open with his teeth right before we had a carnal, hard and fast, quickie on the kitchen counter of my diner. Did the condom rip? It must have; there’s no other explanation for the fact that I am indeed pregnant.

Shit. Maybe if things had gone down like a normal one-night stand we might have caught the ripping of the condom. We had sex in a frenzy and mid-orgasm Luke, Louie’s twin, barged into the kitchen. He made the both of us

jump as if we were caught doing something we shouldn't be doing.

I scrambled off the counter as fast as I could and muttered something while I made a quick escape. Unprofessional to have sex in the kitchen of my own diner but it wasn't planned. Like I said; sex in a frenzy. Lust at first sight and we simply collided. Best sex of my life too. Ugh.

Like any collision, shit fell apart, more like exploded. Louie walked out of the kitchen and bumped into a customer. A girl who fawned and flirted as if an orgasm depended on it and the asshole flirted back. The very asshole who had his dick inside me mere seconds ago, making it clear I was already forgotten in his mind.

Men. Assholes, all of them. I deal with a load of them daily at the diner my mother and I started years ago. I inherited it when she died. She raised me all on her own and now it seems I'm going to be a single mother as well. Of. Freaking. Twins.

My gynecologist wipes the gel off my belly and brings me back to the here and now. Yes, my first ultrasound isn't a transvaginal one; I'm that far along. I have goo on the belly, instead of something checking inside my vajayjay.

I barely manage to listen to her when she starts explaining stuff I need to keep in mind. She clearly sees from my lack of words and stunned expression that this pregnancy comes as a surprise. Also, because she talks about choices besides the prenatal vitamins advice and such.

Yeah, getting an abortion isn't going on my to-do list, even if this pregnancy pulls the rug right from underneath the

plans I had concerning my future. Well, I didn't have a real plan set other than running the diner, and selling my baked goods and coffee, which I love doing.

I guess I can manage since I live above the diner and own the property. I hired Farah weeks ago, an amazing help who has become my best friend over the past few months. There's always an option to hire extra help or a nanny for that matter. The diner is running great so there's that.

It's good that I took the bus to my appointment and the fact Farah is handling the diner today. This way I can take my time to walk home and process everything. Holy shit. Process the fact my whole life is going to change in a few months. Shame I can't throw some tequila down my throat to get some clarity or numb the plot twist life just threw at me.

The rumbling of a bike catches my attention and the realization slams into me that I have to tell Louie. I might have ignored him whenever I saw him again, but I can't keep this from him. He's the brother of my brother's girlfriend, old lady, whatever those bikers call the woman they claimed.

Confusing for sure but it means I won't be able to avoid him and he will find out one way or the other. With my own father missing from my life while I grew up, I know it's damn well important to any kid to at least give the father a chance to know he has a child; Louie deserves to know.

I take my phone from my pocket and stare down at it. Yikes. Probably not something I should do through a text or a call. And it's not like I have Louie's phone number, so I'd either have to call Liah, my brother's girl, or Rack, my brother.

I wince at the awkwardness of telling my brother why I need Louie's number. I bet that discussion wouldn't go over well.

Shoving my phone back into my pocket, I manage to hail a cab and give him the address of the clubhouse. I might as well get this over with today. Fingers crossed my brother isn't at the clubhouse so I can catch Louie by himself.

There's a good chance Rack isn't there. He used to live at the clubhouse but ever since he claimed Liah, he moved into the house he bought a few blocks from the clubhouse. The ride takes a while but it's still too short to calm my raging thoughts.

I pay the cabbie and step out. Taking a deep breath, I steel myself for whatever reaction Louie might have. Dammit. What should I say? "Surprise, you're gonna be a daddy?" Not something a biker who likes to flirt with the ladies, and does whatever the hell he likes, would love to hear.

"Alouette." I recognize Ivy's voice and turn to face her.

I know most of the bikers and the old ladies of Broken Deeds MC. They all come by the diner and I see them when I visit the clubhouse now that they all know I'm Rack's sister. Something we didn't know until a few months ago.

My mother died and I asked Lynn, an older woman who came to the diner frequently, to search for my biological father. I thought she was some kind of private investigator, but it turns out Broken Deeds MC works for the government to solve crime cases.

It was a whole twist of the past and to make a long story short, Lynn found out I had a brother, Rack, who is a

biker of Broken Deeds. Lynn's son is the current president, and her husband was the former, so they are all connected.

I blink a few times and see Ivy staring at me.

“Everything all right?”

My first thought is to blurt, “No.” But I manage to shrug and ask, “Have you seen Louie? I need to have a word with him.”

Ivy frowns and glances over her shoulder. “I think he’s in the main room of the clubhouse. Most of them are. Come, I’ll join you.”

She hooks her arm through mine and guides me in the direction of the clubhouse. I take a deep breath, my nerves getting the better of me.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Ivy questions, her eyes scanning my face.

Shit. I hope she doesn’t see right through me. Ivy is an ER doctor and is too observant.

“I need to talk to Louie,” I repeat as we step inside.

My eyes widen a fraction when I see the number of people in the room. Dammit. There must have been a meeting or something because it looks as if everyone is here. I spot Louie near the bar. Luke is standing right next to him. I’m sure for many people they look like carbon copies.

They are identical twins and yet to me, they look different. It’s the heat and determination in Louie’s gaze while Luke has an uncertain vibe to him. That, and the tiny scar I noticed on Luke’s hand when they introduced themselves the first time we met.

There's also a difference in how they walk, talk, the set of their shoulders, and so on. I might have observed them a little too well when they were sent to my diner for protection when I had a stalker issue that needed to be handled. My tiny obsession with Louie, the whole lust at first sight thing, is why I'm standing here.

"Something is going on," Ivy mutters.

I tear my gaze away from Louie. "I'll fill you in after I've talked to Louie. I might need your help with something because I might not have paid attention...we'll talk in a bit, okay?"

"Sure thing, honey," Ivy tells me and pats my arm. "I'll be right here when you need me."

I give her a thankful smile and cross the main room of the clubhouse. Luke and Louie are talking to Kray, their father, and Depay is standing near them as well. I've met Depay a few times, he's one of the older generation and is inked all over, even on his face. He's an EMT firefighter and looks menacing but every encounter I've had with him gives me the impression he's a kind man.

Kray is the first one who notices me and lifts his chin. The twins turn to see what their father is looking at and I get a little thrill running through my body when Louie's eyes hit mine. Dammit. Why does this man have such an effect on my body?

"There you are," a woman with a nasal voice tries to croon. She's wearing a fire engine red dress and it makes me wonder who helped her into the tight thing. Her boobs look

like they are about to escape any damn second. “Luke.” She pats Louie’s chest and switches to Luke. “Louie.”

The woman clearly can’t tell them apart.

I have no clue why the scene in front of me annoys the hell out of me, but I grit my teeth and snap, “Louie, can I have a word with you?”

“He’s busy,” the woman says and pats Luke’s chest. “Aren’t you, babe?”

I can’t help but snort and roll my eyes when I mutter, “Whatever, keep his doppelganger busy why don’t you.”

“Why are you here, Lou?” Luke grunts.

I keep my gaze on Louie, hating the fact that he keeps his lips sealed in an effort to throw me off and hide behind his twin. I know I’ve ignored him for months but come on, he was the one who flirted with another chick not even a second after he pulled his dick from my pussy.

“I’d like to have a word in private,” I hiss, my anger getting the better of me.

“Boys,” Depay mutters.

Louie holds up his hand to stop Depay and tells me, “Just spit it out whatever you have to tell me, Alouette. I have better things to do.”

I want nothing more than to spin on my heels and say, “Fuck it.” But I can’t; he deserves to know. It seems like the option to tell him in private isn’t something we get to choose sooooo...

“Fuck it,” I snap. “I’m pregnant.”

Everyone around us is frozen in place.

Except for Depay, he mumbles, “I feel like I’m having déjà vu...something’s missing, though.”

Shit. From what I’ve heard Depay knocked up a mafia princess who also came to this very clubhouse to let him know. No wonder it sounds like the man is having déjà vu.

“What the fuck, asshole?” Rack snarls. “You knocked up my sister?”

The next sound I hear is the cocking of a gun, the weapon is right beside my face and aimed at Louie’s head.

“Ah, there we have it,” Depay mutters. “The gun was missing after declaring a surprise pregnancy. Now it’s a perfect déjà vu.”

I groan and turn to face my brother. The way he bellowed out his words made every-freaking-one aware I’m pregnant. How embarrassing. At least my business here is done. Since my brother only has eyes for Louie, I can make a quick exit. Or so I think because Ivy and Bee are suddenly standing in front of me when I’ve barely slipped out of the clubhouse.

“I don’t think you should leave,” Bee softly states.

“What she said,” Ivy quips. “Besides, you wanted to chat with me, and I assume it’s about the pregnancy? Why don’t we go to Bee’s house so we can chat? I’m pretty sure the boys in there need time to...I do not hope it involves firing bullets, but I guess we’ll see.”

They both hook an arm through one of mine and I guess I have no other option but to join them.

“I should head back to the diner,” I mutter in an effort to give me a reason to escape when I glance at the door Bee is closing behind us.

Ivy gives me a warm smile. “Don’t worry about that now. I’ll text Bono, you remember the prospect who jumped behind the counter the last time we were there?”

I nod, remembering the guy and being thankful for his help that day. “Rush hour and a bus with elderly people on holiday stopping for breakfast. Good thing Bono was there. Farah had the day off and I never would have been able to handle it on my own.”

Bee holds up her phone. “I took care of it. Bono just texted back that he was visiting his mother. She lives ten minutes from the diner so he’ll be there in fifteen minutes tops to help Farah.”

“You’re family, Lou,” Ivy assures me. “We look out for one another.”

Such a stark contrast from what I had growing up. Back then it was just my mother and me. My momma never relied on anyone other than herself and me. I was raised the same way and never understood why she didn’t have any friends or didn’t make any attempt to do so.

After she died and I found out who my biological father was, bringing Rack and this MC into my life, I found out my mother was raped. She left her husband and Rack because she couldn’t handle being reminded of that moment that ripped her apart.

She didn't know she was pregnant with me at the time of the rape, and I think she left when she found out she was pregnant. Maybe she always thought the rapist was my father and didn't want that mark branded on me?

I have no clue but she never treated me any differently and she never mentioned a word about it to me. I guess I will never know her reasons why she left or wanted a fresh start, leaving my brother behind. Though, I can't help but wonder about it every now and then.

I wring my hands, not knowing what I'm going to do myself now that I'm pregnant and am all on my own. At least I didn't suffer trauma. Knowing what my mother went through, the hard choices, and the things she faced...I know deep down there's nothing I can't handle because I turned out just fine. If my mother could do it after suffering through so much, I damn sure can.

Financially I have the ability to raise these babies on my own. Ivy just mentioned I'm family, also giving me the assurance these children won't be alone the way I was. And the fierce reaction Rack had in the clubhouse? He'll be a great uncle.

Rack has been protective of me ever since he heard I was his sister. Letting these details sink in, I can actually feel a load fall off my shoulders; everything will be okay. I take a seat on the couch.

Ivy and Bee take a seat across from me and Bee says, "You suddenly look pretty sure of yourself instead of the panic and the whole wide eyes you were just sporting a moment ago."

“You read my mind,” Ivy states. “I was just about to comment the same thing.”

The corner of my mouth twitches. “I mentioned how I didn’t pay attention earlier when the gynecologist discovered I was pregnant. Hell, I went in for a regular checkup due to my irregular periods. They’ve always said it would be hard for me to conceive because of it. Louie and I had sex once.” I shake my head. “Just once and boom, pregnant.”

“Mother Nature is funny that way.” Ivy grins.

“Seeing you now, I feel like I can say this so I will,” Bee says and my eyes find her. “I’m happy Louie knocked you up. Lynn loves you and demanded we all keep an eye on you because she promised your mother she would. With her and Deeds retiring and moving to Ryckerdan, she’s not around as much to check in on you herself. Rack being your brother tied you to us but this strengthens the connection even more.”

I bob my head. “This pregnancy might have hit me in the face before I could so much as blink, and I’m still processing it, but at least I’m not alone.”

The front door barges open and Rack stomps into the living room. His eyes are wide and before he can utter one word, he’s shoved back by Liah who jumps in front of him.

“Don’t you dare spout out words you’re going to regret. Think for one goddamned second because this is not your business. This is between your sister and Louie, you damned idiot. Punching a guy for knocking up your sister is one thing, but even that is crazy. The man just heard the news himself.”

“You did what?” I snap and jump to my feet.

Louie steps into the room. His left eye is all red and already swelling, there’s blood trickling down his mouth and chin. Rack whirls around, his face thunderous and I know he’s ready to kick Louie’s ass again.

Bee is suddenly standing in front of me and points at Rack. “You. Get the fuck out of my house. Louie, you stay here while Ivy, Liah, and I go back to the clubhouse.” She glances over her shoulder at me. “You came here to talk to Louie and I think it’s best to do it in private so please, make yourself at home and call if you need anything.”

She starts to push Rack out of the door and the two women follow her. I’m left standing to stare at Louie while his gaze is pinning me in place. Whatever I came here for has already happened.

I wanted to let him know that I was pregnant and he now knows. What else is there to talk about? The whole flirting after sex showed me he’s a player, a ladies’ man, and there was clearly nothing special about us having sex.

For me there was. My whole body jolted into awareness when he put his hands on me. I’ve had one-night stands but to practically jump a man’s bones as soon as I met him isn’t me. So, I don’t have any illusions of us getting hitched in any way.

My rambling mind jumps to the fact that I won’t stand in the way if he wants to be involved. I didn’t have a father growing up and I know for a fact I don’t want the same for my children.

I asked my mother about my biological father but she would always have an emotional meltdown, so I stopped asking. At least the past changed the future because my children will know who their father is.

Shit.

Children.

Plural.

I told him I'm pregnant but I didn't tell him we're having twins. I guess there's more to talk about after all. More like throwing another shock his way. I swallow hard and clear my throat, ready to spill the news.

Except, he beats me to it and shocks the hell out of me when he says, "I'm claiming you. Right here, right now. You're mine. That baby in your belly grants me the right and the chance to claim you because you can't walk out or ignore me now."

What the fuck?

"Watch me, asshole," I snarl, anger overtaking me.

Can't walk out on him? Those babies might be attached to me through an umbilical cord but he sure as fuck isn't.

CHAPTER TWO

– LOUIE –

I barely manage to step in front of her to block her quick exit.

“Sit and we’ll talk,” I grit.

“Sit?” she snarls. “I’m not a dog you idiot.”

A frustrated sigh rips from me. “I know and I’m fucking shit up again but you gotta give me an inch here so we can—”

“Give you an inch? You gave *me* a few inches and look how well that worked out,” she huffs and my mouth twitches.

I shouldn’t laugh and my face and head are killing me from the two punches Rack gave me before Depay and Luke managed to pull him off me. I didn’t defend myself, too stunned with the news Lou threw at me.

Her shoulders sag. “Listen, Louie. I know you’re a player and hop from one chick to the next without getting any feelings or emotions involved. The whole ‘you’re mine, I’m claiming you’ and all? It’s unnecessary. These babies will know who their father is, okay? I’m not going to take that from you.”

She rattles some more words but it’s all static to my ears. Did she really say babies? As in plural? More than one? Fucking twins?

“Alouette,” I croak. “Did you say babies?” I take a step closer and I can hear the hope I feel in my voice when I ask, “As in more than one?”

She shakes her head, but her mouth says, “Yes. We’re having twins.”

Pride hits me hard. “Twins.”

“Yes.” She wanders back to the couch and sits down. “As in two babies at the same time.”

I can’t help but shoot her a grin as I take a seat in a chair across from her. “We hit the jackpot in one go.”

She rolls her eyes. “Only you would say something like that. Which is crazy, you know. I shouldn’t even be pregnant. We used a condom, right? I saw you grab one and rip it open with your teeth. Then there’s the part where I have issues—”

“What issues?” I question. “Is something wrong with our babies? With you? Are you able to carry our kids full-term? You’re not in any danger if you do, are you?”

“Holy hell. Louie, calm down. I meant fertility issues due to my irregular periods. I could go without a period for months. It’s actually why I had an appointment with my gynecologist who discovered my pregnancy.”

Relief floods my veins. “Good. Good. Well, we can certainly say we don’t have fertility issues anymore.” I chuckle when she rolls her eyes again. “I’m pretty sure you’re gonna strain your eyes if you keep rolling them like that.”

She glares at me, but I can see the twinkle in her eyes. Fucking hell, the woman is gorgeous. We collided beautifully

but somehow everything went to shit after we each came. The condom moment she mentioned? I remember it vividly because I dropped the damn thing after ripping it open with my teeth.

I didn't want to wait a second longer to be inside her and for sure as shit didn't want to snatch a condom off a damn floor. My only condom. I knew there was a pregnancy risk but at that moment I couldn't care less.

When my brother barged into the kitchen, I tried to clean my cum from her pussy but we were fumbling and she rushed out. I snatched the dropped condom from the floor and threw it in the trash. I have no clue why she didn't feel my cum inside her but I guess it's all futile now. My head is still pounding and I rub my temples.

"Shit. Let me check if Bee has some ice for your eye." She jumps up and tries to pass me but I wrap my fingers around her wrist.

One damn touch of her skin and I'm itching for more.

"Don't worry about me. How are you feeling?" I question.

Alouette shrugs. "Fine. Like I said, I didn't even know I was pregnant until this afternoon."

"I meant what I said earlier," I tell her and keep my voice even but firm. "You're mine, Alouette. I'm fucking thankful I knocked you up because it gives me a chance to claim you as mine."

She throws her shoulders back and I can see the defiance growing inside her. "We're not living in a time where

people have to marry or live in the same house because they're expecting a child together."

"Children. Twins," I correct her with a grin.

She huffs and grumbles, "Whatever. I can do this on my own while you can be a father to them in every which way you want."

"Good. Then we agree," I eagerly tell her.

She bobs her head but there's a hint of suspicion in her gaze. "Okay, then that's settled. I have to get back to the diner."

"I'll take you. Let me pack a bag and then we can go."

"Pack a bag? Are you going somewhere?" she questions.

I give her a smirk. "Uh huh. I'm going with you."

"Why?" Her eyes narrow and she crosses her arms over those amazing tits I've only felt and never even saw.

"We're not done talking." I shrug but add, "I know how much the diner means to you and I like being there. I can help out and wait until you do have time."

Suspicion taints her gaze and tone. "That still doesn't explain why you need to pack a bag."

"We have a lot to talk about and it's already getting late. Hey, are you allergic to pets?" I wonder.

She frowns. "Pets? No. I don't think so. I've never had any because I'm always working so I don't think it's fair for me to have a pet."

“Good. Okay. We’ll see how you react.” I point at the door and start walking in that direction.

Alouette catches up and asks, “You have a pet?”

I open the door and we stroll in the direction of the clubhouse. “I do. She’s currently sleeping in my van. I built a cage in the back but I also have one in my room. I keep a dog kennel in case I’m crashing somewhere or someone has to babysit.”

“Why do you have a cage in your van?” There’s a hint of laughter in her voice. “That’s weird. Wait. What kind of pet is it?”

I open the door for her and guide her to my room. Once inside I point at the cage. “Teela is a Gambian pouched rat. Growing up I used to have pet rats but they only live for a few years. A Gambian pouched rat lives almost twice as long. I’ve had her for three years now.”

“Wow. A rat, huh?” Her gaze slides from the cage to me and back. “I didn’t peg you for someone who would keep a rodent as a pet. Why a Gambian...whatever? Is that even legal?”

I chuckle and grab my phone. “I’m a member of Broken Deeds, remember? We’re practically above the law but if you need to know, all the paperwork is in order; she’s completely legal. They are the size of a small dog. Here.” I turn my phone her way and show her a picture. “Did you know they are used to find landmines? I’ve trained mine as well and it’s also the reason she’s legit ’cause I’d like to use her on a case if the situation calls for it. They are nocturnal, high-

maintenance pets and some are more tame than others but Teela is quite cuddly.”

“Does Luke have one as well?” Alouette asks.

“Nah. He used to tolerate the pet rats when we were younger but one scratched him with a nail and he had to get stitches. Luke has steered clear of them ever since.”

“That’s what caused the tiny scar on his hand?”

“You noticed that, did you?” I mutter and I also have to add, “You know, there aren’t many people who can tell us apart.”

She only snorts but she doesn’t realize how much that fucking means to me.

“We tried to—” I start to explain but she jabs a finger into the air, cutting me off.

“Luke has a different personality and it shows in the little twitches on his face. So, keep trying to fool me by hiding behind your twin but you wouldn’t succeed.”

I knew she was observant, saw it when I first laid eyes on her. The way she handles herself in the diner, treats people, situations. We always try to switch on people but the first time we tried with Alouette she knew. It’s the reason why I pulled her into the kitchen and kissed the fuck out of her.

My cock stands to attention when the memory of that moment crashes through me and I clear my throat, quickly moving through the room to pack a bag. Within a few minutes I have everything I need for at least a few days.

Alouette silently follows me out to my van and I'm glad she doesn't question or fight me when it comes to packing a bag or coming with her for that matter. I open the door for her and wait for her to get in before I walk around the front and get behind the wheel.

She's glancing at the back of the van which I've partly rebuilt and it's now a large cage for Teela.

"She's sleeping." I fire up the van and head for the diner. "My Dad sometimes takes her if I have to leave longer than a day. But I made a cage for her in this van for a reason. I only catch a few hours of sleep each night, sometimes none at all. I used to take my bike but since I got Teela I ride out and train with her. Sometimes that requires a visit to the nearest body farm."

"Ew, really? Those are real? I watched a crime show or two where they had episodes about someone dumping a body, you know, hoping the murder would go unnoticed." She shivers. "Yikes. I can't believe you'd go to a body farm for fun. Insects freak me out."

"Probably not good to mention Teela eats insects in addition to lean meat, eggs, veggies, fruits, and nuts, huh?" I chuckle.

She wrinkles her nose. "I think I have to adjust the allergic to pets thing. I'm more allergic to the idea of having one that eats freaking insects."

We fall silent and when we're almost at the diner she says, "You can park around back if you're planning on staying till I've closed up."

Internally I'm cheering at this small victory but it's short-lived when she adds, "Don't think you're spending the night. I know you have your mind set with the bag you packed but I only agree to talking through everything to clear the air between us. Yet, I have no clue what there's left to talk about 'cause there are many months ahead of us before these two come out."

I kill the engine and turn to face her. "There's lots to talk about. I'm claiming this—" I motion from her to myself and back. "Us talking without glaring, turning around to avoid each other, yelling, or ignoring one another for that matter... it's a win-win. I want to talk about what happened that day when I knocked you up. It's not going to be a light discussion but we have more to figure out than my kids in your belly."

"Our kids," she corrects me and steps out of the van. "What's Luke's bike doing here?"

I glance in the direction she's staring at. "How do you know it's his bike?"

She smacks my chest and walks into the direction of the backdoor of the diner. "I don't. I assumed it was his because you're with me driving a van with a freaking cage inside. I might be able to tell you and your twin apart but bikes? They all look the same."

"Harsh, woman," I grumble. "My bike is way better than his."

Alouette mutters something under her breath and it takes a moment for my mind to process.

“What the fuck?” I snap. “It has nothing to do with the length of my cock, or his for that matter and you will never find out what his looks like.”

She turns to face me when she stands in the kitchen and rolls her eyes. “It was just a figure of speech. The whole ‘my bike is better than his, my dick is longer than his,’ comparison.”

I lift my chin in greeting at Bono, who is standing behind Alouette.

Leaning in, I place my lips next to Alouette’s ear. “Figure of speech or not, there’s no other cock, except from mine, you’re gonna so much as mention or use to compare for that matter. You might not accept my claim yet, but I’m giving you fair warning that I won’t have another dude—” I clench my teeth at the mere thought of what I’m about to say. “Or cock sliding inside your body while you’re carrying our kids.” *Even after giving birth there won’t be anyone else but me*, I mentally add.

I saw the way she reacted after I threw out my claim earlier. Alouette is an independent woman who fights for what she wants and excels in it. I’m not gonna put shackles on her to limit the way she lives her life. It would involve me adjusting to her ’cause I can be an overbearing asshole who likes to control any situation so we’re bound to bump heads. A lot.

She blinks a few times. “Holy shit,” she mutters. “My sex life is over. Ugh. Not that I had one to begin with but having a cock poke around in there, bumping my kids’ heads. Yikes.”

I wince. “Don’t say shit like that.”

“Well, then don’t remind me of things like that,” she fires back. “It didn’t even cross my mind until you painted that very vivid vision.”

“I didn’t say anything about your sex life being over or poking our kids’ heads for that matter. You do know that’s not possible, right? People do still have sex while being pregnant.”

“You guys are pregnant?” Bono asks, surprise in his voice. “I didn’t think you two liked each other at all.”

Alouette and I both shoot a glare his way. He immediately holds up his hands, palms up. “Congrats. That’s what I meant. I’m so fucking happy for the two of you and all. Wait. Is that Farah calling me? Yeah, I think it is. If not, I need to check to see if she needs my help. Leaving you two now, bye.”

We both chuckle as soon as he disappears. Alouette is about to say something but I have to make something clear first.

“Being buried inside you was damn incredible. I was pissed when I saw the embarrassment sliding over your face when my brother walked in on us. Then you replied with that it was ‘nothing’ all while it meant fucking everything to me. It was a punch to the gut, a kick to my ego, however you want to call it. Truth is...I shouldn’t have flirted with the chick I ran into but I wanted to lash out.”

Her shoulders somewhat sag. “I was embarrassed but not about you.” She winces. “Okay, it might have looked like that, and sure sounded like it, but I’ve never done something

like that. It's my business. My kitchen. Hygiene and all, professionalism...I don't know. I freaked out because it was damn incredible and I handled it poorly. Then to see you flirting with the first girl you see, barely seconds after you pulled out of me? It was a punch to my gut...ego, whatever."

I step closer and I want nothing more than to cup her face and kiss the fuck out of her cherry-colored lips but this time I want to take it slow. For the first time since we collided we're actually talking and listening to one another, overcoming what blew up in our face with our first encounter.

"Next time, and there will be a next time." I give her a smirk. "We will talk shit out right away. Misunderstandings are clearly built on the lack of communication. We have a lot to learn and will stumble along the way, but we just have to hold strong, work on it...together."

She keeps staring up at me, her pupils dilate and it's as if she's getting lost in my gaze. Fucking hell. Like I said; I want nothing more than to kiss the fuck out of her.

"Lou?" I croak.

"Louie," she huskily replies.

"Keep staring at me like that and I'll give you a repeat of what caused us to be standing here at this point in time; pregnant with twins."

She leans closer and her fucking breath hitches when she says, "You already knocked me up so how bad would that be?"

The door bursts open and Luke steps inside.

Instead of Alouette jumping away from me—like she did the last time Luke burst in here and caught us in an intimate moment—she lets her forehead hit my chest and grumbles, “That man needs to learn how to fucking knock.”

“What’s going on?” Luke asks.

Damn, this sure feels like a repeat like last time so I grumble under my breath, “Definitely not nothing because this shit right here is everything, and more.”

I feel Alouette pat my chest and she turns to face my twin. “Why? Something wrong?”

Luke shrugs. “Don’t know. Farah has been acting nervous ever since a guy came in and took a table near the counter.”

“Shit. Dark hair and a suit?” Alouette questions.

Luke’s eyes narrow. “Yeah. Something we should know about?”

“He’s been coming in every afternoon for the past few days. He only wants to be served by Farah. It makes her uncomfortable, but he doesn’t do anything out of place. Well, other than stare and flirt, hoping she agrees to go out with him,” she rattles and takes a step toward the door that leads to the front of the diner. “I told her I’d handle it next time he came in but I totally forgot.”

“I’ll handle it,” my twin states and spins around.

Alouette shoots me a look over her shoulder. “That doesn’t sound good. Please don’t let him insult a paying customer. Remember how I fucked up the last time I lashed out at a customer when I was having a bad day?”

She doesn't have to remind me. It's the reason why we met. Rack called us to ask us to keep an eye on his sister because she flipped out on a customer who didn't stop flirting with her while she was having a bad day.

In my opinion she was well in her rights to tell the fucker to piss off, but he turned into a stalker. I managed to catch him in the act and threatened the fucker. Might have kicked his ass too but I'm going to deny it if anyone ever mentioned it.

Mostly because no one knows about it, not even my twin. The fucking stalker caught me in a bad moment; right after I fucked up with Alouette so I wanted to blow off steam and manage to end her stalker issue all in one go.

I place my hand on her lower back. "Let's go out front and do some damage control."

We're right on time. Farah is standing in front of Luke in the middle of the diner. She's trying to keep him from stalking to the table where the man in the suit is sitting, observing the situation.

The customer is about to get up when I tell Alouette, "Make Farah go behind the counter and keep her there. I'll take my brother into the kitchen. Call out if the suit causes issues."

Alouette nods and we manage to work together to diffuse the situation. At least, that's what it looks like before I'm facing my furious brother. Not so much a surprise because I know the asshole has the hots for Farah but hasn't done shit about it.

CHAPTER THREE

– ALOUETTE –

It's almost nine, the diner is closed and I'm in my apartment above it making dinner. I'm in the kitchen while Luke and Louie are arguing in the living room. They've been at it for over ten minutes now.

They're not loud but are standing close and are softly hissing at one another. I glance down at Teela. Louie brought her inside along with a large dog kennel he can put her in if necessary. He put a few blankets in there as well but she ignored it after I told him it was okay to let her walk around.

She's like a small dog or a cat and when I first heard about her I wasn't fond of the idea of a pet like that, but she's actually adorable. Like now, she's sitting on her haunches, staring up at me with her paws in the air.

"Are you hungry?" I muse.

Reaching out, I grab my phone and do some quick research to see what a Gambian pouched rat can and can't eat. I stop reading when they mention insects and snails. Yuck. I grab some chunks of carrot I was rasping and hold it out to her.

I smile down at her when it all disappears. They like to shove the food into their pouches and I also read they're little hoarders. I grab a bag of cashew nuts and squat down in front of Teela.

She moves her tiny nose along the bag and starts to shriek. Holy shit. I didn't expect her to make a sound. Louie is suddenly standing in the kitchen. I jolt up and place the bag of cashew nuts on the counter.

"I didn't hurt her," I blurt. "I only gave her some food. I checked what she could and couldn't eat."

Louie is confused and is glancing around while Teela is frozen in position.

"Did she smell something first before she made a noise?" he questions.

I glance at the bag and point at it. Louie steps closer and takes the bag from the counter, holding it in front of Teela the next instant. She makes the exact same noise after sniffing it again.

"What's going on?" I wonder but then I realize. "Holy shit. Did something dead rub over that bag? You mentioned you trained her, right? Or is it drugs? Where the hell did I get those nuts?"

I rip the bag from Louie's hand and stare at it.

"It's probably nothing," Louie says and shrugs.

I glare at him and walk to the garbage bin and throw the bag in there. "Probably nothing doesn't work for me."

Taking an apple from the counter I take the knife and cut a tiny piece off before squatting down in front of Teela.

"Here you go, sweetheart."

I get to my feet and find Louie staring down at me with a weird look in his eyes.

Getting uncomfortable I snap, “What?”

The corner of his mouth twitches. “You trust my pet.”

I shrug. “And? You said you trained her with the whole body farm and such.”

Luke chuckles and I glance in his direction when he says, “Yeah, but no one takes Louie’s pet serious.”

Okay, I have to admit, it does sound strange to trust a rat’s judgement but the number of articles I came across when I did a quick scan of what Teela can eat showed me they are smart and can be trained.

“Whatever,” I mutter. “If I see a fly sitting on a piece of pineapple I won’t eat it. The thought of something dead rubbing against food gives me the same heebie-jeebies. My house, my rules. You don’t like it? You know where the door is.”

“Actually,” Luke starts.

“No,” Louie grunts.

I’m left bouncing my gaze between the both of them. “Okay, one of you needs to tell me what’s going on. What were you two fighting about?”

They keep their lips shut and glare at one another.

“Listen.” I release a deep sigh. “It’s been a long day and I’d really like to have some food and then put my feet up to enjoy a movie. Which I probably won’t even watch and fall asleep during, but...whatever. Point is, this one here.” I jab my thumb in Louie’s direction. “Wants to talk and somehow it feels like he’s spending the night with him bringing his pet and

an overnight bag. Crazy since we could have ripped off one another's head this morning. So, yes, we do need to talk. But it can wait. Either you two get the hell out and come back tomorrow or next week." Now I'm pointing at my stomach. "Since these buns will be in this oven for a few more months. Or you spit out what has the two of you all worked up."

"I think you need a new security system. I mentioned it when you had that stalker and we had to use other businesses to get an angle on the fucker. But with that suit coming in, drooling at the sight of Farah? We don't even have a damn picture to pull him through a facial recognition program to see who the fuck he is. He's bad news, I just know it," Luke rambles. "I want to spend the night to make sure Farah is okay but—"

"Fine," I mutter. "Take the guestroom and get whatever you need in the morning. Make sure you give me receipts so I can declare that shit. And don't forget to add security to the backdoor and the kitchen. We have delivery guys coming in carrying boxes. The keys are on the hook near the door so be sure to get up early so you can hopefully get a chunk of the work done before I have to open."

Luke looks relieved but Louie observes me with narrowed eyes.

"Now what?" I snap.

"Why?" he fires back. "Why are you suddenly agreeing?"

"I'm tired, I'm cranky, and Luke is giving it to me straight and sounds reasonable. With the stalker issue still vivid in my head, these buns in the oven I have to think about,

and Farah? Yes, the diner needs it. Besides, the last time my brother was in danger and I was hauled into the clubhouse for protection I saw all of you work flawlessly when it comes to solving crime cases so I trust your judgement.”

Luke steps closer and places a kiss on my cheek.
“Thanks, sis.”

“Sis?” I mutter. “To my knowledge I only have one brother. He popped up out of nowhere so who knows how many more I have, but still.”

Luke grins and he looks so different from Louie within this moment. “Yeah. Sis. You know, you’re carrying my twin’s twins. I’m gonna be an uncle. Sister-in-law and all. You’re family. Thanks for letting me crash here. What room?”

I’m baffled by his reasoning and can barely manage to mutter, “It’s the room closest to the door, right next to Farah’s.”

He bobs his head and slips out of the kitchen. I focus back on the veggies I was chopping and place them in the oven once I’ve drizzled some olive oil along with some fresh herbs over them. I place the casserole I made this morning beside it and set the timer.

Grabbing a cloth, I quickly wipe the counter and clean up. I glance at Louie who is holding Teela on his arm. They look cute together. If someone would have told me Louie would be standing in my kitchen with his pet rat tonight, I would have called them insane.

Yet, here he stands, looking hot as hell. Shit. Definitely not what I need right now. He’s here to talk and I just realized

I gave his brother the only spare room I have left. Somehow that makes me smile, knowing he either has to go home or sleep on the couch.

“What are you grinning about?” he questions as he pets Teela.

I grab a beer from the fridge and twist off the cap, and freeze. Shit. I’m pregnant. I might not have paid attention to what my gynecologist said but I’m pretty sure alcohol is a no-go. I shove the bottle in Louie’s hands and grab a bottle of water from the fridge instead.

I take a long pull to feel the cold liquid slide down my throat before answering his question. “I just gave your brother the only spare bed I have left, so you have to take the couch if you’re planning on staying the night. Which you were probably counting on with the bag you brought along.” I point at Teela. “Not to mention, who brings their pet along for a talk?”

“She’s nocturnal,” he grumbles. “I know the diner comes first for you so that leaves only the evening hours and we’re discussing our future. Not something that’s easily done in a minute or two.”

Okay, his reasoning does have good points and it’s also why I didn’t put up a fight. Though, to be completely honest with myself, I do regret how things went down between us. Panicking when Luke came in, Louie’s reaction after I freaked.

I can’t believe we didn’t discuss our feelings about the situation until a few hours ago, in the same kitchen where it all went down. The anger, frustration, and annoyance I felt at myself and toward him evaporated along with it.

Probably a good thing because we need to find a way to move forward from here on out.

“Are you okay to eat in front of the TV?” I question.

Louie puts Teela on her feet and she dashes off toward the dog kennel.

“Someone feels at home,” I mutter and Louie chuckles.

“Need any help?” Louie jerks his chin in the direction of the oven when the timer goes off.

I shake my head. “I got this.” I purse my lips and dare to add, “Save the offer for some time in the near future. I’m sure I’m gonna need it when my belly is too big to reach the counter.”

“I’ll be here for you no matter what.” Louie’s eyes slide to my belly. “I can’t wait to see how big you get.”

“That makes one of us,” I mutter and grab two plates from the cabinets and get to work filling them up with the food I just made.

When the both of us are sitting in front of the TV, enjoying our meal, it’s Louie who speaks up after a few minutes.

He points a fork in my direction. “I’ve wanted this from the moment I saw you. Then it all went to shit and somehow life takes another spin to give us a fresh start. Crazy how life can spiral in any direction, at any given time, huh?”

“Tell me about it.” I place my empty plate on the table in front of me. “I never imagined myself as a single mother.

Hell, I didn't even think of kids or any other future but making the diner a success."

"The diner *is* a success, darlin'," Louie states and places his plate next to mine. "Damn that was some amazing food. Thanks."

"You're welcome. I like being in the kitchen, making all kinds of food. My mother used to be the one out front, dealing with the customers and making coffee while I baked and cooked. We started out small and along the years we built it to where it is now."

"Admirable." He bobs his head and leans back. "When I kissed you I knew it was *'the kiss.'*"

"The kiss?" I question.

I bite my bottom lip because I thought the fire flaming through my body with just his mouth on mine was one-sided. The lust at first sight was definitely mutual but it never happened to me and I thought by his reaction after we were caught—flirting with another chick—I was nothing special to him.

"Yeah. I knew you were meant to be mine when I first tasted you. We shared one hell of a scorching kiss. My cock hadn't even touched your pussy, but I knew once I would bury myself inside you once it wouldn't be enough. Then, when I ripped open the condom and the thing landed on the floor?" He shakes his head. "It was the only condom I had on me and I didn't want to pass up the chance to feel you wrapped around me."

I can feel my eyes bulge. “We didn’t even use a condom?”

He rubs the back of his neck. “I hadn’t had sex in months and just had a full checkup. I knew I was clean. I would never put you at risk like that.”

“You didn’t know if I was clean!” I squeak. “You must have known there was a risk of knocking me up, ’cause you don’t strike me as stupid.”

He gives me a sheepish grin. “Does it matter that I hoped I’d knock you up so I’d bind you to me?”

If my eyes weren’t already bulging a second ago, I’m sure they are bound to pop out and bounce on the floor any damn second.

I start to sputter but the man simply says, “I told you we had a lot to talk about. We didn’t just have a quickie on the kitchen counter, Alouette. We fucking collided and we handled the explosion afterward poorly. We’re granted a second chance and I’m not gonna fuck it up. I’m in this for the long run. Not only for our kids but I want a future with you. However you want. Slow, fast, somewhere in the middle, going on one date to see if we can make it work...whatever...just give me a shot...give us a shot.”

“I can’t believe you didn’t use a condom and didn’t tell me.” I keep glaring at him.

“I was going to tell you but then I felt sucker punched when you acted like what just happened meant nothing.” He lets out a choppy breath. “And we’re back to fucking up again. I don’t want to fight. I want everything out in the open so we

can move on. We're linked on a deep level connection that's gonna tie the two of us for life."

"Something you clearly wanted without even knowing me," I grumble, still astounded he came inside me knowing the risk.

"Chemistry isn't something you can create," he fires back. "It's either there or it isn't. I hadn't experienced it until I met you. So, fuck yeah you were definitely worth the risk. Getting to know one another is what comes after. Hell, people who have known each other for years can still get a divorce so in the end it doesn't mean shit. Other than our connection, it will have to make sense for the both of us. We're either in this together or we aren't."

I take in his words but I'm still stuck on how we got to this moment. "I still can't believe the whole condom thing and you not mentioning anything till now."

"It's not like you gave me a chance to explain," he softly says and dammit, he's right.

I curl my feet under my ass and lean back to focus on the TV as I let my mind process everything we just discussed. Louie settles in beside me and we both watch a movie that just started. Though, I'm not sure either of us really get into it; there's simply too much to think about.

The last thing I remember is dozing off but when I wake up, I'm in my own bed. There are soft voices and noise coming from the kitchen and I throw the blankets back and stare down at myself.

My socks are off but I'm still wearing the yoga pants and shirt I was wearing when I fell asleep on the couch. Louie must have carried me to bed because I can't remember going into my bedroom by myself.

I hop out of bed and into the bathroom to handle my business and quickly freshen up and change into jeans along with sneakers and a shirt. Glancing at the clock, I still have an hour before I have to head down and start preparing the food for when I have to open the diner.

When I step inside the kitchen I notice Louie is making breakfast and Farah is sitting on the couch. A few months ago she was down on her luck with getting laid off and her roommate scamming her so she lost the roof above her head along with it.

She was a regular at the diner and during rush hour she jumped in to help me. I just fired an employee that morning for stealing money from the register so I hired Farah on the spot. She's one hell of a barista and I'm lucky to have her.

The apartment above the diner is split in two. My mother used to live in this one we're standing in now and the one I offered to Farah is a one bedroom apartment I used to live in that is attached to this one. We each have our own space and work together but early mornings we do share a coffee to talk as friends.

My gaze slides to Teela's cage, noticing it's locked. "Is she still asleep?"

Louie follows my gaze. "Yeah. I'm gonna keep her here instead of in the van if that's okay."

I shrug. “She can stay.”

He narrows his eyes. “You’re not confiscating my pet.”

I feel my lips turn into a smug smile. “Seems like I already did. Her bed is in my living room and she allowed me to feed her. We’re great friends. I work during the day and she can keep me company at night. It’s perfect.”

“As easy as that, huh?” He chuckles.

“She saved me from a stash of bad cashew nuts. Without her I wouldn’t have known they were near a dead body.” I shiver at the thought. “Makes me wonder how many times that happens.”

Louie frowns. “Surely not a lot.”

He turns to face the counter and hands me a plate filled with pancakes and fruit. “Why don’t you have a kitchen table with chairs? The kitchen is big enough.”

I swallow hard and feel my hand shake. Louie grabs the plate from me and places it on the counter before stepping closer and cupping my face.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” he questions.

I can’t get the words over my lips and I thankfully hear Farah tell him, “Her mother had a heart attack. Lou was working downstairs in the diner and her mother went up because she wasn’t feeling well. She crashed onto the kitchen table and one of the legs gave way. Lou found her and gave her CPR until the EMTs came. She died a few hours later at the hospital due to another heart attack.”

I shoot Farah a thankful look. She knows how hard it is for me to relive through that moment. It also took me months to switch apartments but this one is way bigger and I could hardly stop living. My mother would want me to move on and it's why I work hard every day at the diner; it was something that was both our dream.

“All in good time,” Louie murmurs and I feel his lips on the top of my head. “Come on, let's get some food inside you. I'm sure the diner needs to open soon and I have to swing by the clubhouse later.”

I step away from him and grab my plate from the counter.

“Why don't you take some time, enjoy breakfast together?” Farah offers. “I'll head downstairs and get everything ready.”

“Thank you, that would be amazing,” I confess and then realize. “Oh, Luke is downstairs. He's installing a new security system in the back and in the front.”

“Great,” Farah mutters and spins around to head downstairs.

Louie and I both chuckle when the door closes behind her. When I glance at Louie, I find his gaze on me, heated as if the man wants to have me for breakfast. The reminder of knowing how good he felt inside me makes my cheeks heat.

I quickly pop a piece of apple into my mouth and head for the couch. The talk we had might have cleared up some of our issues but it doesn't mean I'm jumping right back...well in bed with him I've never been, on his cock, though? Dammit. I

seriously need to get to work and steer clear of Louie otherwise my mind will be in the gutter.

And it's the main reason why we were thrown back together again after all these months.

CHAPTER FOUR

– LOUIE –

“Can you bring your attention back here?” I grumble.

Luke’s eyes finally land on mine and he snaps, “I was checking the cameras I set up this morning.”

“Right. That’s why your eyes were on Farah,” I deadpan.

“Don’t give me any shit when you knocked up the woman you’ve been rattling about nonstop ever since we walked into this diner,” he hisses.

His reaction pisses me off. “Are you gonna follow my example by trying to knock Farah up? It would take more than glancing at the woman when she’s not looking, you know.”

He growls low in his throat and it’s Ganza who snaps, “Enough, the both of you.”

We glance in his direction but the fucker’s attention is on the laptop in front of him. The phone lying next to him lights up and he grabs it. A goofy smile slides across his face and he thumbs the screen before turning into his asshole-self when he faces me and my twin.

“All the cameras are working,” Ganza states. “I’ve set it up on the laptop Luke bought for Lou and the feed goes straight to a recorder so if anything happens to the laptop the feed will still be secure.”

His phone lights up again and the fucker grabs it to check the incoming message that pops up on the screen.

“Who are you texting?” I ask but then it hits me. “Please tell me it’s not who I think it is. Fucking hell, Ganza. Prez told you to leave her alone. We have enough shit to deal with and getting extra heat from the government is not what we need.”

“Mind your own business,” is all he grunts.

“It is our business if that’s Kessie,” Luke chimes in.

I’m about to give him hell when there’s a soft touch on my arm and Alouette’s sweet voice asks, “Mind giving me a hand in the kitchen?”

Sliding out of the booth, I follow her into the kitchen without a word or a second glance at Ganza or Luke.

“What was that about?” Alouette asks when the door falls shut behind us. “You looked like you were ready to punch Ganza in the throat or something.”

There’s a stack of boxes in the middle of the kitchen as if the delivery guy just wheeled them in and left.

“These just came in?”

Alouette bobs her head. “Yeah. I have no clue about heavy lifting, at what time in the pregnancy it’s too much for the babies and all, but I also have some stuff I need to bake. I was hoping you’d help me stash the contents away while I make a new batch of muffins.”

“I’m here for whatever you need,” I tell her. “You can put me to work any time.”

The smile she gives me warms my chest.

She points at the top box I just opened and then she taps on a cabinet. “Those go in here.”

We work side by side for a few breaths before I find myself saying, “I caught Ganza texting with Kessie.”

Alouette frowns. “I don’t think I’ve heard that name, and if I did, I must have forgotten. Who is she?”

“Only Broken Deeds members know who she is.” I give her a smirk and place my forearms on the stack of boxes. “Since you’re mine, I can share a little more.” I can tell by the frown sliding in place she’s about to tell me she’s not mine, so I keep talking. “Kessie is our government contact. I’m sure she knows exactly who you are as well. Anything that goes down or if we need something ASAP that’s government connected? Kessie will make it happen. When I get arrested or someone runs my name through the system? She gets an alert and acts on it.”

Her eyes go big and she wipes her hands on a cloth as she steps closer. “You mentioned you caught Ganza texting her, so he’s not allowed?”

I shake my head. “Ganza has been trying to figure out who she is and is doing shit...I don’t know exactly what the fucker is up to...but I do know Archer has given him an official warning.”

“And he’s clearly not listening.” Alouette grins. “Are you going to snitch?”

I shrug. “Dunno. It’s not my business but I also know we can’t piss off Kessie. She’s like the barrier between us and

the government. You know, taking all the heat from both sides and making sure everything runs fluently.”

“I can see why that could form an issue.” She steps closer to me and whispers, “Why do you think he’s texting... bugging her? He’s going against his president’s orders. So unlike any of the men in your brotherhood, from what I’ve experienced since I met you guys. Do you think he has a crush?”

Her words make sense. “Who knows. No one has seen her, though. She might be a woman in her late sixties. From what I’ve heard she never leaves her house.”

“Or.” Alouette leans in closer as if we’re discussing a secret. “She’s extremely hot. One of those computer nerds who rather interact through a screen than face people in real life.”

I lean in some more, bringing our faces mere inches from one another. “Maybe that’s exactly why he’s doing it. Intrigued by the unknown and all.”

Her gaze falls on my lips and I can see her pupils dilate. My chest tightens in longing to taste her again and when she leans in a fragment more I take what I’ve been craving for months.

Our lips meet and it’s as if we’re both tumbling down a cliff and land in a sea of bliss. It’s exactly what happened the first time we kissed and ignited into a sex frenzy. My fingers slide into her hair to pull her closer and tilt her head for better access. Deepening the kiss we let our tongues collide into a sensual dance. My body heats and my cock starts to throb against my zipper.

I hear the door open and my twin's voice flows through the air. "Fuck, not again."

This time it's different, though. We break the kiss and both chuckle. Her cheeks are flushed and those fuckable lips are all puffy and red from the kiss we just shared.

"What do you need, Luke?" I rumble and brush a gentle kiss against my woman's forehead before facing him.

"Ganza and I have to head back to the clubhouse. Prez's request."

Dammit. I wanted to spend time with Alouette, show her I want a second chance to let her see we'd be good together.

"I'll get Teela and follow you," I grumble.

Luke snickers. "Nah, brother. Prez said you're off duty for the next couple of days. He wants things to calm down between you and Rack so for now you're good to stay here with Alouette and get things sorted."

"Thank fuck," I mutter under my breath.

Alouette is wiping the counter and I catch the hint of a smile tugging her lips. Yeah, we're definitely making progress in getting things sorted. Good to hear my prez has my back.

"If anything changes, let me know," I tell my twin.

He grunts. "I'll be back later today and check on Farah."

Alouette shoots me a "what the hell?" look.

"I'll be here, there's no need to check on her. If the suit shows up, we'll have him on camera from different angles and

can run him through the facial recognition software. So far all he's done is some harmless flirting, something Farah has made clear to him that she's not interested."

"Don't fucking care," Luke grits. "He needs to stay away from what's—" Luke snaps his mouth shut and clenches his teeth before adding, "Just keep me posted."

He spins around and disappears.

Alouette steps closer to me and throws the cloth she was holding on the counter. "He was about to say Farah was his, wasn't he?"

"Yeah." I keep my gaze on the door. "He's been talking about her since the day we stepped into the diner. He was so pissed at me for fucking up with you 'cause that meant he wasn't allowed near this place...so no getting near Farah either."

"You both have been a major discussion point between Farah and I as well." There's a small smile tugging her lips. "Not all good so don't let your ego swell."

"Now there's the difference between you two and my brother and I," I huskily tell her. "Everything we say about you two is fucking good."

"Such as?" she questions, curiosity flashing her gorgeous face.

"I won't discuss what my brother mentioned to me in private, but I can tell you what thoughts I shared about you." I let my gaze fill with heat. "How gorgeous you are. How smart, strong, and ambitious you are, running the diner all by

yourself. The way you hit me full force with simply being the one woman who captured me at first sight.”

Her chest rises and falls and we inch closer—set to let our mouths fuse once more—but she suddenly pulls back and clears her throat.

“Work.” She stomps toward the oven. “We have to work.”

“On it, boss,” I tell her and get back to unpacking the products.

The day goes by quickly as Farah, Alouette, and I work side by side. The work is surprisingly fun and I don’t mind wiping tables, cleaning shit, and handling some other legwork I can do to take the weight off my woman’s shoulders.

It’s a half hour past closing time and Farah is already upstairs in her own apartment. I’ve started dinner—stuffed mini peppers with beef rice, along with a salad—when Alouette still hasn’t come up to her apartment.

“Come here, Teela.” I squat down to lift her and stroll toward her cage.

It’s smaller than the one I have in my room but she only uses it to sleep while we’re here so it suits her just fine. I have a tiny harness with a leash for her and quickly put it on before I head downstairs.

Alouette will probably not like me bringing Teela with me—rightfully so—but I’m used to having her with me during the time she’s awake. The diner is empty and dark but I hear Alouette roaming around in the kitchen.

The door is open and I watch Alouette cleaning up the counter. Looks like she was getting things ready for tomorrow morning. She glances in my direction and a smile slides across her face.

“Hey Teela,” she croons and steps toward me.

“Here I thought I’d get a scolding for bringing a rodent into your kitchen but instead my pet gets all the love while I’m being ignored,” I grumble but I’m smiling on the inside.

Teela has been my pet for years and it would suck big time if Alouette didn’t like her or that they wouldn’t get along.

“Oh, shush,” she whispers and steps toward a cabinet. “I’ll get you some fresh cashews. Let’s hope this package doesn’t smell like a dead body.”

Alouette meant to say it as a joke but Teela shrieks, exactly the way she did the last time. It’s what she learned to do to let me know she found something.

“That can’t be a fucking coincidence,” I mutter. “Can I put her on the counter?”

Alouette’s eyes are wide and she quickly nods.

“Can you hold her leash for me?” She takes it and I stalk to the corner where I’ve flattened the boxes the bags of cashews were delivered in this morning.

I hold one of the boxes out for Teela to sniff and she shrieks again.

Worry hits me and I let my gaze find my woman. “Do you have anything here that wasn’t delivered today?”

“Over there. I get those from a different supplier who comes once a month.” She points at another cabinet that’s filled with a few packages of icing sugar.

I take one of the packages and hold it out for Teela. Nothing. I take another item that’s been delivered today and she starts to shriek again. I carefully put everything away and take Teela into my arms.

“I need to know the name of your supplier. Do you know if you have the same delivery guy every day?” I question.

Alouette swallows hard and ushers me out of the kitchen.

Killing the lights she mutters, “Let’s take this discussion upstairs. I cannot think about dead bodies or any of the ingredients I use sitting next to one.”

We enter the apartment and I remove Teela’s leash and harness. I stalk into the kitchen and wash my hands before I grab plates and fill them with the food I made. Alouette is sitting on the couch and turns on the TV, taking the plate I offer her.

“I’ll get you the information–” She takes a quick bite from the mini stuffed pepper and groans. Quickly chewing and swallowing she mumbles, “This is good.”

“Thanks.” I smile and dig into the food.

We both eat in silence and I stand once I’m finished and hold out my hand to take her plate.

She hands it to me, rubs her belly, and sighs in contentment. “I could seriously get used to this.”

I wander into the kitchen and let her know, “I’m all yours. Unless I’m on a job that requires me to be elsewhere. Otherwise I’ll be right here, making you dinner and helping you downstairs.”

“Just like that?” she asks from behind me.

I rinse the plates and put them into the dishwasher.

“Just like that,” I assure her when I turn to meet her gaze.

“Thank you for helping today and for making dinner.” She stares down as she wrings her hands.

I step closer, forcing her eyes up to meet mine. “I liked spending time here, with you. It’s a good way for us to get to know one another and for me to spend my free time now that Prez gave me a few days off.”

“True,” she whispers, her gaze sliding down to my lips.

The color tainting her cheeks lets me know she’s reminded of our kiss. Seems like the hot and instant chemistry we share is always hovering right above the surface. I can tell she wants me as fiercely as I want her but with our history I know we have to take it slow this time.

It’s why I regretfully switch topics. “Can you give me the name of the supplier? The paperwork of the delivery this morning so I can see if the delivery guy’s name is on there?”

Alouette is clearly startled by my request and I could smack my own head; she probably thinks I’m dismissing her.

Reaching out, I cup her cheek and let my thumb slide over her bottom lip. “I want nothing more than to take this

mouth and warm your body up to slide my cock home. I know it's exactly what will happen as soon as we kiss. There won't be any interruptions and I truly want that to happen. Though, when I claim your body this time it will be mine forever, understand?" I brush my lips against hers and instantly pull back. "I not only want your body entwined with mine, I want your future along with it. A family that takes care of one another. Together we can combine work, this diner, the kids... hell, we can handle everything. And I know you're very damn capable to handle anything yourself but you gotta admit there's something there between us."

I'm holding my breath when I throw out that last line. I hope to fuck she's honest with herself because there's no denying; the chemistry burning between us runs hot.

"I won't deny it," she whispers in a fierce tone and strengthens her voice when she adds, "But I've handled everything myself for a long time. Hell, I've never leaned on anyone. My mother was even leaning on me the last few years. So, to be completely honest? I'm out of my depth when it comes to relationships or how this thing between us will work."

"Honesty is the first part," I tell her. "Communication is a close second. I'd say us standing here now talking about shit is how we're gonna make it work in the long run. Because for sure as fuck I don't have a blueprint or a damn manual on how things should work between us. All I know for sure is that I want you to be a part of the now, the future, and whatever else this fucked-up life has in store for us."

“Like finding out if my supplier is hiding a dead body in their supply room?” she questions.

I stare at her for a heartbeat or two before I throw my head back and bark out a laugh.

Shaking my head I let her know, “Yeah, I guess that’s the first thing on our to-do list.”

She grins and I fucking love how her eyes twinkle. “Let’s get to work.”

I follow her into the living room where she opens a file cabinet near the desk and pulls out a thick binder.

“Here you go. The most recent one from this morning is on top. The delivery guy from this morning is the same one from last week but I’ve seen two others so they must work in shifts. We can check if the stash of cashews were delivered by the same guy.”

I cut her off to tell her, “The source of the scent getting attached to the boxes can very well be coming from the supply room at the main office. Though, Teela didn’t react to everything so it could be the delivery guy who has a body stashed in his truck or had one in there long enough for scents to penetrate to transfer onto the bags and boxes.”

She wrinkles her nose. “Gross. Just the thought makes me want to throw out everything Teela shrieks at.”

“No need to waste good products. Teela’s nose is very sensitive. Maybe she thinks the delivery guy smells like death,” I joke, hoping to lighten the mood.

When Alouette’s laughter fills the air, I know I said the right thing. I take in her beauty and feel my chest tighten,

loving the way we've managed to clear the air between us. More than clear the air the way she didn't deny or decline the thought of sharing a future with me.

A huge fucking step forward.

We take the binder with us to the couch and go through everything to see what we find out. Once we have more details, I grab my phone and text Ganza so he can run a few names for me. It might take some time for him to get the information but come morning I'll be working on this as well as helping my woman out in the diner.

I love the way my life took a spin and changed my future along with the mindset I had involving the club. I've always felt like there was something missing and between my tasks for Broken Deeds I now have the diner to keep my hands busy.

The way Alouette snuggles against me later that evening assures me the two of us can face whatever we run into. If we manage to straighten our shit out as fast as we did it proves there's a strong foundation for the long run ahead of us.

I place a gentle kiss on the top of her head and close my eyes, falling asleep right along with her with a smile on my face and warmth settling in my heart.

CHAPTER FIVE

– ALOUETTE –

“Where did your copy go?” Farah asks me when she grabs a cup from my left.

I automatically glance at the booth in the corner where Luke is sitting.

“My copy?” I echo. “How can you be sure they didn’t switch? I mean, it could be Louie sitting right there, studying whatever is on the laptop in front of him.”

Farah snorts and fills the cup with an iced tea before handing it to a customer with a beaming smile on her face.

Her face pops up right next to mine when she says, “Oh, please, as if you can’t tell them apart? Louie only has eyes for you while that one in the corner? I feel his stare but whenever I look? His eyes are anywhere except in my direction. The only time he looked me in the eye was after that suit asked me out and made me uncomfortable. Luke demanded to know if I wanted to fuck him. He practically snarled out that question while all the other times he’s been a fly on the wall.”

“A fly on the wall,” I muse.

Farah makes a noise in the back of her throat. “An annoying one you hear buzzing all the time but can’t seem to catch.”

I bump her shoulder with mine. “Oh, but you want to catch him. Admit it.”

Her eyes slide to Luke. “My sex life is non-existent and the guy is overly easy on the eyes. I just...he’s difficult to read with the whole looking but not looking at me.”

“So? Put yourself out there. You can ask him out, drag him upstairs into your bedroom, whatever. There’s no rule about women making the first move.” I glance at Luke to make sure he’s still in the same spot when I whisper, “Besides, I might have a little inside information about those twins discussing the both of us. From what I heard Luke mentions all good things about you.”

“Seriously?” Farah whispers, voice and face filled with intrigued excitement.

“Excuse me,” a voice rumbles and the both of us spin around.

There’s a guy with a massive bouquet of flowers in his hands. “I have a delivery for Farah.”

Farah steps forward and takes the flowers. We’re too stunned to ask the guy who they’re from and he’s out the door while we’re still staring at the stunning bouquet of roses.

“What the fuck is that?” I hear Luke growl from behind us.

Farah buries her nose into the roses while she murmurs, “Flowers and they happen to be amazing.”

Luke shoves his arm between us and grabs something from the bouquet.

“That motherfucker,” he grumbles and stomps back to the corner to sit behind his laptop as he grabs his phone and starts to punch the screen.

“Did he just grab a message that belongs to me?” Farah gasps.

I wince due to the way Luke is handling this. “I guess he did. Let me—” I start but Farah is already striding toward him.

Shit. I jog after her but am not quick enough to prevent what happens next; Farah smacks Luke over the head with the roses she just received. He’s stunned for a fragment in time and it allows Farah to snag the card from his hand. She storms into the kitchen and I quickly follow her.

“Did you just hit a biker over the head with freaking flowers?” I ask in awe and glance down at the bouquet. “Poor roses.”

She glances down and she might not have hit him all that hard because the flowers are still intact.

“He makes me so freaking furious,” she snaps.

The backdoor opens and Louie steps inside.

His gaze slides from me to Farah, to the roses, and back to me before he asks, “Everything okay in here?”

“No,” Farah snaps. “Your brother sticks his nose into stuff that isn’t his to deal with.”

A confused look slides across Louie’s face so I tell him, “Someone delivered flowers that were meant for Farah.

Luke snagged the card from it before she could see for herself who sent them.”

“I fucking knew it,” Luke bellows as he steps into the kitchen.

“Shit,” I mutter when I notice there are customers waiting in front of the counter.

Louie catches my gaze. “Go, I’ll manage the damage control in here.”

I mouth a quick “thank you” and rush into the front of the diner to serve the customers. A few minutes later Farah storms out of the kitchen, without the flowers, and joins me behind the counter. Luke and Louie stroll out and take the booth Luke was occupying earlier.

We both handle the rush and it’s almost an hour later when I can finally ask her, “What did Luke mean when he bellowed that he fucking knew it? What did he know?”

Farah glares in the direction of the booth where Luke and Louie were sitting a moment ago but it’s empty now.

“The flowers were from the suit. He left his name and number along with the flowers because he couldn’t swing by for coffee today,” Farah huffs. “I thought it was sweet but someone.” She glares in the direction of the booth, this time successfully finding Luke who is strolling out of the kitchen right next to Louie. “Took it upon himself to interfere and rudely checked his name, telling me he’s a criminal. Who does that? He’s a freaking biker! An outlaw! Judgy much?”

I bite my bottom lip, wanting to tell her they’re not really outlaws. Yes, in some way they are, but they work for

the government, solving cases by using any means necessary. Only those who are in the brotherhood or in a solid way connected are aware of this fact.

Farah leans in and growls on a whisper, “If he only knew who my father was he wouldn’t even bother to glance my way.”

This piece of information snags my attention. “Your father?”

“Leon Baliska.” She smirks. “I might have my mother’s last name and the world might be oblivious to our connection, but I do have his DNA. I haven’t had any contact with the man for the last three years but that doesn’t change the fact that basically I’m still a mafia princess.”

Holy shit. My eyes go wide and Farah swallows hard.

“Dammit. I didn’t think. Does it...are you...am I fired?” She stares at me with a panicked look in her eyes. “I swear I have nothing to do with my father anymore. I haven’t been in contact with him since I moved here three years ago.”

I grab her forearms and give a gentle squeeze. “Hey, calm down. We’ve been friends for months. Hell, living together for all that time and that right there has given me a solid impression of what kind of person you are. I know you’re a sweet, caring, and responsible woman who works her ass off for my business. I don’t care if your father is the biggest criminal out there because it doesn’t reflect on you in any damn way. Need I remind you of the fact that my father is in prison for murdering the man who raped my mother? You didn’t judge me when you found out, did you?”

“That was different. You didn’t grow up with him, you recently found out who he was and what he did. Though, I totally understand what you’re saying.” She hugs me hard and whispers, “Thank you. You have no idea how much that means to me.”

I’d better not tell her that my brother ran a background check when he heard I hired her and gave her a place to live. On the other hand, he never mentioned anything he might have found. Then again, she did just say she has her mother’s last name so that might explain not being linked with her father.

A thought suddenly hits me and I pull away from the hug. “Do you think the guy who sent you flowers knows who you really are?”

Her eyes are wide again. “I don’t know. Holy shit. What if he does?”

I glance over my shoulder, noticing the twins are sitting in the booth again, and back to her. “We’ll figure it out. Luke went nuts before he knew the guy was a criminal so I’m guessing he will protect you no matter what.”

She slides her arms around her waist. “Not if he knows that I probably brought it all on myself with my father—”

“None of that,” I snap. “Come on, I’m going to make you a cup of coffee and you’re going to sit and take a breather. As a matter of fact, why don’t you head upstairs and I’ll finish up here. There’s only a half hour left before closing time and I have those two sitting in the corner who can make themselves useful.”

“Really?” She glances at me with her eyes brimming with tears.

“Positive. You look like you need a shower and some time to catch your breath. Go on,” I urge.

She gives me another hug and rushes through the diner to get upstairs. The twins glance after her but they don’t say anything. I wave Louie over and he instantly gets to his feet and stalks toward me.

“Everything okay?” are the first words he asks. “Do you need to go after her? I can handle it here or we could close up and I’ll clean.”

Yesterday and today, he’s been a huge help, also curious about making coffee, and has patiently watched me and Farah work. Farah and I also taught him some basics so he can at least help most clients.

“No, I told Farah to take the rest of the day off.” I give him a smile. “I mentioned you two would help me so she wouldn’t feel guilty.”

Louie reaches out and brushes a wayward strand of hair behind my ear. “Whatever you need, I’m right here.”

I remember what he told me when he shared the information about Kessie, their government contact. He mentioned how I’m his and that he could share with me and it makes me question if it goes both ways.

“If you say I’m yours...your—”

“You’re my old lady,” he rumbles without blinking.

“That.” I point at him and wave my hand between us. “Does that mean we have this unspoken rule between us that whatever I tell you will be our secret? Or will you run to your brother and betray me behind my back?”

His eyes narrow and he leans in close. Damn, this man likes to breach my personal space at every freaking turn.

“What’s going on, Alouette? If it’s about the delivery guy we think is connected to a dead body, I’ve already put things in motion but would rather keep you out of it. You’re carrying our kids and I don’t want you anywhere near danger at this moment.”

I’m already shaking my head. “No, it doesn’t have anything to do with...wait. You’ve put things in motion? What did you do? Come on, spill. I want to know. This is our case; I deserve to know.”

“Our case?” He chuckles. “I’ll fill you in later. Now, tell me what brought up this discussion?”

I’m about to say something but a customer strolls in. A few minutes later the customer walks out and I trail behind him to close early. I turn to walk back to the counter but a little scream rips from me when Louie is standing so close I bump into his hard chest.

“What the hell?” I grumble.

His hands go to my hips and he gives a gentle squeeze. “Tell me what you were going to say, Alouette.”

I peer up at him. “This will stay between us, right?”

He doesn’t so much as blink when he says, “I can’t promise you that when I don’t know what the hell you’re

going to tell me. I'm not going to jeopardize you or anyone else I care about."

Anyone else he cares about. He cares about me? We just met. I mean, I do feel attracted to him, very freaking attracted. Like magnets, drawn by strings of sexual lust.

"Alouette," he rumbles. "If you don't stop staring at me with dilated eyes, I'm going to fuck that sweet mouth with my tongue before I lick your slick pussy and make you come. Twice. Once on my tongue and last, but not least, on my cock."

I place my finger on his lips to silence him. "Shush. I don't need those thoughts in my head when I have loads of work to do and other stuff to deal with on top of it."

I gasp when his teeth are suddenly holding my finger hostage. Gently biting down he lets go and murmurs, "There's always time in the day for pleasure, especially when it comes to you."

Not knowing how to handle this situation, and before I jump this man's bones, I blurt, "Farah is a mafia princess."

Louie rears his head back. "Say what?"

"A mafia princess?" Luke questions from our left.

"Shit," I grumble and glare at Louie. "This is your fault with all your sexing me up shit."

Turning to face Luke, I jab my finger against his chest. "This mess is on you too. How dare you make Farah feel less about herself? Opening a can of whoop ass when she gets flowers from some guy who turns out to be a criminal, huh? All while you guys look like outlaws but clearly polish those

law enforcement badges you guys don't have with a toilet roll filled with violations."

Louie chuckles. "A toilet roll filled with violations? I told you that's what Kessie is for. We don't have that many violations because we are allowed to use anything we want and need to gain justice."

"Hence the toilet roll comment, doofus," I grumble.

"Just hold up one fucking moment," Luke snaps. "When the hell did I make Farah feel less about herself?"

I glance at Louie, hoping he can help me out because this conversation isn't going the way I planned it.

"Just get it all out and then we'll see how we're going to handle it," Louie says. "Trust me. Trust us. I meant what I said yesterday, Alouette. Trust, loyalty. We got this. I know you're raised to handle everything yourself but I'm right there next to you while you fucking bloom, okay?"

I bob my head but tell the both of them, "Do not disappoint me or Farah."

"Believe me when I say I've been on your bad side, darlin'," Louie rumbles. "There's no fucking way I want to be there any time soon again."

"Farah's father is Leon Baliska." As soon as I throw that name out there, the twins share a look and it's Luke who steps closer.

"Are you fucking sure?" he growls.

"Watch your tone," Louie grits and slides his arm around my waist to pull me closer.

Knocking on the window breaks the tension and we all glance at the door where the twin's parents are standing, waving at all of us.

"Fuck," Louie mutters.

"Pretty sure they're here for you two," Luke states and is about to walk into the back.

"Hey," I snap and grab his leather cut. "You can't go to Farah and talk to her about this."

His gaze slides to my hand fisting the leather and I instantly drop it.

"Please, Luke. She thinks because you flipped out about the suit being a criminal you'll think less about her too. You can't just walk up to her and throw out you know about her father. She just freaking told me. How do you think she'll react when the only friend she has betrayed her trust, huh? Even if I did it to help her because the thought crossed my mind that if the fucking suit guy knew who she is, who her father is...then...I don't know, but it wouldn't be right."

"Motherfucker," he grumbles under his breath. "You're right." His eyes find mine and he gives me a tight nod. "I promise I won't say shit. But I will run a thorough background check on her father because we know exactly who he is. And for the record? I think you might be right; there's a chance the suit might know exactly who she is."

"Thank you." I glance back at Louie who is letting his parents inside. "I was going to spill everything to Louie so he would help me. But maybe it's good you're involved as well. And if I can say something else." I lean in and lower my voice.

“Could you just look Farah in the eye next time you check her out? Your gaze is all over the place and it’s confusing her. If you’re interested in her, you gotta show some balls.”

Luke chokes on a laugh. “Show some balls, hey? Thanks for the suggestion.” He jerks his chin in the direction of the voices behind me. “You go entertain my parents and my brother and I’ll head back to the clubhouse. I’m gonna cool off and ask Ganza to help me research everything.”

“Sounds good.” He nods and leans over to grab his laptop, but I stop him when I say, “And Luke?” I wait till his eyes find mine. “The guest bedroom is there if you need it.”

His eyes fill with warmth and appreciation, as does his voice. “Thanks, sis.”

I roll my eyes at the “sis” comment and I hear his chuckle as I turn to head for Louie and his parents. Shit. Nerves hit me. I know these people due to visits at the clubhouse and when they come to the diner, but this is different.

“Relax,” Luke mutters from behind me. “They already love you for who you are and are thrilled to become grandparents.”

I take a deep breath and close the distance. Louie is sitting on one side of the booth while his parents are sitting across from him.

“Hey,” I quip.

Vienna slides out of the booth and surprises me with a hug. When she pulls back she asks, “How are you feeling?”

Any nausea? Tired? If you need some help around here I'm happy to chip in." She glances at her husband. "We all are."

"I'm fine actually. Sometimes I completely forget I'm pregnant because I don't feel any different," I admit.

"That's good," Kray muses and glances at his wife with a loving look in his eyes when he says, "Remember when you were pregnant with Liah? You couldn't even step away from the toilet."

"Don't remind me," Vienna groans.

"Maybe this means she's carrying a son." Kray grins at Louie.

"We're having twins," Louie casually states and Kray and Vienna's gaze drop to my belly as if they can see right through it to check.

"Holy fuck," Kray murmurs. "That's fantastic."

Vienna chuckles. "More than fantastic." She reaches out to touch my arm. "I've been there before, carrying twins. My sister as well so if you have any questions or just want to rant or escape, call me. We have your back."

"Appreciate it," I sincerely tell her. "I think it'll be good to search for temporary help around here while I'm still mobile. Then I have some more free time in case I run into any issues. Of course, I have Louie here." I shoot a glare his way. "He refuses to leave my side, but I appreciate the help he's been."

"You could ask Bono," Kray states. "He mentioned a few times how much he liked working here. Put him on the

payroll and if we need him for something we can send another prospect so you're not without help.”

I glance at Louie who nods and I find myself saying, “That’s not a bad idea at all.”

I smile at Kray and Vienna, feeling good, and realize Luke was right; they love me already and make me feel part of the family. At least some issues are easy to fix.

CHAPTER SIX

– LOUIE –

I stare down at Alouette's sleeping form. Wild, red hair spread across the crisp white sheets. She's lying in the middle of the bed and I'm balancing on the edge. I didn't expect my parents to come to the diner yesterday but I'm glad they did.

Not only because they suggested for Alouette to hire Bono—which happens to be the perfect solution—but it also showed her she's already lodged into everyone's heart. It helps that she was already a part of Broken Deeds through her brother, and now by being my baby-momma.

Though, I'm not going to call her that to her face because I'm pretty sure she won't appreciate it. We've come a long way these couple of days and it shows by the fact I'm lying in this bed with her. Okay, we were watching a movie and fell asleep, and I'm still wearing my sweatpants, but we spent the night in one bed.

I reach out and let my fingertips slide along the side of her face. Her beauty is captivating but the way she's fierce in everything she does is even more stunning. She groans and rolls to her back; her face seeks out more of my touch.

She's wearing a top, no bra, and boy shorts. I tug the sheets slightly down and let my hand trail from her knee up to her inner thigh. Her breathing picks up and I know she's awake and yet she keeps her eyes closed. I let my hand freeze in place, wanting her to take the next step.

My heart fucking leaps when she suddenly flashes her hands down. She jabs her thumbs into her shorts and shimmies them down her legs, throwing them into the air to let them land somewhere on the floor.

I don't care where because all I have eyes for is her neatly trimmed pussy. Soft red curls above a slick and swollen place where I want nothing more than to bury my head and spend the rest of my morning. Her upper body leaves the mattress and she rips the top away and it too goes flying.

“Lou,” I croak. “Give me your eyes. I need to know you're right here with me. No regrets or freaking out this time.”

Her eyes flash open and land on mine. Such life in those sparkling windows to her soul, as if existence itself was born there. I want nothing more than to hold her stare but the rising and falling of her chest brings her perky tits to my attention.

Fuck. The desire to taste her sweet pussy is put on hold as I crawl up her body to pull one of her nipples into my mouth. Her hands fly to my head and a moan falls from her mouth, spurring me on. I grind my sweatpants-covered cock against her pussy and I feel her legs clamp around me to draw me closer.

I'm giving her some of my weight, pinning her underneath me as I knead one breast while teasing the other with my mouth. My cock is hard as hell but I'm still pacing myself. Alouette's breathing picks up and I can hear by the sounds she makes that she's desperate for release.

I trail a path down her stomach until I'm finally between her legs where I greedily bury my nose into her sweet pussy. I inhale deep and memorize her scent. Sticking my tongue out I lazily start to lick her and give special attention to her clit, flicking the bundle of nerves to keep her balancing on the edge.

This is what we skipped the first time we collided, and I passionately take my sweet time to get my fill. Her little moans, nails raking my skull, grinding hips to feed me her pussy, everything about her spurs me on.

I can taste she's close and when her head falls back, breaking our connected gaze, she falls apart so fucking beautiful. One damn moment in time that's fleeting and yet it's lodged in my heart where it settles.

She's mine. She will always be mine one way or the other. I knew it the second we collided, and it showed the whole fucking world when my seed took root in her womb. Life has a way to give you the options you need. Though it's up to you to choose how you want to walk said path. I feel it in my fucking bones I'm meant to take this road alongside this woman.

Her body sags into the mattress while I gently keep teasing her pussy. Her pleasure is what keeps the craving burning inside my veins. I don't have the urge to fuck just to get off. Before I met her that's all there was but now? It's as if my eyes are opened and I found a completely new way to give and take pleasure with the balance of emotions during sex.

This is what people might call making love, I'm sure of it. I place one final kiss on her mound and brush my lips

against her skin as I crawl up her body, loving the way she squirms underneath me. I reach for my waistband, shoving my sweatpants down and kicking them off to gain the freedom of feeling my woman; skin on skin the way it should be.

My cock nudges her entrance as I stare down into her eyes. There's a desperation rising between us, a mixture of lust, desire, the craving of bliss we both know we can give one another. I shift my hips and the tip of my cock enters her.

Slick heat wraps around me and I grit my teeth, wanting to enjoy this very moment and not fuck her hard and fast; the way we were clawing to our orgasm the first time. I keep my eyes open, letting our heated connection burn hotter through our gaze.

Slowly we connect our bodies until we're wrapped deep and solid. I don't pull out but grind my hips, making sure we're rooted deep and she feels there's no other choice than to be pinned down by me. Her body, her heart, her fucking soul. Everything she is belongs to me as much as I'm hers.

Completely absorbed by one another we start to ride the pleasure our bodies are creating. Sliding in and out of her slick pussy, feeling her walls clench as tight as a fist around my cock. As if she doesn't want me to ever leave and is desperate for me.

I slam hard and deep inside her, my hips pulling and pushing, bodies smacking and the sound fills the air. Her nails rake over my back, head going forward and she fucking sinks her teeth into my shoulder as she explodes around my cock.

The feeling is utter bliss and I want nothing more than to fill her up with my cum but I hold back. I relish the feeling

of her pleasure and wait till it slightly fades. She gasps when I suddenly pull out and crawl back.

“Need to taste you again,” I rumble and lick her center while keeping my eyes connected with hers.

A groan rumbles against her clit as I eat her out. She whimpers and grabs my head, quickly consumed by waves of pleasure as she comes on my tongue. This time I don't allow her to stay in orgasm-fog but I jolt up and fist my hard cock.

I start to jack off under her wide-eyed gaze. Staring down at her puffy from our fucking pussy, I let the tip of my cock stimulate her clit, letting it roam around her slickness. My breathing picks up and I let the hot ropes of cum rip from my body, coating her belly, mound, pussy, every-fucking-where as I claim my woman's body as I brand her with my cum.

I shudder through the feeling. It's as if I'm giving her my all; exactly how it should be. Eventually I fall forward, quickly placing a hand onto the mattress beside her to catch most of my weight so I don't crush her.

All the energy is drained from my body and I roll to the side. Reaching out, I grab her arm and gently tug to drape her over me. My heart is still racing as I try to catch my breath. Yeah. This afterglow, cuddling, relishing in the heat of the pleasure we created is perfection.

“Ecstasy,” I rumble and brush my lips against the top of her head. “Kiss me, babe.”

She tilts her head back and gives me her mouth to allow me to lazily take it. We break the connection and I let

my head fall back to stare at the ceiling, letting the feeling overtake me that I'm right where I should be.

“Finally,” I rumble. “No going back now. Fucking hell, I thought the first time was mind-blowing and that I hyped it up inside my head but to have you again? Even better than the first time.”

“Agreed, but messier.” She chuckles and I realize we are indeed sticky 'cause of my cum that's basically the glue that's keeping us together.

I chuckle and don't mind one bit but when I glance at the clock on the wall I regretfully tell her, “We need to shower and get dressed. My brothers will be here in half an hour to get shit ready.”

She pushes her naked body up. “I can't wait. Are you letting Teela search the truck? Arrest him when he shows? Tell me, what's the plan?”

“The plan is for you to stay behind the counter in the front of the diner while me and my brothers deal with it.” Her mouth slides into a straight line and I add, “I need you and our kids safe, Lou. I can't bear the thought of putting you at risk. I'll fill you in as soon as we've handled it. Hell, it might very well be nothing and we'll have to shift the investigation to the warehouse or whatever. Who knows, Teela might just think the delivery guy smells like death.”

The corner of her mouth twitches at the last line I threw at her. “Fine. But I expect a fully detailed description of everything that happened.” She jabs a finger against my chest. “And don't bash on Teela. She's smart. I always thought the delivery guy was creepy so she's certainly on to something.”

I smack her bare ass. “All right, love. Hop off so we can take a shower where I can soap up those sweet curves of yours.”

She crawls off the bed, carefully making sure not to let my cum hit the sheets. I follow her into the bathroom. We take our time getting clean and I make sure to let my hands roam over every inch of her body.

Fucking hell, I love the way we’ve come together, to be at the start of something solid. We might have hit the ground running when it comes to our connection but we’re sure going somewhere solid now. It’s not running wild and free but both of us have a plan, and expectations, and are set to be in it fully; together as one.

The last few days of talking have certainly paid off. This morning we let our bodies take over the communications and it made us fucking shine. She’s standing in the doorway, fully clothed and ready to take on the day when I scoop up Teela after putting on her harness and leash.

Once downstairs we let some of my brothers in who were waiting out front. My father, along with North, Archer, Wyatt, and Luke stroll inside. They take a seat around a table in the middle of the diner while Alouette locks the door.

The diner doesn’t open for another twenty minutes and it gives us a chance to talk through the plan while we wait for the delivery man to show up. Farah enters the diner from the door that leads to the apartment. Her eyes find Luke, but she quickly dismisses him and heads for the counter.

I know my brother is more than interested in her but the fucker always holds back. Alouette mentioned what she

said to him yesterday but I haven't had a chance to talk with my twin yet, so I don't know where his head is at.

"I've put Chopper out back," Archer states, drawing my attention to him. "He's making it look like he's fixing his bike but he's armed and ready to jump in when needed. Rack is on the roof of the building across from the diner. We got every angle covered just in case, just as you requested. I hope to fuck that rodent of yours is right otherwise it'd be a pain for you to fill out a full report about this shit."

"Teela didn't flag every item we made her check out," Alouette snaps from beside me as she places cups of coffee in front of my brothers.

Archer shoots me a knowing grin and waits for Alouette to disappear behind the counter when he says, "With her standing up for your pet I figure you two are solid?"

Pride fills my chest and I nod. "I hope you have some time later today or someone else at the shop. I'm getting my property patch."

Archer pats my shoulder a few times. "We'll get it done. Your old lady will have to wait to get the patch inked. She won't be tested 'cause she doesn't get inked right away. Alouette has proven herself already and is Rack's sister, pregnant with your kid, so it's all good."

"Kids," I correct him. "I knocked her up with twins."

"Motherfucker." Archer chuckles. "You don't do shit half-assed do you?"

Chuckles and congratulations fill the air and it feels damn good to have things settled when it comes to me and my

woman. We talk details for a few minutes, agreeing I'm taking lead in this, and we'll wait for the delivery guy to enter the kitchen.

Archer and Wyatt will take the fucker and keep him there while I check out the truck with my father and North standing watch. Luke volunteered to stay in the diner to keep an eye on my old lady and Farah.

We're all wearing an earpiece to keep in touch with one another, it's pretty standard when we're going into action. Of course, this is different. There might not be anything going on but we're taking all the necessary precautions.

A dead body might be involved but we have no clue if there actually is one or if the delivery guy is involved in any way. Luke stays in his seat while the rest of us step into the kitchen.

"Lock that door." Archer points at the door that leads to the diner. "We don't want to risk the fucker taking off and entering the diner."

My father snorts. "There are five of us against one untrained delivery guy who has only worked on a truck his whole life. He never went into the army or even had a gym membership. His background is boring. Except for being married, he doesn't seem to have a social life. No kids either."

"Still," Archer says. "I don't want anything going to shit because this is an easy grab and go."

"The truck is in sight," I hear Rack rumble through my earpiece.

“Places, brothers. Get ready,” Archer snaps. “I want this handled within the hour so I can pick up my kids.”

“I thought Bee was headed to Nerd and Dams to pick them up?” Wyatt asks.

“So? I can swing by anyway. Besides, I can have a chat with their Prezs while I’m there.”

Wyatt shakes his head. “I still can’t believe Areion Fury now has two presidents. I mean, even if they’re twins they could split tasks by having one take the prez title and the other VP.”

“Or they can do whatever the fuck they want,” I state.

My father and North chuckle. “Twins or not, a team makes it work. One should never fit the standard and do what feels right.”

I’ve heard stories about my father and North, both sharing women until they ran into my mother and aunt, both falling hard for those twins with different personalities.

“Fuck,” Rack grunts. “There’s a car blocking the road. He’s parking the truck...shit. He’s going in through the front.”

“Motherfucker,” we all grumble and glance at Archer for orders.

“Kray, North, out the back and jog around to enter through the front.” His eyes land on mine. Walk into the diner as if nothing is up and get near that fucker. We’ll slide out after a minute or two.”

I enter the diner and instantly spot the fucker near the counter. There’s one client in front of him. Farah has her back

to the counter and Alouette is helping the customer. Her eyes slide to me, wide-eyed as if she's asking what the hell she should do.

I give her a small shake, hoping she gets the message not to do shit and let us handle it. There's no need to check where my twin is. We've hardly been apart a day in our lives and it's like a sixth sense we developed. One look and we know what the other is thinking and it's as if we feel the other one's presence when we enter the room.

Besides, he's also wearing an earpiece and has heard the discussion and what the fuck is going on. I stride toward the delivery guy to be near him but that's when things go to shit. The customer in front of him chooses that moment to apply for a death sentence.

His arm flashes forward and grabs Alouette's shirt, putting a knife to her throat with his other hand as he snarls at Farah, "Grab all the cash, Farah, and then you're coming with me. Now! Or I'll slash her throat."

Utter fury slams into me laced with panic. Panic because he pulled her hard and rough toward him, making her belly slam into the counter. I let Teela hop onto the floor and palm my weapon in one swift move.

"Get that fucking knife off my woman's neck," I growl in a deadly tone.

The fucker doesn't so much as move an inch. All he does is laugh without humor. The ice-cold feeling hits me that I just let my emotions run the show and I might have fucked up everything...even the life of the woman I've fallen heart

over heels for. But I can't go back in time so all that's left is to ride out the ride and hope for the best.

CHAPTER SEVEN

– ALOUETTE –

My heart is beating in my throat. Scary as hell because there's a knife pressing against it and my stomach hurts from being slammed into the counter. The asshole who is holding me at knife-point releases a sinister laugh after Louie's comment.

Clearly, the asshole isn't scared of Louie's threat, even if he now has a gun aimed at his head. My gaze slides to Louie's gun and I notice a red dot trailing down his arm. I glance out the window where the laser is coming from and instantly know what to do.

"You're so fucked," I murmur and take a deep breath in an effort to calm myself for what I'm about to do.

"Stay still, Lou," Louie warns.

I don't. Instead, I hold up two fingers with my left hand. I strain my eyes to see the red dot appearing on one of my fingers. I drop one finger and clench my teeth, bracing for what's next as I pull back and lean my head right. Glass shatters and the weight I was feeling from the grip of the man in front of me instantly falls away.

The delivery man screams. I hear Farah scream and then whisper, "Holy fuck, holy fuck, holy fuck," over and over.

Louie turns to face the shattered window and bellows, "Rack you motherfucker! You could have hurt my old lady,

asshole!”

I stumble back and notice movement on the ground. Teela is running and I manage to scoop her up and hold her leash. She tries to bury herself under my arm as I hold her tight. Louie’s scent surrounds me when he pulls me into a hug.

“I have nothing to do with this,” a man says in shock. “Why are you cuffing me?”

“Are you okay? Farah, say something. Please, babe. Look at me,” Luke’s voice holds slight panic.

I pull my head away from Louie’s chest to glance in the direction Farah is standing. Luke is cupping her face, but her eyes are closed. He places his forehead against hers and murmurs something before pulling her into his body.

“You,” I hear Louie snap and feel it rumble through his chest. “I’m going to fucking kick your ass, asshole. How dare you risk your sister’s life like that?”

I pull back and glance at my brother while petting Teela. “Thank you.”

“Don’t fucking thank the fucker, he could have killed you,” Louie snaps and takes a step in the direction of my brother.

I place my hand on Louie’s chest and Teela hops from me onto him. “It was my decision.”

A confused look slides across his face when he stares down at me. “What?”

Rack comes to a stop next to me. “My sister and I had this crazy discussion once.”

“Because you were being an ass and sketched the most insane scenario,” I add.

Rack shoots me a grin. “We were having lunch together and I asked her what she would do if she was being robbed at gunpoint.”

“At first, I said I would give the robber all the money. Cash should never be something to risk your life over. Clearly, that was my opinion and then Rack here made a face. I told him that scenario would probably never happen in real life because Rack, my lovely brother who happens to be a sniper, would be watching the diner twenty-four seven the way he was interfering with my life. I explained to him how he’d probably shoot him through the head the second someone pulled a gun on me.” I reach out to hug my brother, realizing this insane discussion months ago led to this point where he basically saved me from getting my throat slit.

My brother wraps his arms tight around me and I feel the rumble of his words when he tells Louie, “She explained in detail how I needed to warn her with a red laser dot first. I then explained how snipers didn’t fucking use lasers because this is real life and not the movies so no warning before we take out a target. She mentioned how crazy that was because then I could place the dot on her fingers she would signal me with before jumping in the direction of the hand she was not using to signal. Fucking stupid.” He pulls back and stares down at me. “Two fingers, drop one before the action hits because a countdown from three would take too long.”

I’m being pulled away from Rack by a strong arm wrapping around my waist to pull me against Louie’s side.

“Never again.” Louie’s words sound final. “This shit might have worked once but do not fucking risk her life like that.” Louie glances down at me and cups the side of my face. “How are you feeling? Any pain in your stomach? We need to have you checked at the hospital.”

My eyes widen in realization. “I don’t feel anything now, but he did slam me into the counter.” I glance around, remembering how Farah panicked. “Where’s Farah?” I wonder, not seeing her.

“Luke took her away from the scene. She had some kind of panic attack or something,” Archer says. “Louie, can you let Teela scan the truck? EMTs are at the scene in a few minutes. I can stay with Alouette if you want.”

“No,” I tell him. “I’ll go with Louie and Teela if that’s okay.”

I glance at Louie instead of Archer, hoping I can join them the way I wanted to when he told me what was going down today.

Louie gives me a warm smile, as if he hears my thoughts. “Sure thing, love.” And he demands in a harder voice, “Only if you promise to let me take you to the hospital right after to make sure you’re okay.”

“Deal,” I tell him, knowing I’d have myself checked out anyway.

My stomach might not be hurting now but I was hurting when I hit that counter. I’d be too worried not to know if something is wrong with the kids. Luckily, I’m still early in

my pregnancy but on the other hand, everything could easily go wrong.

Louie guides me out the door and I cringe at the sight of the shattered glass. My mother mentioned last year how we needed to replace the glass for some better quality and I guess that's going to happen now.

“Stay here,” Louie tells me.

I'm about to object but notice how Louie easily jumps into the back of the truck. Yeah, no way would I be able to drag my ass up there the way he just did. Besides, it just hit me why Louie and Teela are inside.

With the robbery, being held at knife point, and having the robber killed before my very eyes? I realize adding possibly finding a dead body isn't something I want to add to that list today. At least not witness it.

I release a deep sigh and shiver, the turn of events suddenly overwhelming me. I rub my own arms. A strong one overlaps mine and then I'm wrapped in Louie's father's arms. Another hand rubs my back and I know it's North because those two are always close together.

“Hey now,” Kray rumbles. “Everything is okay, sweetheart.”

I hear muffled voices before I'm being shifted into different arms. Louie's scent fills my nose and I sigh in relief.

“Come on, let's get you checked out at the hospital,” he tells me.

I stare up at him in confusion. “No, wait. You needed to check the truck. Where's Teela?”

“Teela is right here,” Kray says and I glance back to see him holding the leash. “Don’t worry about her. If my son needs to go on a run or whatever and is gone for more than a day then either I or North take care of her. She’s used to us and will be well looked after so let my son take care of you, okay?”

I stare up at Louie. “We’re coming back here after we come back from the hospital, right? Teela can stay in the apartment.”

“We’ll be busy inside the diner,” Archer says. “I’m sure we can all make that happen. Now, I’m going to make a few calls and get that window replaced. Sorry, darlin’ but the diner will be closed due to repairs and the investigation ’cause we need to write a report about the shit that happened.”

“The security feed,” I quip. “Luke installed new security cameras. That will help, right?”

Archer’s eyes widen. “Seriously? That would be a great help to have that fucker holding you at knifepoint on camera. Kessie will take one look and file the case away without a hitch.” He pats Louie’s shoulder. “Take your old lady to the ambulance and catch a ride to have her checked out at the hospital. I’ll talk to Luke to check on Farah, and handle everything here. Including the extra dead body you found and to make sure that delivery guy is locked up.”

I’m about to ask about the delivery guy but I’m being ushered in the direction of an ambulance. Time passes where I’m being poked and prodded, questioned, and poked some more when I finally get a sonogram and am given the news that everything is fine, perfect even, with my twins.

Louie is still staring at the images he's holding in his hand. They're a gray, black, and white blur of blobs but he's grinning from ear to ear along with a look of awe in his eyes. I guess hearing the news we're pregnant and seeing it, while hearing the heartbeats, is a complete awareness that knocks him on his ass.

In a good way for sure, because my chest fills with so much warmth, it feels as if my damn heart is smiling. Everything between us feels solid and yet there's a sliver of uncertainty peeking around the corner. I've never been in a relationship and I guess no one can predict the future either.

I do know that this man loves the children growing inside my belly as if he's already met them. The look in his eyes says as much and it's enough for me to know that I want to do whatever comes our way together, as a team.

We collided full-force and were thrown back together with a surprise added into the mix but when it comes down to it? None of that matters now. Not how we got to this point, but how we go from here on out.

There's a soft knock on the door and I glance up to see my brother standing in the doorway. "Hey. I heard you two needed a ride." He shifts nervously on his feet before pointing at my stomach. "Everything still okay in there?"

I bob my head but am prevented from saying anything when Louie jumps up and stalks to Rack, holding the pictures under his nose the next moment. My brother stares down at the image and I see him squint his eyes and tilt his head.

A chuckle slips from me and I can't help but tease my brother when I say, "Yeah, it's not a clear baby selfie, that's for

sure.”

Rack chuckles along with me but Louie is already pulling back the image so he can stare at it some more.

My brother shakes his head and smacks Louie on the back. “Fucking hell, man. I was so damn furious when I heard you knocked up my sister but to see you now? Melting into a puddle at the sight of two blobs? Yeah...that right there tells me you’re in it for the long run. There’s no way to hide or act such an emotion. But you’d better—”

“Treat her right?” Louie snaps. “Claim her, marry her? All of the above? You bet your ass I will. Prez is going to ink my property patch today and we’ll get married before the kids will be born.” His eyes find mine. “I want my wife, not just old lady, to give birth to my children when I’m by her side to welcome them into our world.”

I swallow hard at the emotion clogging my throat. Some might think it’s crazy to have a man throw something like that at you. Skip romance or a nice proposal where the man goes down on one knee, holding a rock in his hands. The hell with that; this man is my fucking rock.

Everything he says and does holds meaning and it’s why my head automatically bobs in agreement. Rack pulls Louie in for a man-hug and in my opinion, he smacks him a little too hard on his back.

I jump off the bed and grab my sneakers to put on. “I’m ready to get home and see what still needs to be done.”

Both men glare at me but it’s Louie who says, “You’re not going to do anything other than rest, I’m going to fix us

some food and we're doing a marathon of whatever series you like to see. Let me fucking pamper you after what happened today. Then we'll see if we open the diner together tomorrow."

I purse my lips, thinking how to reply but both of them cross their arms in front of my chest to glare at me.

"Fine," I huff. "But I still want to know what happened." I pin Louie with my fierce gaze. "You said you'd explain once the doctors made sure I was okay."

"And I will once I have you in bed relaxing," he fires back.

I point at the door. "Well then, why are we still standing around here?"

The both of them chuckle and we head for the car. An hour later I'm in bed with the remote in my hand as I hit pause. Louie might think he can make good on his promise to fix food, let me rest in bed, and watch a series, but he needs to tell me what the hell happened with the truck and the delivery man.

Teela hops onto the bed when Louie enters the room with two plates filled with delicious-smelling spaghetti in his hands. I take one of the plates and scoot back against the headboard.

"Thanks," I murmur. "Now, start talking."

He places his plate on the bedside table and nestles himself on the bed, under the covers, before grabbing his food.

"Later. I want to eat first," he rumbles.

I make a noise in the back of my throat. “That sounds like a never.”

His head turns my way. “Woman, I’m gonna tell you everything in full detail but it involves a dead body and some other gore I don’t want to discuss while eating.”

I stare down at my spaghetti. The little pieces of meat remind me of brain matter. I witnessed someone who got their head blown off today. Yeah, he’s right; no discussing dead bodies while eating.

“Fine,” I grumble and hit play.

We watch and eat in silence for the next few minutes. Louie takes our plates and brings them back into the kitchen. Teela hops on after him. Louie placed two boxes at the foot of the bed to make it easy for her to hop on and off the bed.

“I put Teela in her cage,” he tells me when he strolls back into the bedroom.

I hold the sheets up to make it easier for him to slide into bed. Once he’s comfortable I snuggle closer and place my head on his chest.

He starts to stroke my hair when he says, “I let Teela do her thing in the back of the truck. There was a twin compartment so they can regulate two different temperatures. There’s a chilled section and a frozen one. The frozen section was in the back and she went straight to it. There was a woman’s body in a frozen state. Archer has been keeping me up-to-date and the shit he found out? I don’t think you want to know.”

I rub my cheek against his bare chest. “I do,” I tell him firmly.

I feel the bare touch of his lips on the top of my head. “Are you sure? The shit we deal with sometimes? It’s not pretty. There are some twisted fuckers out there, Alouette. I want nothing more than to keep you oblivious to everything.”

Pushing away from his chest I stare at him with a stern look on my face. “Listen here, Louie. We’re in this together, right? What we went through today also proves I can handle a lot. I’m not saying I can handle everything but I for damn sure am here to take some weight off your shoulders as well. There’s no reason for you to carry all the ugly you’re confronted with. Talking about it helps, that’s what my mother always used to say. Of course, she didn’t open up about what happened in her past but I guess that also shows some burdens aren’t meant to be shared.”

He gives me a tight nod, understanding entering his eyes. “Archer said the body was identified as the wife of the delivery guy. She was strangled. They searched their house and when they interrogated the fucker he came clean about what happened. Or at least his version. He said her death was an accident. She wanted to be choked while fucking and he was caught in the throes of pleasure and didn’t notice he really choked her until he came down from his orgasm.” Louie winces and wrinkles his nose when he adds, “The wife’s body was covered with frozen semen. He kept her that way so he could relive the moment, jerking off over and over and over. Fucking weirdo.”

Stunned by all of this I sink down onto Louie's chest and hit play so the series starts. I'm not sure I'm happy knowing Teela was right and all those details they found out. It's definitely something I will try to clear from my mind because there's no use to be reminded of something like that.

Well, except for the fact that I will have to shift to another company. Though, it's also not the company's fault their employee killed his wife—accidentally or not—and kept her on ice to use her for his own pleasure. Yikes.

What a weird and twisted day we had.

"I'm going to let Teela smell-proof the new delivery man," I state, making my pillow shake underneath me when Louie rumbles a laugh.

"I'm not kidding," I grumble.

He gently strokes my back. "I know, love. I know."

"Did you hear from Luke yet? Other than the last text message you told me about?" I question.

"Nope," Louie mutters. "They're still at his house. I'm sure he'll reach out if something changes. For now, we'll open the diner together tomorrow and I can ask Bono to help out or do you need some more time to process what happened?"

I think about it and decide, "No. I want to work. It's my business and that man decided his own fate. He placed that knife on my neck and when he laughed? A chill went through my whole body and I knew he was going to hurt me."

Louie's arm tightens around me. "Yeah," is all he says.

I don't know what the hell that was or why that robber chose to hold me at knifepoint while addressing Farah. It's a good thing he's dead and no longer a threat. Though, I'm pretty sure Broken Deeds will do a thorough investigation anyway to make sure everything is handled in case this wasn't a one-man action.

For now, I get to try and put everything behind me to focus on the future. One where the man I'm snuggled tightly against will also be my solid rock in an uncertain future. Though one thing I know for sure...I'm going to marry the man who is willing to fight and do everything to make sure I'm loved and well taken care of.

His lips brushing the top of my head is a soft reminder, as is the strong arm holding me in place. I'm happy, feel loved, and look forward to whatever life throws our way. Hopefully no dead bodies, we've had enough of those for one day.

LUKE & FARAH

*The storyline continues with the switch of characters.
Keep reading to dive into the lives of Luke and Farah.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

– LUKE –

I raise my eyes from the screen of my laptop when I notice Farah enter the room. “Feel better?”

She tugs at the hem of the shirt she’s wearing. Her hair is up in a bun on the top of her head, still wet from the shower she just took.

“Hungry?” I question as I rise from my seat and softly close the laptop.

Farah shrugs. She still doesn’t meet my eyes as she stays frozen in place in the middle of the living room. She’s clearly still processing everything that happened today. Being confronted by a robber is one thing, seeing your boss—who also happens to be your best friend—being held at knifepoint adds to the trauma.

To top it off she saw the robber being taken out by a bullet to the head. The moment that happened? It was as if a truck slammed into my chest, seeing the horror in her eyes and hearing her scream. I didn’t care what went on around us and within a few strides, I was standing in front of her, cupping her face to try and calm her down.

She was locked in that traumatic moment and I had no other choice but to scoop her up and physically remove her from the scene. My father helped me get her into my car and I drove straight to the house Louie and I own.

It's secluded, a mix between a cabin in the woods and a small mansion. Our home sits on a large property and is surrounded by a solid fence and a state-of-the-art security system I installed myself. My twin and I each have our own wing in this house and the center of it is a large, shared living room.

We're in my part of the house and the reason I brought her here isn't just to remove her from what just happened at the diner but also because Adriel Camdens—a customer at the diner—showed interest in her. Not a normal customer swinging by for coffee, though.

The fucker is a rising star in the underworld and from the research I've been doing, I get the feeling he wants Farah by his side as a trophy wife. Not gonna happen. Farah is still oblivious to everything going on around her, and I'd like to keep it that way.

At least one positive thing comes from the shit she endured today because it allows me a reason to hit pause on her life and let her stay with me. It hopefully gives me enough time to get to the bottom of what that fucker, Adriel, wants.

Well, he clearly wants Farah but his true intentions are what have me handling this with extreme care. I've only recently been able to identify him and I didn't have enough time to gather all the information. The only thing I know for sure is that he's a rising star in the underworld.

There isn't any evidence of it tied to him so he knows how to cover his tracks, but I found out he's the nephew of Domenico Flavio, the head of a cartel that's located across the country. The reason I think he wants Farah as a trophy wife is

because my twin's old lady told me yesterday that Farah's father is Leon Baliska, a fucking mafia boss.

Yeah, that right there puts me on edge. Farah might not have had any contact with her father for the past three years but her connection is there to find by anyone who makes an effort. Even if she's living under her mother's maiden name.

And I'm guessing Adriel Camdens made a fucking effort because why else would he show up at the diner, flirting with the woman that caught my attention the second I laid eyes on her? The fucking asshole is sending flowers and shit to persuade her to go on a date with him. She declined a few times but he's persistent.

He wants her. Well, he can't fucking have her because she's mine. She might not know it yet but today was also a turning point for me. A wake-up call so to say. The robbery gone bad showed me life itself can change or hell...end, at any fucking time.

I'm not wasting a damn second dancing around what I want. Been there, done that, and got scolded by Alouette for it so I'm all in now. No more messing around. And when I glance down at the woman in front of me every instinct is screaming at me to fight for her. As if I can't live without making her mine to complete the future I have in mind for the both of us.

"Come on," I softly murmur. "Let's get something warm and solid inside you."

Preferably my cock sliding inside your tight pussy, my mind chimes in. Shit. Those thoughts are definitely not what she needs right now.

She follows me into the kitchen and takes a seat on one of the barstools near the counter. I glance in the fridge and take out the stuff I need to make grilled mozzarella sandwiches. Farah studies my every move as I start to chop and grill.

“I will never get used to violence, blood, and death,” she suddenly states as I cut the sandwiches in half.

Placing the knife on the counter, I slide one of the plates in front of her. “No one expects you to.”

I turn to grab some juice and two glasses. Filling one I hand it to her and she gives me a small smile in thanks.

“You’d think as a mafia princess I should be,” she says in a bare whisper.

Keeping my face void of emotion, I simply shrug. “Still. Most mafia heads shield their daughters from that part of their world. Besides, every person reacts differently. I never would have guessed Alouette had balls of steel, pulling a move like that. Hell, who would have thought she and her brother discussed a plan in case she would get robbed, huh? What are the fucking chances of that?”

Less than zero if you asked me. I was utterly stunned when Louie told me over the phone how Alouette and Rack worked together. Crazy and damn lucky but it saved all of us from a very dangerous situation.

She grabs her sandwich and tilts her head as if to study me. “I’m not kidding about being a mafia princess. My father is—”

“Leon Baliska,” I state, deciding to cut into her admittance to let her know I’m very aware of who her father

is.

Her eyes go wide. “You knew?” Her shoulders stiffen and I can see a muscle in her jaw jump from the way she grinds her teeth when she hisses, “Alouette told you.”

Good guess but by the way she’s reacting it’s not hard to guess she’s not pleased by her best friend sharing something personal. Alouette is my twin’s old lady and she shared this piece of information with me because I fucked up the other day. I practically ripped into Farah about Adriel when she brushed his advances off as harmless flirtations.

I told her he was a damn criminal and Alouette mentioned the details of her father because Farah told her I’d think differently about her when I knew she was the daughter of the head of the mafia.

I place my hands on the counter and lean in so she has no other option but to be pinned by my gaze. “Since you’re under my roof and with it under my protection, I can share some details about me and my club. You see, Broken Deeds isn’t just a motorcycle club. We earn our pay by solving cases the government can’t close. Being who we are, we’re allowed to use any means possible to gain justice. So, unraveling the fact of who your father is, even if you’re using your mother’s name, happens to be a twist of one fucking finger.”

“Oh,” she softly says, placing the sandwich back on her plate without taking a bite. “That’s why you were able to get me out of the diner without waiting for the cops and all. I was wondering why no one called the cops and everyone was so freaking calm.”

“We handle a lot of different shit and deal with it in our own way. The important thing I want you to remember is the fact that your boss, who also happens to be your friend, has your back, Farah. As do I. Now.” I point at her plate. “Eat.”

She shoots me a glare but picks up her sandwich. She tries to bite into it angrily to piss me off but her eyes close when the taste enters her mouth.

“Good, hey?” I chuckle. “It’s my favorite, no matter how many times I’ve made and eat them.”

She places her fingers in front of her lips while chewing and swallowing she mutters, “It’s really good.”

“Almost as good as your coffee,” I remark and give her a grin when I notice one of her eyebrows go in the direction of the ceiling. “I love watching you make it first, serving it to me is a close second to actually drinking it.”

She shakes her head. “You’re crazy.”

I shrug. “I’ve seen many baristas do their job. Hell, Broke, Wyatt’s father, is one and can make a damn fine cappuccino but to see and taste yours?” I close my eyes and moan at the thought.

Farah jerks her head in the direction of the expensive coffee machine I had installed a few months ago, a day after I met her, actually. “I guess after what you did for me today and making this delicious sandwich I kinda owe you a favor.”

“You do,” I fire back, instantly having something completely else in mind than making me coffee. “Besides, I bought that thing because of you. It’s only fair you get to

handle it. Did I mention I also bought some of that roasted Black Ivory Coffee I heard you talking to Alouette about?”

Her jaw drops. “Last time I checked it was over a thousand dollars a pound. Are you freaking...no shit? Seriously?”

I take two steps and grab the black package with a golden seal on it, placing it in front of her. “No shit. And I do remember you telling your friend it’s made from cherries, pooped out by elephants and then the coffee cherries are washed and sun dried and stuff, but I’m still kinda stuck on the whole eat and poop coffee twist. So, elephants, hey? Didn’t see that one coming.”

Her laughter fills the air and my chest tightens from the carefree sound coming from her body. Those magical brown eyes of hers light up. They completely stand out due to her platinum hair tinted with warm brown highlights. She’s a sight to behold and it’s why she caught my attention at first glance.

“I can’t wait to taste it. Not now, though. Later. We’re going to save this.” She glances at the package in her hand and almost cradles it as if it’s a prized possession.

“I have more, Farah. There’s no need to save it for a special occasion. If you want something you need to take it. If both of us learned anything from what happened today it’s to never hold back no matter what, ’cause tomorrow might not be within reach but right here, right now, sure as fuck is.”

She places the black package on the counter and puts her hand over it, letting her eyes find mine. “You’re right. But I’m kinda full from the sandwich and I really want to enjoy

this coffee instead of just making it because I have it within reach.”

I nod in understanding and I can't help the lip twitch when I notice her practically petting the coffee.

“You can keep that one,” I tell her and jerk my chin in the direction of where I grabbed it from. “There's more in that cabinet.”

Her eyes are instantly drawn to it and now I'm barking out a laugh.

“I've bought the expensive coffee machine with you in mind. The same with the coffee. Hell, I've been building up to asking you out ever since I walked into the diner and saw you. My brother fucked things up and then I wasn't allowed to go near you,” I confess and make sure to hold her gaze when I add, “I'm done building up to it and am telling you now, straight to your face I intend to make you mine.”

She blinks a few times. “What changed?”

Confusion hits. “What do you mean?”

“You didn't look me in the eye once for all that time. Shy wasn't a word to describe you, but you were standoffish or...I don't know, a creepy admirer from a distance?”

I could laugh it off but nothing is funny about her observations because it's the fucking truth.

“Your friend might have straight up told me that if I was interested in you, I gotta show some balls. I figure you won't be impressed if I dropped my pants and showed them to you, so I showed you coffee instead.”

An unfeminine snort comes from her before she starts to laugh uncontrollably. It's infectious and I find myself laughing right along with her. The laughter fades and we stare at one another with smiles on our faces.

She surprises me when she softly says, "I won't show you any balls either, but I appreciate the coffee and am also interested."

If the words she just gave me weren't enough to get me hard, the woman also sinks her teeth into her bottom lip. Motherfucker, she's a wet dream come alive by accepting what I'm offering.

I stalk around the counter and reach out to take her head in my hands. She barely manages a sharp intake of breath before my mouth crashes down on hers. My tongue slides between her pouty lips and I get my first taste of this woman.

I groan when she grinds herself against me. She drives me fucking wild with desire and I want nothing more than to rip her clothes off and fuck her right here on the kitchen counter. Realization swoops in and I regretfully pull back.

Keeping her face in my hands I tell her, "I want kids, just not right now and if we fuck—"

She places a finger on my lips to silence me. "I'm on the pill and I agree and think I know why you're bringing this up with your brother knocking up my friend."

Her hand drops and I give her a smirk. "You're right. He might be over the moon to become a father, but I'd rather enjoy our time before multiplying. Hell, he can't even take her on the back of his bike. Can he? I mean, she's pregnant with

twins, the vibrations...fuck. I'm not gonna think about that, not my business and it clearly shows why I'm not ready. I want you on the back of my bike to ride for hours or take off to spend a few days on the road, checking into a hotel wherever our asses land."

"I've never done anything like that," she admits. "When my mother died, I bought a one-way ticket out of state and switched cities until I got here. I wanted to make sure no one from my past knew where I was starting over. I guess that's the extent of my traveling if you can call it that."

"I'd call it the start of a new beginning. And thank fuck you did because by doing so you put yourself in my path." I brush my lips against hers, wanting to get another taste, but pull back just as quick. "You're mine."

"That means you're mine too," she fiercely says. "No flirting, no cheating."

"Agreed. You're the only one I have eyes for and have wanted to feel wrapped around my cock more than taking my next breath and that's never happened with any chick I laid eyes on. I won't fuck up, believe me. Especially when I saw how my twin fucked up with Alouette. The time they lost... fucking hell, if she wasn't pregnant they probably would still be shooting daggers at one another."

"Stupid how easily things can turn around," she murmurs.

She inches closer and places her head on my chest. I wrap my arms around her and hug her tightly. Releasing a deep breath, I rub my chin gently over the top of her head, relishing in the feel of my woman against me.

“I’m not in a hurry,” I find myself saying. “The whole life and death experience might have given me a wake-up call, and I do want to bury myself inside you, but at the same time, I want to take things slow. Build a foundation ’cause I’m in it for the long run. First step was getting to where we are now. Next, I’m gonna claim you in front of my brothers.” I pull back and glance down at her. “You might have seen the patch inked on some of my brothers who have an old lady.”

She bobs her head. “The old ladies have the same patch inked on their skin with their man’s name on it.”

“Yeah,” I croak. “I’ll be getting mine first. After I claimed you there’s a timeframe for you to get one as well.”

“Oh,” she softly says. “I love tattoos.”

I glance at the skin she has exposed. “You do?”

She shyly takes the hem of my shirt she’s wearing and pulls it up to show the tight boxers she stole from me but are too big on her curves. Then I notice the flowery swirls starting on her hip and going up to her ribs.

My finger trails over her skin, going up and under her breast, tracing her sternum as I follow the ink that lands over her collarbone. Damn. All this time and I had never seen a mere glimpse of her ink.

“Beautiful,” I croak.

“I’m no stranger to ink and don’t mind getting something meaningful. I’ve heard the old ladies talk about it and know how much it means to you guys. Though, I’d like the sound of a timeframe so we can spend some time together to know and see if we work well together.”

“I know we do,” I fiercely tell her.

She leans in and for the first time she kisses me instead of me being the one who initiates it. I let myself sink into the warmth she ignites inside my veins. Only for a moment and I regretfully pull back.

Brushing my nose against hers I murmur, “Come on, let’s relax on the couch and catch a movie. It’s been a long day and we both could use some distraction.”

It’s the safest option because if I keep kissing her we’re bound to end up naked and that’s not the definition of taking it slow.

Thank fuck she bobs her head as if she can read my mind and we clean up the kitchen before heading out to the living room.

CHAPTER NINE

– FARAH –

Eyes filled with life turn blank with my next breath. My scream is loud in my own ears and I can taste the blood the same moment I see it splattered everywhere. I want to scream again but I know it's useless. The warmth of the blood on my face is as confronting as the crimson on my clothes.

The scent of copper hits my nose, reminding me I'm next. There's no time left to think; I have to act. The gun my mother was holding falls to the floor as I aim mine and swallow hard when I pull the trigger. I killed a man. My throat hurts as another scream rips from me when I'm grabbed from behind.

“Farah. Look. At. Me.” The hard snap of a voice rips me from the painful nightmare I was locked in.

Frantically I try to fight the person who's restraining my arms as I take in my surroundings. I don't recognize the room. A TV hangs on the wall, opposite from where I'm on a couch. Luke's face enters my vision and I stop struggling.

“Luke,” I croak.

He hauls me against him and I let the warmth from his body seep into me.

His chest rumbles against my cheek when he says, “Fuck, darlin’, that was some nightmare. You're safe, I got you. Fucking hell, I wish I could erase the visual of what happened today.”

I shiver at the reminder, knowing what happened today caused the nightmare to come back of what happened years ago. The true reason why I ran away from home and why my father hasn't contacted me; he doesn't know where I am.

"I'm fine," I grumble and try to stand but he's still holding me close.

"No, you're not." His fingers slide into my hair and he lightly fists it to gently pull my head back. "But you will be, I'll make damn sure of it."

"Like you said, you can't erase memories from my mind, Luke," I tell him, feeling some of my anger and frustration drain. He lets me pull away and I find myself saying, "I wish you could. Seeing the life slipping from her eyes is engraved in my brain."

"Her eyes?" he questions.

Shit. "His. Did I say her? I meant the guy who tried to rob the diner."

"And tried to take you," he adds.

I frown and try to think back but my mind keeps giving me the moment where the robber gets shot in the head on a freaking loop.

"I don't remember." I sigh in frustration.

"He called you by name. He ordered you to get the cash and then to come with him."

I swallow hard because I do remember now. "He didn't look familiar. If he were a regular customer I would have known. Maybe he read my name tag?"

“He didn’t look at it and you had your back facing him when he arrived and pulled Alouette against the counter.”
Luke’s gaze keeps me pinned in place.

Gosh if only he would go back to being somewhat shy and keep his eyes averted. It feels as if he can reach out to touch my very soul the way he looks at me now.

“They’re still working on identifying him. There are complications because the fucker burned his fingerprints right off. Doesn’t matter, though. It might take a bit longer, but we’ll eventually know which rock he came crawling out from. We have ways to turn people inside out, their background and family included. Doesn’t matter who the fuck they are,” he grunts.

Panic hits me and I jolt to my feet as I start to pace. What if he finds out exactly why I ran from my father, why he helped me get away? No. He can’t. My father promised he’d take care of everything. But what if? I run into a hard chest. Luke’s hands have a firm grip on my hips to steady me and I gasp from being jolted out of my train of thought.

“Why are you scared? And don’t fucking lie because I can tell by your reaction something’s scaring the piss out of you. It’s about what I mentioned, how we can find out anything. What are you hiding, Farah? I already know about your father, but I also know there’s something more freaking you out than what happened today.”

I push against his chest. “Stop it. Just stop.”

“Why? What are you afraid of? Explain it to me, Farah. I can help. Isn’t it fucking obvious? I brought you into my home only a handful of people know about and this place

is safer than a fucking bunker. We agreed to give us a shot. I'm in it for the countless dinners we will share, the endless nights we'll sleep in the same bed, the sex I definitely look forward to with only one person for the rest of my life. I'm committed to all these things because I feel it in my gut, we're meant to be together. That's how much I've thought about us ever since I met you. This isn't some fling or diving in headfirst as it appears to be. There's no other explanation I can give you. I'm drawn to you the way no other woman has managed to hit me full-force with fucking feelings that make me crave everything with you." His chest is heaving and his eyes hold a haunting expression. "Tell me what's tormenting you, dammit."

He wants to fix whatever he thinks is possible, but he can't. There's blood on my hand I will never be able to wash away along with the painful memory of watching my mother get killed. What will he think about me? Will he still think about countless times, sitting at dinner with a woman who took a man's life?

How foolish of me to even consider being with him. I can never outrun my past. There's a reason why I never dated and declined every time someone asked me out. Exactly what I did when that suit offered to take me out.

"Tell me," Luke snaps again, louder this time, making me flinch.

"No," I snap back. "And I changed my mind. I don't want—"

His phone rings and he holds up a finger to cut me off as the asshole answers the phone. Is he fucking kidding me?

"We were having a discussion," I seethe.

Again, he holds up a finger as if he can hit pause on me.

For. Real. What the hell?

“I don’t want you. It’s over. Do I have your fucking attention now?” I growl.

He gives me a frustrated glare and mutters something into the phone. Seething on the inside I whirl around and head for the bedroom where I left my clothes when I took a shower earlier. I don’t even care if they have blood on them; I need to go. Now. Taking the stairs two at a time, I rip off the shirt I was wearing and reach for my clothes.

“Nice. I thought you were mad at me but instead you’re getting naked. Thanks, darlin’, I sure appreciate the view,” Luke rumbles and I reach for my chest in case my freaking heart decides to jump right out.

Mother of everything that’s holy. How the hell did he get up here so fast? I give him a finger—the middle one to be exact—and reach for my clothes.

Within two strides he’s in front of me. “Oh, no you’re not. We’re going to burn these.”

“There is no ‘we.’ We’re done. I’m going home,” I snap, trying to make a grab for my clothes again.

He gets in my way and rumbles, “Home. Let me guess, you mean the diner where a fucker went in to try and kidnap you because he heard the new boss showed interest in you?”

My eyes go wide and I gasp. My voice is a mere whisper when I ask, “What?”

He steps back and releases a choppy breath and rubs the back of his head. “Fuck. I didn’t mean to say it like that, but you push my fucking buttons.”

I could say the same about him. “Explain.”

“The call I had to take just now was from my prez. Archer gave me the details they found out because they managed to identify the robber. Turns out, he’s a lowlife drug dealer around here who feels the weight of the new shark swimming in his territory. Adriel Camdens burned his house to the ground and put a price on his head. The fucker probably didn’t see or have any way out but to rob the diner for some quick cash and take you as revenge to get back at Adriel.”

His words are like ice water, chilling me to the bone and making my knees buckle. Luke is in front of me before I so much as falter and scoops me into his arms. I grab his leather cut and bury my face against his chest. Breathing in his scent, spicy with a hint of leather and clean soap, I try to calm myself down.

I feel him shift and realize he’s sitting down on the bed as he shifts me onto his lap. “Everything will be fine. We just need to figure out what the fucker wants with you or if there’s any type of connection. Meanwhile my brothers and I are building a case against the fucker. Now that we’ve become aware of a new player in town we need to nip it in the bud before he can evolve and become an even bigger problem. We don’t know exactly where the fucker lives but we will eventually.”

Everything that happened—along with the nightmare, bringing up the past—reminds me of the hard fact that, “I’m the

cause of it all...clearly people tend to die around me because I put them in danger.”

“Bullshit,” Luke rumbles. “The fucker who stepped into the diner to rob the place, he decided to do that all on his own. He was the one who put a knife on Rack’s sister’s throat and thank fuck he’s a sniper and took care of it before others got hurt.”

“You don’t understand,” I grumble.

“Then fucking make me understand because all I’m seeing and experiencing so far is the fact that nothing about this is on you. Even the fact that some dude makes a pass at you. You’re fucking gorgeous, totally understandable. Any fucker with eyes in his head wants a piece of you.”

Warmth flows through me and I snuggle closer. How come this man makes me feel safe? I’ve never felt safe around anyone and yet Luke has the ability to close his arms around me as if he’s wrapping me in a fluffy blanket.

Taking a deep breath I decide to share my past, hoping it doesn’t change anything between us. “About three years ago another mafia head wanted my father’s territory. They sent men to the cabin where we were celebrating Christmas. My mother and I were decorating the tree when suddenly two men we didn’t recognize stepped into the room.”

I fall silent and shudder at the memory. It might be three years since it happened, but I’ve never actually told anyone about what happened or voiced the words out loud.

“I’m right here, sweetheart,” Luke murmurs. “The past is the past. I’ll make sure nothing will touch or harm you in

any way as long as I'm by your side.”

“They shot her. My mother and I looked at one another and I saw when the bullet impacted the back of her head. Her eyes...filled with life and fear one moment and dead the next.”

He curses under his breath and tightens his arms around me, letting his chin softly slide over my hair.

“Apparently my mother grabbed a gun but it fell from her hand when they shot her. I reached out and grabbed it... managed to shoot the one who shot her.” I close my eyes, trying to block the visual hitting me from memory. “I killed him.”

“Self-defense,” Luke states with determination. “With what you just mentioned there’s no doubt in my mind it was self-defense.”

I shake my head. “Someone grabbed me from behind. I struggled. He dragged me out of the room and then I was thrown into someone else’s strong grip. The man ordered the other one to put me in the car, that he was going to take a picture of what I did. That he was going to show the boss that his son was murdered by the mafia princess.”

“Fuck,” Luke grits through clenched teeth.

“Yeah. My father managed to kill the one who was trying to get me into the car but the other one escaped.”

“The one who knew you killed the son of his boss.” Luke mindlessly strokes my back. “This is the reason why you left.”

“I had no choice. My father vowed he wouldn’t rest until the blood of his rival coated the streets for killing his

wife and attempting to kidnap me. I couldn't stay. All I saw was my mother being murdered. The blood on my own hands...the never-ending kills that flows from one to the other until no one is left standing." I bark a humorless laugh. "Here I thought starting a new life away from my father and the mob would leave all of that behind me. Look where I am now. The head of an upcoming gang has the hots for me and one of his rival buddies thought to take me, getting himself shot in the head instead. See? I'm a fucking magnet when it comes to killers and twisted people."

Luke chuckles. "In which category did you shove me, babe? Killers or twisted people? 'Cause for sure as fuck are we drawn to one another like magnets."

I purse my lips but can't help the slight twitch of a smile when I tell him, "Neither. You're in a league all on your own."

"Damn right," he muses and places a finger under my chin to tip my head back as we lock eyes.

Leaning in he captures my mouth in a scorching kiss. Warmth blossoms inside my chest, radiating outwards to spread goosebumps all over my skin. It's a kiss with a sexual promise, a deep connection where you know it won't take much to drift away on a hazy cloud. One that will guarantee to leave everything behind so all you can do is live in the now where our mouths control our minds.

I'm ready to plunge into bliss and see where it leads us, but Luke gently pulls back and brushes his lips against my forehead. "We're not going to fuck, darlin'. Not today."

A frustrated breath rips from me.

Luke chuckles. “I know. Hell, I can’t even believe I’m cockblocking myself, but I refuse to let our first time be ruined by the need to forget and create a distraction for our minds to use our bodies. This thing between us is more than that. I want special. Long-term. Build a foundation before we add sex.”

“Define sex?” I mutter. “No penetration but hot kisses and dry-humping allowed? Because I could get myself off while we kiss and I’ll hump your leg.”

“Motherfucker,” Luke curses under his breath. “You’ve got to be kidding me. Shit. Just the mere thought of you rubbing that sweet pussy to pleasure has me ready to come in my damn pants.”

“Nice,” I huskily tell him. “So...second thoughts? Wanna fool around? Would it be so bad for us to get lost in one another?”

He groans and pulls me tighter against him. “Don’t tempt me. You’ve been making me fantasize about your sweet pussy for months. Louie cockblocked me when he screwed up with Alouette and made it worse but to have you now makes me really want to do right by you. Especially with the shit you just shared and what we still have to deal with.”

“Past and present shit should be reason enough to stay in the now, right here, you and me.” The desperation in my voice fills my ears and I realize he’s right.

I am looking to get lost in feeling something more, letting pleasure fill the void havoc slammed into my life.

“We should discuss a game plan,” I blurt in an effort to change the subject. “Did Archer mention anything else useful

about Adriel? You mentioned you guys were building a case, right? Can I help?”

“I don’t want you in the middle of it,” he gently tells me. “Even if you already are I want you safe so let me and my brothers handle it.”

“Exactly the way my father did,” I snap, pushing myself out of his embrace to get to my feet. “Look how well that worked out with my mother dead and me on the run. He let me leave because he knew he couldn’t protect me with all the men he had while he was basically going on a suicide mission. And I know for a fact he had more loyal men than you guys have brothers.”

“I doubt it,” Luke calmly states. “We have chapters in different states, different countries. We even have other MCs with lawmen. The Iron Hot Blood for instance. They are bikers running a ranch while solving cases. Their brotherhood is twice our size and they also have many chapters. Get my drift?”

“Fine,” I huff. “You might have the manpower but I hate being in the dark. Twice now I’ve been caught by surprise, thinking I was safe when I wasn’t. My father always said he’d protect me but clearly he can’t be everywhere and neither can you. Hell, you were right there in the same room when I was caught by surprise when Rack killed that robber. I didn’t even know what you guys were up to or the fact that there was a freaking sniper watching over us. I don’t want any more surprises, Luke. I want to know who has my back and I damn well want to fight too.”

His piercing eyes hold mine captive and I can see when understanding hits. He nods and I can tell he doesn't like the idea of me helping him but at least he accepts my reasoning.

“Fine,” he grumbles. “But when things go to shit or if I think it's too dangerous, you'll back off or stay put; whatever I say goes.”

I cross my arms in front of my chest. “Does Deeds say that to Lynn?”

His eyes go wide. “Why do you have to bring those two into the discussion? You can't compare Lynn to anyone. Thank fuck she's retired and not around the clubhouse as much.”

“She'll be here this week,” I tell him, watching his eyes go a fraction wider.

“Fuck, no. I didn't hear shit about them coming over from Ryckerdan and staying at the clubhouse. That's not possible.” He grabs his phone and jabs the screen. “How do you know that?”

“She likes me and added Lou and I to a group chat most of the old ladies are in as well. If anyone has issues with something and she's not available, anyone else can handle or help...whatever is needed.” I shrug. “Me or Lou had to swing by the clubhouse a handful of times these past few months when someone ran out of coffee. It's also easy to arrange a girls' night out or breakfast for that matter. At first, I thought it was weird. I knew Lynn since she always came to the diner for coffee. I thought she only added me out of politeness or for when Lou wasn't available. I didn't think I fit in or was actually a part of the group but...I am. I know that now, even

if I've only realized it over the past few weeks. I guess I'm more of a loner for obvious reasons, but Lou just pulled me in and I got her bonus family along with it."

"Who happens to be my family as well. With me claiming you I hope it's quite clear that you can't get out of it; you're stuck with all of us. Which is a good thing because it also grants you immunity." He grins. "A bonus plan for becoming my old lady. If you want I can even dig into your father to see if he's managed to clear shit up over the years. Maybe organize a call or a meeting if you want."

I can feel my eyes bulge and my jaw practically hits the ground. Caught by shock I don't know how to react so all I manage is to stutter out the words, "Would...would that be...is it...possible?" Emotions clog my throat. "I thought I could never return and it feels like I lost both parents the night my mother was murdered."

Then I realize what Broken Deeds does and I grumble, "Wait. You're only offering to dig into the past so you can take him down."

Luke grins. "In some cases, we do but in others we keep the connection and the criminals in place. It's a necessary balance, taking out some of the bigger ones or smaller ones who fuck up and leave those who have honor and boundaries, respect lives and actually keep the underworld away from civilians, if you know what I mean."

"And where does my father fit in?" I wonder.

Luke shrugs. "To be honest? I don't have a fucking clue. But like I said, we can find out."

I nibble on my bottom lip while thinking things through. In reality, there's not much to think about because I don't exactly have a choice. My father has always seemed like a reasonable man. He always talked about honor, respect, and keeping his men in line. I can only hope he was true to his word and still is.

I guess there's only one way to find out. "Okay."

CHAPTER TEN

– LUKE –

“Absolutely not,” Archer rumbles.

I grit my teeth, hating the fact that I’m here and not at home. After our talk yesterday I told Farah this morning I’d ask my prez about reaching out to her father. It’s why we arrived at the clubhouse a little over an hour ago.

“Why not?” I try to keep the anger and frustration out of my voice. “The former president had no issues working with a mob boss and his connections.”

Archer narrows his eyes. I know it’s a low-blow. Deeds, his father, had a contract with the government as well but he had more leeway when Depay knocked up the daughter of a mafia boss. After a CIA agent went under for a government investigation concerning Broken Deeds, there was no other choice but to have a change in leadership and sign a new contract.

It was a fucking mess ’cause Cullen, the CIA agent in question, used Esmee, Archer’s sister, to get close to us but it all ended well anyway. We have nothing to hide and might have extreme actions sometimes but we gain justice in the end and that’s what matters. Esmee and Cullen have been married for years now.

“There are no benefits to reaching out to a mafia head across the country, Luke. I’m not risking another warning from Kessie who is already breathing down my neck due to the

diner incident. Need I remind you of what happened yesterday? Fuck. We were lucky the diner wasn't filled with customers because we were already planning to bring in the delivery guy, not knowing what shit was coming from that."

"Which turned into solving a murder no one knew about because my twin's pet caught it. Plus, everything was caught on camera that went down in the diner, with that robber putting a knife to my twin's old lady's throat. That should have scored some fucking bonus points instead of Kessie giving you shit. She can't be that big of a cunt," I snarl, not liking the use of the c-word but I'm fucking pissed.

"Don't call her a cunt," Ganza growls and places his hands on the table in front of him.

I glance in his direction and it looks like the fucker is ready to jump over the table to attack me.

"Your obsession over her is turning into an issue, Ganza," Archer snaps. "I've warned you two times already."

Ganza's head whips his way. "I heard you the first two times you made it clear but I'm not doing anything to fuck shit up for the club. Hell, she doesn't even know it's me she's talking to, okay?"

"The fuck?" Wyatt grunts. "You're talking to her?"

All of us sitting around the table stay silent while Ganza faces the angry stares of both the prez and the VP.

"Explain," Archer growls. "And don't even fucking think about leaving out details."

Ganza sinks down into his chair. "At first, I was just poking around to see why this chick had a stick up her ass. I

mean, why would the government put her in control of us? Made no fucking sense and I just have to know how things work or it will eat me alive if I don't know all the details."

"It's your flaw, we all know about it, but it's also a good character trait. Especially when it comes to the line of work we're in 'cause it turns you into a damn genius when you sink your teeth into something. Though, your interference fucked shit up when you didn't cover your tracks that well and Kessie found out you were digging into her shit." Wyatt jerks his chin in Archer's direction. "Prez here had to grovel and promise to keep you in line."

"We don't need you shitting where you eat," Archer adds.

"She sparks my interest, I can't help it," Ganza grumbles. "That's why I covered my tracks. I learned from the first time, don't worry. I didn't expect our government contact to be a fucking computer expert. One of the best hackers on the damn planet." He shakes his head and we all curse under our breath.

It makes perfect sense for Ganza to be captivated by Kessie because of the awe-factor she holds, being a chick who's one of the best at something that's his obsession.

"I managed to find out she likes a game I also play and we got to chatting in the game's chat box. We've been texting back and forth but we both stay anonymous...first name basis."

"And the name you're using?" Archer grits through clenched teeth.

“Roque. She’s using Cassiopeia.” He grins.

Archer rubs a hand over his face. “What a bunch of nerdy, fucking horny, stupid teenagers.” His pins Ganza with a stare. “Both of you are using your middle name, dammit.”

Laughter flows through the room and I can’t help but chuckle right along with my brothers.

“I know, and don’t care. We’ve been talking and gaming together every day for months now. She wouldn’t do that if she didn’t like it...like me. I mean, we talk about everyday shit. Never job-related stuff. Like I said, she’s one of the best hackers in the world and hasn’t complained about me these past few months, or said anything, right? She could make an effort to try and track me. I’ve added some tripwires so to say to see if she tries to track me but nothing yet.”

Arrow snorts. “She could tiptoe around that shit if you say she’s one of the best.”

Ganza gives him the middle finger. “I’m better.”

“Can we get back to why we’re having this meeting instead of talking about Ganza’s love life? Or lack of it because it’s digital love and no emotions can be big enough to glide through the digital, cable wires, or a screen for that matter.”

“Emotions aren’t tangible and the internet is wireless, idiot. Kinda like they’re both an invisible force to recon with so don’t fucking piss on my parade when you just found someone to shove your cock into, asshole,” Ganza snaps.

Now I’m the one pressing my palms onto the table, ready to go for his damn throat.

“Cut it the fuck out, dammit,” Archer bellows and releases a deep sigh. “Now, where were we? I don’t even know what the hell we were discussing.”

“The benefits of contacting a mob boss,” I remind him.

“Leon Baliska is a ruthless fucker,” Ganza states.

Shit. Last night I asked him to dig into Farah’s father’s past to see what he’s been up to and what kind of man he was. Ganza hasn’t gotten back to me yet, but it seems like he kept the information to himself rather than share with me.

“He’s the head of a mafia gang, not so much of a surprise,” Archer dryly states. “Anything out of the ordinary?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact.” Ganza opens his laptop and presses a button on a remote to make the wall behind Archer light up with the visual of documents and images. “There’s been a drastic change in his activities over the past couple of years. The last year there’s a significant difference concerning deaths and crimes in his territory. I’ve reached out to one of our law enforcement contacts there and he’s told me Baliska put an end to rival gangs and has been working with the local law to make sure drugs and dealers are off the streets. He owns several legit businesses and invests in the community.”

“Sounds like a standup guy,” Arrow mutters. “Clean and dandy, now...let’s discuss the dirt covering the fucker’s shiny shoes.”

“There’s loads of it but none in the past few years. Doesn’t mean he’s not breaking the law because he’s still the boss, but one who keeps his men in check and by doing so he keeps the peace,” Ganza explains. “Our contact mentioned he

remarried about a year ago. An arranged marriage. The woman's a widow and has a twelve-year-old son."

I wince at the last details Ganza just threw out there, wishing I didn't know so I wouldn't have to say anything to my woman. The look in her eyes yesterday was clear as day; she misses her father.

Archer nods. "That right there might be the reason why he's managed to keep things running smoothly. Arranged marriages are there to forge alliances."

"He might be in calm water now but three years ago was fucking bloody." Ganza lets the wall behind Archer fill with an image of a pile of bodies alongside a dirt road. "These men were found with their hands and heads cut off. They all belong to a rival gang that eventually fell apart when the boss disappeared."

"Three years ago?" I lean my forearms on the table and suddenly realize this has to be what Farah mentioned.

Ganza jerks his chin down. "Yeah, right around the time your girl settled here."

"That's because the son of a rival gang killed her mother right before her eyes. She managed to grab the gun her mother had and kill the intruder. There were two others and while one was kidnapping her, the other took pictures to show the boss and tell him who killed his son. Baliska was able to kill the one who was kidnapping his daughter but the other one got away."

"Holy hell, that would explain it," Archer mutters.

“That’s the reason she ran?” Wyatt asks. “Run and hide so her father could retaliate without giving away his daughter’s location. Though, she didn’t return. Didn’t they plan that part? Does she know he managed to end it?”

I shake my head. “She doesn’t know anything that happened after she left.”

“Fuck,” Arrow grumbles under his breath and pats my shoulder in sympathy. “Sucks to give her the news about her father remarrying and shit.”

“Fine,” Archer snaps. “Discuss it with your old lady and I’ll allow you to reach out if she wants it. Who knows if the fucker can give us some intel about Adriel Camdens.” His gaze slides to Ganza. “You didn’t find a connection between Baliska and Camdens by any chance?”

“Nope. None.” Ganza shuts his laptop. “I’m fairly sure they never crossed paths but on the other hand, who knows. These fuckers might run in the same circles.”

“Find out,” Archer orders me. “Vachs, Depay, Austin, and Louie. Any issues with opening the diner today? The place was spotless and the window was repaired yesterday when I was there but I haven’t been around to ask for an update. Bono is on her payroll now, right, Louie?”

“Everything was smooth sailing. My old lady is a tough one. Pregnant with twins, worked together with her brother to take down the fucker who was holding her at gunpoint, and still wants to go to work the next day like nothing fucking happened. Good thing Vachs and Depay came by to help out. My father and uncle are there as well and Bono already knows how to run the place so all went well.”

“I don’t mind chipping in either. Jersey loves her coffee so swinging by is no hardship.” Austin grins.

“Sometimes I think my mother returns from Ryckerdan just to get some coffee and fucking pastries from that place,” Archer grumbles, making all of us laugh.

“She might be using that as one of her excuses to check up on all of us,” Wyatt agrees. “But on the other hand, all the women love her visits. You too, Prez, as well as your kids and everyone else for that matter.”

“Speaking of which.” Archer gets to his feet. “I’m gonna head out and see what she’s up to.”

Everyone stands and starts to leave church. I reach out and tap my prez’s arm. “Prez. If you don’t mind, could you ink the patch on me later today?”

“Talk to her first and handle the dad thing. Come find me when you know more.” Archer walks off while I glare at his back.

Just before he steps out of church I tell him, “I am fucking sure. Even if she wants to be in contact with her father or not; I don’t fucking care, she’s mine either way.”

Archer stops midstride but doesn’t turn, he merely repeats, “Come find me when you know more.”

Asshole.

I know it’s his job to be an asshole ’cause he carries the responsibility for all of us, but it’s still annoying. Stepping into the main room, I scan the faces to find Farah. She’s sitting on the couch. Alouette is on one side, Bee on the other, and Lynn is sitting on the table in front of her.

She's surrounded by old ladies; right where she belongs. At first, I didn't want to leave the safety of the house, but I needed to talk shit through with my brothers. Seeing Farah's face, I now realize this is also what she needed. Chatting with the women, her best friend right next to her, is what lightens the load.

I hear a low whistle and instantly connect my gaze with my twin. His chin jerks in the direction of the screen mounted to the wall. Fuck. There's a limo riding up to the gate and comes to a stop. The driver gets out and opens the back door. Adriel Camdens steps out and the driver pulls a man from the limo to put him on his knees in front of Adriel.

"Lynn," I snap and I wait for her eyes to land on mine. "Keep my old lady safe."

"Rack, Liah, backup. Now. Luke and Arrow, you two are with me. Wyatt, handle extra backup and call it in. The rest of you stay with the old ladies," Archer orders.

"Prez," Deeds grunts and throws an earpiece in his son's direction.

He snatches it out of mid-air and Deeds throws one in my direction and Arrow's as well. We all put it in as I follow my prez, along with Arrow, out the door.

Archer doesn't glance back at me but mutters under his breath, "No funny business no matter what that fucker says, hear me, Luke? I let you tag along because this involves your old lady but don't make me regret it."

"Understood, Prez," I grit.

“How many times have crazies come to our doorstep?” Arrow grumbles. He might throw it out as a question, but he answers himself by stating, “Too fucking many to count and I get a feeling we’re going to end up with another dead body tainting the dirt crimson a-fucking-gain.”

“Shut it,” Archer states when we reach the gate that’s still shut and will remain closed.

Adriel Camdens glares at me through the spiles. “I thought it was time to formally introduce myself since you’ve managed to get yourself tangled up in my business.”

Archer snorts. “Adriel Camdens, I think it’s the other way around.”

Adriel finally takes his eyes off me and stares down his nose at Archer, first at the patch on his pecs, before dismissing him.

“You have something I consider mine,” the fucker tells me. “Though I’m thankful for the way you stepped in and took her in your care, there is no need for it. I’ve come to collect her.”

“Dude, you’re speaking in riddles,” Arrow remarks with a hint of humor in his voice. “Mind getting to the point ’cause we have better shit to do than to stand out hear listening to your scratchy voice.”

A bullet rips through the man’s head that was kneeling in front of Adriel and is now slumping lifelessly to the ground. Blood leaks out of his head and onto the dirt.

Archer jerks his chin in the direction of Adriel’s chest. “I wouldn’t raise your arm if I were you. The red dot on your

heart is the only warning you'll get.”

Adriel shrugs. “I was merely making a point.”

“A hollow-fucking-point by the looks of the damage the bullet did,” Arrow mutters under his breath.

“Farah Katz, bring her to me,” Adriel grits.

“She’s a Broken Deeds MC old lady,” my prez states. “The woman also has a say in anything involving herself and I know for a damn fact she doesn’t want to be anywhere near you.”

“You have no clue who you’re dealing with,” the driver states from beside his boss.

Adriel holds his hand up to silence his driver. “Like I said, I’m here to formally introduce myself and to deliver a message.” He points at the dead man at his feet. “I heard Farah was almost taken and harmed because of me. This man here was behind the wheel of the getaway car. No harm will ever come to her again, I will make sure of it.”

I want nothing more than to kill the fucker right here and bellow into his cold, dead ears that I already vowed to protect my woman and that she’s not his to deal with. But I don’t. Instead, I grit my teeth and stay rooted in place, trusting my prez to deal with this asshole.

“Your words, nor the dead man soaking up the dirt at your feet, mean anything to Farah’s old man.” He jerks his thumb in my direction. “Or to me for that matter. You made the wrong choice by showing up here, thinking we would be pissing ourselves over your introduction. All you’ve managed to accomplish is speeding up our intent to clean this town of

you and the rest of the cockroaches infesting our territory with your drugs and other criminal activities.”

“Your territory,” he sneers.

Archer glances my way and ignores Adriel when he asks me, “Are we done here?”

The corner of my mouth twitches. “Yeah, Prez. I think we made it clear Farah is mine and this fucker right here is something we’ll deal with later.”

My prez nods and pins Adriel with a dismissive stare. “Shut the fuck up and get the hell off our property. You’re wasting our time ’cause there’s nothing we have to say to you and for sure as shit don’t need to hear anything else coming from your throat. Take another look at that dot on your heart before you so much as think of doing something stupid.”

Archer spins around and stomps in the direction of the clubhouse, leaving Arrow and I to follow closely behind him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

– FARAH –

“Let. Me. Go,” I roar and try to kick Louie’s shins as he struggles to hold me in place.

“Impressive.” Lynn grins. “I always knew she would be badass while fighting. Good for you, girl. Luke is lucky to have you.”

“Y’all are insane. Let me go, you idiot. That’s your twin out there. Go help him!” I seethe.

Why are they doing this? As soon as I knew what was going on I wanted to go outside but both Lynn and Louie blocked my quick escape. All I could do was stare at the screen, watching them without sound. Panic hit full-force when I saw Adriel put a bullet in the back of a man’s head.

While I was shocked to my core—memories of my mother flooding back inside my brain—when the same thing happened before my eyes yesterday, now all I feel is fear for Luke’s safety. These asshats here don’t do shit, making my anger and fear spike to a whole new level.

Lynn nods at someone standing behind us when she says, “They’re inside. You can let her go.”

My feet land on the floor and the steely grip holding me in place is gone. I whirl around and notice Luke standing behind Archer. I quickly close the distance between us and practically jump into his arms. He grunts due to the impact but

holds me tight. I let his warmth and scent comfort me for a heartbeat or two and pull back.

Crushing my fist against his shoulder I scold, “What the hell were you thinking? Asshole! We just started something and everything could have ended just now. Your life and with it mine.”

“You got yourself a little spitfire.” Archer chuckles and is now the one smacking Luke’s shoulder. “I’m ready to ink whenever you are and whatever your old lady’s choice might be? I’ll handle Kessie, okay?”

I bounce my gaze between Archer and Luke, not understanding what those two are talking about.

“Thanks, Prez,” Luke grunts with a load of gratitude.

“Head into church and I’ll fill you in after you two are done.” Archer leans in and whispers something to Luke.

Luke nods when Archer steps away. “Come on, little spitfire. We need to discuss some crucial things.”

I’m still fuming with anger and fear but let him steer me into church. Crossing my arms in front of my chest, I glare at him as he closes the door and leans against it, as if he needs to block the exit.

“Well, what did that asshole, Adriel, want?” I snap, wanting to get this over with.

“Your father remarried.”

I blink a few times, needing to process his words.

Confusion hits but switches to fear just as fast. “Adriel knows who my father is?”

“Fuck,” Luke grumbles and rubs his neck as he takes a step in my direction. “Sorry. This has nothing to do with Adriel. The fucker called you by your mother’s last name so I don’t think he knows who your father is. It’s just that we discussed shit before Adriel arrived and...I didn’t think. Besides, there’s nothing to discuss about what just happened. It’s club business and we’ll discuss and handle it.”

“Okay,” I answer warily, my mind going back to what Luke said. “So...my dad remarried?” A foreign feeling hits me; did he replace my mother as easily as he let me leave that life? Did he even go after the man who ordered the kill and kidnapping. “How long ago?”

“Sweetheart.” Luke’s voice fills with warmth.

I grit my teeth. “How. Long?”

“About a year ago. A widow with a twelve-year-old son. Our contact said your father put an end to rival gangs in his area and has been working with the local law to make sure drugs and dealers are off the streets. He owns several legit businesses and invests in the community. It was an arranged marriage, so we think it was probably an alliance, part of a deal, to benefit peace.”

I stumble back and sit down in one of the chairs near the table.

“After you left shit turned bloody. Up until they found a pile of bodies alongside a dirt road. They all belonged to the gang who sent men to kill your mother and kidnap you. He took them all out, Farah. He cleaned house and has been keeping the peace ever since.”

I mindlessly bob my head, not knowing what to say and barely manage to take in all the information he's throwing at me.

“Did you guys discuss you coming back home? What would happen if he took care of everything?”

This time my eyes find Luke, his questions catching me by surprise.

“No,” I whisper. “We only said goodbye.”

My heart feels as if it's caving in and I hear Luke curse before I'm scooped from my chair and into his arms. He settles me in his lap and places a warm hand on my head to guide me against his chest.

“He might not have thought he'd survive attacking his enemy or wanted you safe from his world. We won't know unless we ask. It's what Archer mentioned...we discussed it and Archer was hesitant to reach out to your father. Kessie, our government contact, would be breathing down his neck because we have no reason to reach out or work with criminals. Even if your father seems to have cleaned house, the fucker still has a load of dirt hidden under his rug, or so to speak. Though, clearly you changed Archer's mind when you practically ripped me a new asshole for risking my life. So, little spitfire, it's up to you. I can ask Ganza to text me your father's phone number and we can reach out.”

I'm stunned into silence while my thoughts are loud. For the past three years I never thought it was possible to contact, to return, to...to reach out and check if my father was still alive. He swore to me he would make them pay for killing

his wife, my mother, the woman we both loved with all our hearts.

“I don’t know,” I croak.

He softly brushes his cheek alongside my head. “What if I called him? Put it on speaker when I ask him about you or if he knows who Adriel is. He might be able to help or not but remember, you’re my old lady. You have immunity from all his shit. He can’t make you come back or anything he is or does will backfire on you. You’re mine. A Broken Deeds MC old lady.”

The panic and uncertainty slightly ebbs away. The reminder of his twin stopping me from rushing out of the clubhouse still vivid in my mind. How Lynn and Bee tried to gently talk me out of doing something foolish, like putting myself at risk.

They are all a tight family, working together and not making emotional decisions. It shows how Luke told me he couldn’t say anything about what just happened; how they need to discuss it together first.

For him to tell me I’m a part of this, his woman. I feel as if I’ve been lost for these three years until I was finally found. It shows me that it’s time to move on. To stop hiding and wondering if at any time death is going to catch up on me. But mostly? I’m not alone, not by myself, anymore.

“Okay,” I find myself saying.

Luke places a finger under my chin and slightly tips my head back to connect our eyes. The warmth in his gaze

strokes my heart and he slowly leans in to give me a tender kiss warming my chest to full capacity.

He breaks our connection and softly echoes, “Okay.”

Luke takes his phone from his pocket and lets his thumb slide over the screen. Placing it on the table, he stands and turns to put me in the chair. He strolls toward a cabinet in the corner and takes something from it.

Holding out his hand I notice he’s holding a phone. “This is a burner, untraceable. Let me do the talking first and you can join in or not. Remember, there’s nothing to fear at this point. You’re my property; under my protection. There’s nothing or no one going to take you away from me. And if anyone tries to harm you, they’ll have to go through me and my brothers.”

“And the old ladies,” I murmur.

“Fuck yeah.” Luke chuckles. “Sometimes I think they’re more vicious than the brothers.”

I can’t help but grin, knowing he’s right—especially when it comes to Lynn. His own phone gives a notification of an incoming message and he grabs it.

Holding the burner, he types in a string of numbers and glances at me. “Ready?”

I take a deep breath and give him a firm nod. He taps the screen once more and places the phone on the table in front of us.

“Who the fuck is this?” a harsh voice I haven’t heard in three years flows through the air.

I close my eyes and feel Luke take my hand in his when he says, “This is the man who’s falling hard and fast for your only daughter.”

Silence fills the room when my eyes flash open and connect with Luke’s. Holy shit. Did he really just say that?

“You have the wrong number,” my father snaps.

“No, I don’t. Have you heard of anyone by the name of Adriel Camdens? She unwillingly spiked the fucker’s interest. He’s the nephew of Domenico Flavio—”

“Head of the Flavio cartel,” my father grits. “Who are you and why are you calling me?”

Luke’s eyes stay connected with mine. “Luke.” He doesn’t give him a last name or anything else but turns back to the discussion at hand. “Have you heard of Adriel?”

“No. You say my daughter spiked his interest. If you’ve called to search for an ally in your crusade against the cartel, then you’ve contacted the wrong person; I don’t have a daughter.”

His words are like a knife slashing across my chest.

“Asshole,” Luke snaps and squeezes my hand when he growls, “Are you denying her existence to protect her, or did you easily replace her by the son you gained with the arranged marriage? Is that why you two didn’t discuss what would happen if you handled the retaliation? You wanted to bury the past and with it ignore her existence? I know for a fact you’ve cleaned shit up enough to welcome her back into your home, but your reaction makes me think you’d rather slam the fucking door in her face.”

Luke leans in and brushes his lips against mine and the warmth in his eyes gives me the strength ringing loud in his words when he says, “At least she has a man who will stand strong beside her. My family welcomes her and won’t ever turn their backs the way her own blood leaves her cold.”

“If you assume the woman you mentioned falling for is my daughter...what color might her eyes be?” my father rumbles.

“Brown.” Luke cups my cheek and lets his thumb slide over my chin. “The way dark chocolate is stirred when it’s melted. She has a tiny scar under her chin that looks like she had it for years. Way before the three years she’s lived in my town. Though, we only crossed paths a few months ago. She’s one hell of a barista by the way.”

“Where is she?” my father demands, his voice a hard snap that sounds as if it could cut through steel.

“Right here with me and I’m glad we’re on the phone. If you were standing in front of me, I’d punch your damn throat for saying you don’t have a damn daughter. Do you even know how much you emotionally hurt her with that statement?” Luke snarls.

The line goes silent for a few breaths and then my father croaks, “Farah?”

Luke’s face turns blurry from the tears filling my eyes. I give a quick shake with my head.

“Motherfucker,” Luke mutters and pulls me from the chair and into his arms. “It’s okay, little spitfire.”

“Does Adriel Camdens pose a threat?” my father grits.

“He’s a new player in the underworld, considers himself a rising star. The fucker just came to our clubhouse and executed a man in front of us to make a damn point. I’d consider him a threat since the fucker demanded we handed Farah over because he considers her his.”

“Give me your address and I’ll make sure Farah will be safe.”

Luke barks out a humorless laugh. “Fat chance, dickhead. She’s safer with me than anywhere else on this fucked-up planet.”

I gasp and quickly curl my lips around my teeth to bite down and prevent laughter from slipping out. Never in all the years growing up have I heard anyone call my father a dickhead, or any other curse name for that matter.

“Doubtful if you’re calling me for information on the man who just fucking killed in front of her. Now fucking tell me your address or I swear I’ll have your body—”

Luke cuts him off by growling out the words, “Alongside a dirt road with my hands and head cut off? Yeah, I’m aware of what happens with men who harm women connected to you, but you know what? No one will ever find the bodies of those who hurt my woman now that she’s mine.”

Again, silence falls until my father asks with a voice filled with curiosity, “Who exactly are you, Luke? Making a threat like that to a man like me you’d have to have a lot to back it up.”

“An outlaw who works for the government. Basically, I can do whatever the fuck I want so my threats are not to be

taken lightly. Now, are you going to help me get insights as to why Adriel might have interest in my woman? He called her by her mother's last name so we don't think he knows she's your daughter. He might just be captivated by her but it's just too much of a coincidence and we want to rule it out."

"I'll have all the information we can find on Adriel within the hour," my father states.

"Good. I'll call back," Luke replies.

"Farah." My name is voiced in a warm and soft tone, the way my father used to address me when I walked into a room; as if he's delighted to see me. "Please let me know you're safe and happy. I was just taking precautions."

"Daddy," I whisper, my throat clogging up from emotions.

"Ladybug." He sucks in a sharp breath.

A woman's voice softly speaks in the background. "Leon. Is that her? Is she okay?"

My whole body locks tight. That must be my father's new wife. The warmth I was feeling a few heartbeats ago is flushed away by the ice water at the reminder of how easily he replaced us. I reach forward and hit the end call button. Taking in a shuddering breath I lean back and let Luke wrap his arms tightly around me.

Both of us stay silent and I'm actually stunned of my own reaction. Not to mention, Luke didn't say anything about the way I ended the call. Arranged marriages aren't something foreign to me; my mother and father are the prime example.

Who knows, if I didn't run three years ago, my father might have looked for a suitable husband for me. I shove that thought away. Once it might have been something I considered a duty but now? I've found someone who might be pushy and relentless but it's my choice. One where I follow my heart and gut and feel good about my choice.

Not just him but the people connected to him as well. My best friend is carrying his twin's twins. He's not a complete stranger and like he mentioned to my father how he was falling for me; I know my heart already took a dive after his.

An arranged marriage would be between complete strangers. Made men. A wedding where they take you on the wedding night with a tradition of showing the sheets in the morning. Women of honor, virgins, their blood staining the white sheets.

I shake my head at my train of thought and remember what Luke told me. How my father remarried. The reaction of the woman's voice at the end of the call was kind of strange. As if she knew about me and was concerned.

"What do you want to do?" Luke softly asks. "I have to talk to Archer to check what's discussed concerning Adriel."

There are so many things happening all at once, the load resting on all their shoulders to lighten the load. No judgement for one pulling the others into their mess. The one for all mentality is heartwarming and it's a stark contrast to what my father's choice was when we were facing a life and death situation.

He braced for impact while I ran to safety, leaving him to deal with the fallout. Would we do the same thing if it happens again? I lost both parents that night. Not only that but I lost my family as a whole. Lost. Alone.

I shudder and stare at Luke's warm gaze. Adoration heats my core and all I want is to get lost in the moment. He makes me feel to the deepest depths; adored, treasured, safe. He lightens my load the way no one else has been able to do.

Leaning down I brush my lips against his. There's no hesitation. He groans into my mouth, fingers sliding into my head to tilt my head and I sigh in relief, acceptance, loving bliss, as we deepen the kiss.

My hands have a feverish urge to feel skin. I start to grab fistfuls of fabric and pull it from his jeans to let my fingers glide over the hard ridges of his stomach. A moan rumbles through his chest and it urges me on to open the button of his jeans. One of his hands lands on my ass, kneading as I rub his hard length through the fabric, wishing it was bare to my touch.

"I want to feel you," I tell him in a husky demand. "Not only in my hand. I want to feel you everywhere, Luke. Now."

CHAPTER TWELVE

– LUKE –

“I want to feel you.” Her voice is a husky demand. “Not only in my hand. I want to feel you everywhere, Luke. Now.”

“Fuck,” I mutter and quickly stand to put her off her feet. “Pants. Off,” I growl and feverishly work on my own jeans to shove the fuckers down to my ankles.

I plant my ass back in the chair and fist my cock while I take a condom from my pocket. Bringing the foil to my mouth, I rip it open as I stare at my woman’s bare pussy. A nicely trimmed landing strip covers her mound.

Covering myself, I move forward to catch her waist and place her bare ass on the table in front of me. Pressing a flat hand on her sternum, I force her to lean back. Her chest is rising and falling and I hate not seeing her tits but right now something sweet demands my full attention and there’s plenty of time in our future to bury my face between those lush breasts.

I grip her thighs and push her legs further apart. Eye on the prize I lean in and let my tongue slide through her pussy. The gasp ripping from her makes my cock twitch. Soon. Very damn soon I’ll bury myself inside her, but I can’t pass up the sweetness this woman is filled with.

I groan and close my eyes for a brief moment, consumed with a hint of pleasure. Getting a taste won’t ever

be enough. I grab hold and slide my tongue deeper inside her. Probing, licking, nudging, teasing her clit, sliding through her folds.

She's grinding her pussy against my face, seeking the pleasure my mouth gives her. Soft moans spill from her lips as she stares down at me. Not a shy bone in her body as she watches her man feast on her slick pussy.

"Luke," she whimpers. "I'm gonna...gonna."

"Come," I rumble against her clit, letting the vibrations heighten the pleasure she's already balancing on. "Give it to me, Farah."

"Oh...oh...oooooouuuuuuuke," she whispers, moaning through the bliss she keeps chanting my name.

Pride fills my chest, knowing I'm the one who brought her to orgasm and I make sure she's enjoying every jolt until it slowly fades, making her sink down on the table. I place one more kiss on her clit and slowly rise to my full height.

Fisting my cock, I let it slide through her wet, puffy pussy. Holding her gaze I start to push in. Merely the tip at first but the feverish need in her eyes is back and an insatiable hunger to claim her overwhelms me, making me slam forward to bury myself deep.

"Fuuuuuuuck," I groan.

My cock has never been surrounded by the kind of tight heat it's fisted with now. I grind my teeth to hold back the need to brand this woman with my seed, regretting the condom I've covered myself with.

My parents were attracted to one another the second they laid eyes on each other. The dynamics repeatedly told to us whenever our sister asked about true love. Stories. A unique connection. Something that catches fire. I've never understood any of the special and unique feelings, but fuck do I realize how unique the experience is.

Sliding out and back in is coming home to a place one might refer to as heaven. Different to all yet the dream we all long for. She's letting me into her body, I'm giving her a piece of mine as we create bliss together. Making love feels like a damn good time.

Without thinking I let my hand move up while the other keeps a tight grip on her waist to keep her in place. My fingers wrap around her throat as I let my face hover above her. I keep thrusting forward, burying myself in and out of her over and over.

"Mine," I growl in a guttural tone and tighten my fingers a fraction, not taking her air supply but letting her know I very well can. "Everything you are. Mine to treasure, mine to adore, mine to pleasure, mine to protect, mine to fucking have."

"Yours," she breathes. "All yours."

"That's right." I grind against her, making sure every surge up is done by dragging across her clit. "All mine."

Her lips part and my cock is treated by rapid waves, trying to pull the cum straight from my balls.

"Fuck." I grit my teeth and let her ride my cock through her orgasm.

I want nothing more than to follow but I'm holding back until I feel her slump down and finally pull out. I rip the condom off and let it land with a smack on the table beside her as I fist myself and roughly jerk once, twice, before letting ropes of cum land on her stomach, the neatly trimmed curls covering her mound, the inside of her legs.

I watch, enthralled by the vision in front of me. A wild urge soothing something inside me now that she's covered with my cum. A magnificent sight. I squeeze the last bit of semen from the slit and make sure to brush the head of my cock along her clit, making her shiver.

The grin tugging my mouth, along with the fulfilment inside my chest is a fantastic feeling. She's mine. The thought not only sinking into my bones but it's taken root inside my veins. Mine. All mine.

"You're quite the artist with your cum." Farah giggles and I raise my gaze to hers.

She's balancing herself on her elbows, grins, and lets her heated stare slide down to her pussy where I'm still rubbing her clit with my cock. The thing didn't even soften and I'm definitely ready for another round.

"Yo, Luke," Louie quips from behind us. "Fuck. Sorry. Wrap that shit up, brother. Prez needs us."

The door closes behind us and I don't know if I should chuckle or groan. Chuckle because of the way her cheeks heat from getting caught, groan due to the knowledge the next round will have to wait till later.

“Come on, let’s clean up and find Prez,” I tell her and step back to yank my jeans up.

Farah stays in place and stares at my cum coating her skin. I pull off my cut and place it on the chair to take off the hoodie and tank I’m wearing underneath. Putting on the hoodie, I take my tank and wipe the cum from my woman.

Hell, in my mind I’m doing the extra work of rubbing it into her skin. My cock twitches at that thought, even if I’m removing it by the looks of it. A possessive streak inside my head fills with satisfaction and that’s all that matters; if it makes sense to me, who the fuck cares.

She quickly puts her pants back on and points at the table. “You might want to throw that away too.”

The corner of my mouth twitches. “Good idea.”

I reach out and snag the used condom from the table and put it inside the tank.

Guiding my woman out of church I ignore the stares of everyone and mutter, “We’ll be right back,” and head for the hallway.

Once inside my room, I point at the bathroom. “Go grab a shower and I’ll ask if Lou has some clothes for you in my brother’s room. Do you want me to bring them or can she drop them off so I can check on my brothers?”

“Lou is fine. Any of the girls for that matter. Thanks,” she throws over her shoulder as she disappears inside. I quickly dispose my tank into the trash and head back to the main room of the clubhouse. Alouette is sitting with my mother, Bee, Lynn, Jersey, and Ivy.

When I reach them, I ask, “Lou, do you have a change of clothes for Farah?” I jab my thumb over my shoulder. “I’m gonna check with Prez. If you don’t mind, can you bring them to my room. Farah is in the shower.”

Lou frowns and it’s Bee who answers, “Go. We will handle the change of clothes. Oh, and they’re all out back.”

“Thanks,” I mutter and jog down the hallway in the direction of the backyard.

Arrow is standing in the middle of the boxing ring, Depay is holding his fists up, and it’s clear those two have been going at it for more than a few minutes. Arrow has a split lip and there’s blood coming from a tiny cut above his left eye.

A few brothers are standing around watching while the rest are standing off to the side. I spot Archer and Ganza and stalk toward them. Archer lifts his chin when he sees me and turns to Wyatt who taps his shoulder and leans in to tell him something.

“Understood,” Archer rumbles and turns to me. “I’d appreciate you keeping your private shit in your own room. The smell of sex kept us from entering church and instead we’re out here. Arrow needed to blow off some steam after the shit we endured with Adriel and it gave most of us some entertainment while we waited for the information. Though, there still isn’t much to go on.”

“Can’t even get a location on the asshole,” Ganza grumbles. “Believe me, I turned the fucker inside out and nothing pops up other than a few properties which hold businesses and no living accommodations.”

“Did you reach out to her father?” Archer questions.

I shove my thumbs in the front pockets of my jeans.
“Yeah. I asked him for information on Adriel after I told him he sparked her interest. I explained what happened and he said he’d call back in an hour.”

“Good. How did your old lady react? Did they communicate? Did he have any interest in reconnecting?”

I frown at the questions he throws at me and it makes me wonder, “Why the overly excited interest in their connection?”

Archer releases a deep sigh. “I called Kessie and when I dropped Farah’s father’s name she practically ordered me to make sure we have him by the balls. She needs a favor from him. Information about some human trafficking ring or something.”

Ganza’s gaze landed on Archer the instant Kessie’s name tumbled over his Prez’s lips. “Is she giving us a new case?”

Prez shakes his head. “Nah, it’s personal. One of her friends went missing last year and turned up dead three months later. There were leads to a human trafficking ring, but everything was a dead-end. It’s a cold case but she’s working on it by herself. I offered her our help, but she refuses to hand it over.”

“Stubborn woman,” Ganza grits.

“Yeah.” Archer sighs. “If she does turn it over to us, our contract states her hands need to be pulled off. We can’t work together on this ’cause she’s our government contact and

if we're handed a case it becomes Broken Deeds club business. She'll see it again when I turn in the report once we solve a case."

Ganza is about to say something but Archer holds his hands up to stop him. "She knows damn well we could do a better job, but she can't hand it off to us. I don't know the exact reason but I'm pretty sure it involves something about personal favors. If she did hand it to us her credibility would be questioned. All while the woman got the job to supervise us because she's basically a cold fish when it comes to humans."

"Bet the loss of her friend hit harder because of it," Ganza mutters. "And Prez or not...don't call her a cold fish again or I'll punch you in the teeth. She's funny, warm, pleasant, and damn smart."

"Need I remind you of the fact you're both hiding behind your middle name and live in la-la-land online?" Archer sighs again. "Fucking hell, sometimes I feel like I'm surrounded by damn teenagers."

"Your kids are getting old but aren't that old," Wyatt states. "But wait a few years and they'll give you gray hairs while they are chasing boys and chicks."

"My kids will stay virgins until they move out," Archer snaps. "No damn way will any fucker lay a hand on Queenie."

I notice the old ladies stepping into the backyard. Mine being one of them. Fuck. It feels good to know we took the next step in our relationship. Which reminds me of the fact that I want my patch inked. Today.

Farah's eyes find mine and I hold my arm out as a silent invitation. She closes the distance between us and I pull her flush against my side where she belongs. Farah places a hand on my chest and tips her head back to glance up at me. I take advantage by placing a quick kiss on her sensual lips.

"I'm getting a patch inked with your name as soon as Archer has time," I tell her.

A blush spreads her cheeks and she whispers, "I would like to get mine today as well."

Damn. A surge of heat mixed with pride jolts my heart. "Are you sure?"

"Why wait? All the things that happened made me realize the good things in life and I want to focus on the positive. Besides, I won't let you get an early start with your ink. I'm pretty sure when we're old and gray you'll still throw it at my feet how you got your patch inked before me." She rolls her eyes and a bark of laughter rips from me.

"I wouldn't dare," I huskily tell her.

A hard smack hits my back. "Yeah, he sure as fuck would. I can tell you more than a handful of times where he pulled the same shit with me," my annoying twin informs my old lady.

"Definitely," Liah adds and giggles.

"Don't believe my siblings. They were put on this earth to annoy me," I grumble.

Chuckles flow through the air and so does the sound of a ringing phone. I pull it from my pants and hold it out for Archer to see.

“Her father,” I remark.

“Pick up,” Archer orders. “Everyone, church. Farah, you too.”

I take the call and tell the man to hang on a minute. We all head for church and once we’re seated and the door is closed, I put the call on speaker.

“Leon Baliska,” Archer quips. “I’m Archer Lawson, President of Broken Deeds MC. You’ve met Luke, one of my brothers who has claimed your daughter as his old lady.”

“Broken Deeds MC,” Baliska rumbles. “Outlaws who work for the government indeed. Is my daughter still safe?”

“She’s on lockdown.” Archer’s gaze finds mine. “Her old man is overly protective and will make sure she stays inside the clubhouse until we’ve handled the Adriel situation.”

“I might have information that will offer a quick solution, but I have one demand,” Baliska says.

“Out with it,” I grit.

“Farah returns home after I’ve dealt with Adriel.”

My old lady takes my hand and shakes her head.

Baliska has no idea about her reaction and continues, “Text me your address and I’ll be there tomorrow morning to share Adriel’s whereabouts but I’m fine with dealing with this asshole myself.”

“Do I seriously need to remind you of the fact your daughter is an adult? She goes where she wants to go,” I practically growl at the damn phone.

A sinister laugh comes from it. “I was just told you are over overprotective and keep her inside the clubhouse. My daughter belongs with her family, she needs to return home.”

“I have a new family,” Farah states with determination. “You do too, or so I’ve heard.”

“Farah.” Baliska softens his tone. “We need to talk. Everything is safe now, you can return home, to me, where you belong.”

“I belong where I am right now. It took years for me to move on, Father. Years. I’ve been by myself, feeling alone, all this time until I met a friend who took me in without wanting a single thing in return. Friendship, something solid I learned to rely on and it gave me so much already. The man I’ve fallen for gave me a taste what life could be when we’re together and I’m grasping it with both hands. If I would return to live with you all the hurtful memories of what happened would arise while there’s nothing left for me there. I didn’t think we would ever see each other again because you said I was better off by myself to keep safe from—”

“I was wrong,” Baliska interrupts with a firm voice. “Back then I didn’t know exactly what I had to face but I’ve made things right. Everything is handled. Silvanna, my new wife, she looks forward to meeting you. I’ve told her all about you.”

“I need time,” Farah croaks and looks at me with a plea for help.

“You’ve heard my old lady. Your demand is useless,” I snap. “Either you help us deal with the threat against your daughter, out of the goodness of your heart, or we’ll handle

this on our own. I don't want my old lady's heart on the line and the added stress you cause by demanding her to return to what you call home. What she calls home is where her friends are, where the warmth of emotions wrap around her from the things she built along with the people she holds dear. It's a foundation and right now the only thing that connects home with you is the fact that you were once her father. A man who loved her enough to set her free to gain freedom which gave him the space he needed to wash his hands in blood to make sure she was safe. I don't fucking judge. Hell, none of us in this room do but the fact won't change that you can't order someone to return to you. Now, you have a choice to make, Baliska. Help your daughter without strings attached and let her make her own choice to grow accustomed to the fact that you have returned to her life and go from there."

The room falls silent but the thankful look in my woman's eyes is all that matters. I understand the struggles she must be facing inside her head when it comes to her father. It's not something you can demand or easily discuss.

A person can make up their own damn mind. My woman's safety will always come first but there's no way I will ever take a choice away from her. We're a team. An equal unit who faces everything together.

There is not a single person on this fucked-up planet who can demand shit differently.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

– FARAH –

Luke's words wash over me, the warmth of them empowering me. I'm no longer alone and he's voiced it out loud for all to hear. He stands up for me while letting me feel as if I'm his equal instead of a damsel in distress who needs saving.

"Let me know the address you would like to meet and we will handle Adriel together," my father states and his voice turns to ice when he adds, "And Luke? My demand is for you to be present at that meeting."

"Looking forward to it," Luke replies with his gaze still set on me.

The call ends and Archer releases a deep sigh. "I was hoping he would hand over the information without any interference, but I guess this will have to do."

"We can ask him about the other thing," Ganza quips. "Maybe Luke's old lady can ask so he will definitely help."

My attention slides to Ganza and I wonder what he's talking about.

"Leave it alone, Ganza," Luke snarls. "Just because you have the hots for Kessie doesn't mean you can use my woman for your own personal gain. Didn't you just hear her father demand for his daughter to come home in exchange for information? How the fuck do you think he's going to react

when we ask him for help on a case that's not even connected to us, huh?"

"What case?" I wonder and bounce my attention between Ganza and Luke.

I expected one of those two to answer my question but instead it's Archer who says, "Any major shift in our brotherhood has to be reported to Kessie so the government doesn't face any surprises when shit hits the fan. When Kessie heard about your father, she wanted information from him concerning a human trafficking case."

"She practically ordered you to make sure we had him by the balls," Luke adds.

"Because it's fucking personal," Ganza growls. "Don't make her sound like a bitch. One of her friends went missing last year and turned up dead three months later."

"Why would my father have any—" Realization hits and my lips slam shut while my eyes widen.

"No," Archer snaps. "Banish that thought from your head. There is no evidence or link that your father has anything to do with human trafficking. However, he has connections and a lot of power within the underworld. There's a reason he accepted an arranged marriage with a widow who already had a kid. He's single-handedly wiped out a rival gang and has regained peace within his territory. Kessie merely sees an opportunity and wants us to grab it. We have a meeting with him and we will handle things concerning Adriel first and then hopefully persuade him to help out. Who knows, he might give us a marker when we manage to keep you safe or for reconnecting, whatever."

“A marker,” I muse. “A favor, and I owe you.” I shake my head. “He should help if he can. If you say he’s not in any way connected or linked with human trafficking, he must be against it. I don’t think...I don’t know...it might be stupid or ignorant of me, but I don’t think my father would condone something like that. My mind might have gone there for a second but...no. Growing up I heard things, even if they tried to shield me. At an early age I knew my father wasn’t just a businessman but he treated my mother and me with kindness.” Determination fills me and I know what I have to do. “I’ll come to the meeting and ask him myself if you give me the details so I know what Kessie wants him to do.”

“No,” Luke grumbles. “You’re not going anywhere. You’re on lockdown.”

“We could ask him to meet us here, at the clubhouse,” Archer suggests.

I’m bobbing my head, but Luke is shaking his. “You’re pressuring her into facing her father.”

Squeezing our joined hands I tell him, “Nobody is pressuring me. We’re doing this together, remember? All of you are helping me. Me! I didn’t ask for anything, but you simply swooped in and knew something wasn’t right. We might be together but that doesn’t mean my problems are automatically yours or ours for that matter.” I wave my hand around. “All of them as well. And if there’s something small as to ask my father if he’s willing to help with something else, I will do it. Besides, maybe it’s something we could use to take a step in talking...get past the gap our lives we’re struck with when we lost Mom.”

Sadness hits me and before I can take a shuddering breath, I feel Luke's strong arms surround me.

"Fine," he grumbles and brushes his nose along my neck.

"Text him the address of the clubhouse and let everyone know we're on full alert. I'm going to make my parents take the kids to Blue and Zack," Archer states. "With the shit going on I think it's best to make sure all the kids are with Areion Fury MC. That Adriel fucker showing up and dumping bodies at the gate isn't something they need to see, no matter how old they are."

"Your daughter knows how to handle a gun. I'd say she won't blink an eyelash at the sight of blood," Arrow dryly replies. "Hunter would probably jab his knife in anyone who would glance his sister's way."

Archer glares at him. "Didn't you hear me mention the fact that they don't need to see it no matter what their age is? Dammit to hell, the third generation is growing up hard and fast to step into our footprints but it doesn't mean they should be ready for it."

"Damn sure," Arrow agrees. "We, the second generation, still have quite a few good years in us."

Depay smacks Arrow against the back of his head. "Tone it down. Fucking third generation. We, the first generation, are still kicking and screaming. Don't so much as think those teenagers are ready for this life, even if those little shits think they know everything. Their brains are still a sponge. Just like you, still wet behind the ears and as green as a damn twig. Third generation. Fuck that."

Luke's father grunts in agreement and so do the others of the first generation. I feel a smile curve my lips. This bunch might be a mixture of different ages, but they are a loyal, tight-knit family. They all rise from their seat and stroll out. I follow Luke into the main room and notice Louie who goes straight to Alouette.

"Maybe Alouette should go to Areion Fury as well," I wonder out loud and turn to Luke.

"She might be pregnant but there's no way anyone will be able to keep her away from her business. Louie barely managed to persuade her to take it easy after the robbery at the diner. We'll have some prospects and probably two or three of the first generation sitting in the diner as customers to keep an eye on things. With the kids going to the other MC, and the old ladies here at the clubhouse, we can focus on taking down Adriel once your father gives the information we need." He mutters a curse. "If only we could find out where the fucker is hiding then we would be able to plan an attack. We couldn't risk taking him out when he was standing at the gate. We did manage to have him on tape assassinating the driver of the getaway car of the robbery so we have reasons to take him out. Fucking hell, we might be above the law, but we still need some form of evidence or solid reason to take him down."

I touch his forearm. "He screwed up, he gave you what you needed so who cares if we need my father to gain information? It speeds things up so you can take me on a proper date."

"A date?" A husky chuckle ripples through his chest and he sneaks an arm around my waist to pull me close. "I

don't date, darlin'. I might put you on the back of my bike to take you for a ride and grab something to eat, but no fancy picnic or some shit. I'd rather order takeout and eat the food from your body and have your pussy for dessert."

I swallow hard. "That works."

He leans in and murmurs, "We compromise so well," before he takes my lips.

"Okay, you two. Keep the tongue tag to a minimum." We pull apart and see Lynn staring at us. "I'm going to borrow your woman for a while."

Luke and I share a look and he asks, "Aren't you going to take the kids to Blue and Zack?"

Lynn snorts. "My son might be the president but he's not the boss of me."

I have to smother my laugh. This woman is amazing. She not only has a great sense of humor, a smart mouth, and is strong in every way, but she's a total badass. Lynn used to come to the diner while I worked there but she retired recently so I don't see her as much as I'd like to.

"Why do you need to borrow my woman?" Luke asks the question that went through my mind as well.

She cocks her hip and places a hand on it. "Your girl was kicking and screaming to get to you, but Louie was able to restrain her without much effort. I figured me and Bee could show her some moves." Lynn checks the nails on her other hand. "Archer agreed when I told him Broke and Roan could take the kids and that Chopper and Ivy would go with them so they could take two SUVs to bring all the kids. I already called

my brother who called the twin Prezs so they have the clubhouse safe and locked up. Slumber party safehouse for the upcoming few days. Though, I hope you guys can fix this shit in a day, two tops.”

“Here I thought you were retired,” Luke mutters under his breath.

She pins him with a stare. “Someone needs to liven things up around here to keep you folks from saggy-ass, half-work. So, every now and then I hop on a plane. Be glad I left my bullwhip at home.”

I chuckle. “Now that’s one weapon I would like to handle. I read somewhere a man could extinguish a candle with a simple lash of the whip.”

“Forget extinguishing, focus on the heat, chickie. That right there is where the fun is when it comes to erotic play.” Lynn shoots me a wink and I hear Archer choke on a cough on my right.

“Ma! I thought you were going to teach her some moves with Bee. Motherfucker,” he grumbles. “Skip the whip shit and keep the bedroom stuff for when you’re with Dad.” He shakes his head and then frowns when he looks at me. “I know you fired a gun, the details you shared the day your mother died tell me as much, but have you handled one before that? Or after for that matter?”

I swallow hard at the reminder. “No. My father explained the basics and let me fire a gun a few times. He, along with the bodyguards, wore them at all times so growing up he didn’t want me afraid but familiar. I haven’t touched one since that day.”

“Good,” Archer grunts. “Time to refresh ’cause we don’t want you freezing up or thrown into a memory the way you reacted after the robber was shot. Of course, it’s due to trauma and you reacted better when Adriel came at the gates. Though, that was due to anger mixed with fear when it came to your old man.”

“Kray and North are out back,” Lynn states.

“Good. After sparring with you and Bee they can work with her.” Archer gives Luke his attention. “Since that frees up your hands, we can ink your patch.”

Luke grins and pulls me against his side. “Sounds perfect.”

“Where are you getting your patch?” Lynn questions and I’m glad she asked because I’m curious as well.

“My right hand,” he states, and I can feel a blush heat my cheeks.

Not a part that can simply be covered by clothes.

“Nice.” Lynn grins.

“Let’s leave the girls to it while we get that patch inked,” Archer states.

I feel Luke’s lips brush my temple. “I’ll come looking for you when I’m done.”

There’s no time to reply when Lynn snatches my arm and pulls me in the direction of the hallway.

“You two are so freakin’ cute together,” she muses. “I know you’d be good for him and like the fact that Lou got knocked-up by his twin.”

“It takes two to get knocked-up,” Lou grumbles from behind me.

Lynn chuckles. “Oh, I know. My old man knocked me up four times. Imagine your man doing that and planting twins each time. You’ll end up with eight kids.”

We all blink at one another and Lynn bursts out laughing. “The third generation is going to take over the world if Broken Deeds MC keeps multiplying like that.”

“Can we just focus on these two for now?” Lou sighs as she points at her belly. “I’d say we’re multiplying enough. Getting the news I was pregnant is one thing but twins? I’m still processing. Louie isn’t by the way. I think he already picked out names and wants to turn the guestroom into a nursery.” She glances at me. “He told me Luke and you can have the house all to yourselves because he’s moving into the apartment above the diner.”

I smile at the thoughtfulness of Louie.

“He really cares about you,” I tell her.

She bobs her head. “At first, I thought he was just dedicated to the obligation of becoming a dad, but his intentions aren’t hard to miss. We both screwed up and felt overwhelmed by our connection when we first got together. Good thing life forced us to get our heads back together and it gave us the opportunity to clear things up. We’re just starting out and I don’t know what the future might bring but with Louie it definitely looks promising.”

Lynn shrugs. “No one knows what the future might bring. The here and now is where your heart beats.”

“Wise words,” Bee quips from inside the boxing ring. “Now get in here so we can make that old muscle of yours squeeze a little faster.”

Lynn glares over her shoulder. “Bitch. Daughter-in-law or not, I’m gonna rub your face on the mat so damn hard you’ll have a red cheek for at least a day or two.”

Bee crosses her arms in front of her chest and snorts. “I’d like to see you try, grams.”

“Dude. Do. Not. Grams. Me.” Lynn is standing near me one moment and is inside the ring the next.

Bee lets out a squeal but quickly recovers when they start to spar.

Alouette bumps my shoulder. “You haven’t been around the clubhouse as much as I am but these two are amazing to watch. I’ve learned a thing or two from each one.”

I keep my eye on Bee and Lynn and feel a smile tug at my lips, understanding what Lou is saying.

“Are you really settling in with Louie?” I question, knowing it’s just the two of us now with both Bee and Lynn occupied and no other ears around.

“I really am.” She releases a happy sigh. “He’s not just thoughtful about me but also supports me in my business. He knows how much it means to me.” She bumps my shoulder again. “What about you? Is Luke still not meeting your eyes?”

I chuckle and turn to face my best friend. “He definitely took your advice on that. He hit the gas and snagged me up along for the ride. And I love it. I might have told him I needed time to get the patch inked but I’m ready. Every single

minute I spend with him, along with the people in his life, shows me this is everything I want in life. I'd be a fool to still have doubts or want a trial or whatever. Like Lynn said; the here and now is where our hearts beat."

"Awesome," Lynn states and we turn to face her.

She's leaning her forearms on the ropes of the boxing ring and so is Bee who is standing next to her. Both are panting and their hair is sticking to their sweaty faces.

"So, we're hitting pause on sparring and getting inked first?" Lynn asks.

Bee glances at her mother-in-law. "I can grab Archer's spare kit from our place if you want. Besides, I can entertain Farah while she's getting her ink. Show her some self-defense moves to distract her. Lou can help. Of course, we'll be careful." She points at Lou's belly. "Buns in the oven and all."

I quickly bob my head, loving the idea. Lynn holds the ropes to let Bee go through before stepping out of the ring herself.

"Let's do this." She rubs her hands. "Let's go to your house where Archer's spare kit is, Bee. We'll have some privacy and can get a drink or two while we're at it." Lynn shoots me a grin. "Archer used to have a bottle of tequila in his office but I kept stealing it so now he keeps it at his house. Hence the reason we're now going there to steal it anyway."

Bee chuckles. "So very true."

We all stroll in the direction of the duplexes and the buildings behind it. Most of the first and second generation

have a house behind the clubhouse. Their property is massive and the next neighbor is a few miles away.

“Do you know where you want your patch?” Alouette asks.

Remembering Luke stating he wants it on his right hand, I hold out my left and tap on it with the other. “Right here.”

“Aw,” Lynn gushes. “How cute it will look when you two hold hands.”

She hits the nail on the head when it comes to my reason for picking that spot. My heart skips a beat at the reminder of the here and now, knowing deep down I’m following my gut that’s led by the growing feelings I have for this man who is rapidly becoming my future.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

– LUKE –

I keep my eyes on the two dark SUVs and the limousine sandwiched between them as they drive through the gates while I stand in front of the clubhouse. The fucker's eagerness to cross the country as fast as he could by jumping on a plane to get to his daughter puts me on edge.

"You look ready to kill," Farah whispers from beside me.

Releasing a deep breath, I try to ease the tightness from my shoulders and reach out to lace our fingers together. Fuck, I love the way our hands carry matching ink. It's the visual of a unity, even if both our hands are swollen from the new tattoos.

"Just some healthy nerves," I assure her. "Both for what's about to come. The information to grab Adriel and facing your father."

"Don't forget the fact that we need to squeeze some more information from him for the case Kessie is working on," I remind him.

"First things first," I murmur and lean in to place a quick kiss on her mouth before I focus back to the vehicles that are now parking. "Let's see what your father has to say. Except for him wanting you home because that's not going to happen."

She gives our joined hands a squeeze. “I’m already home.”

“Damn right you are,” I practically growl and narrow my eyes when I notice a man dressed in a suit step out of the limousine.

I have the urge to pull Farah close to prevent the fucker from coming near my woman, but I know it’s crazy. He’s her father and his voice in the calls we had gave me the impression he cares about his daughter.

Hell, the fucker loved her enough to cut her from his life to put her safety above all. It’s also openly displayed in his eyes when he stalks toward her and spreads his arms as he finally stands before her.

“Ladybug,” he softly croaks and I hear a choked sob ripping from Farah before her hand slips from mine when her father pulls her into a hug.

Six men are standing behind him, two of them are glaring at me while the other four are keeping an eye on their surroundings. The three drivers are staying with the vehicles.

He’s murmuring words to her but it’s a low rumble and I can’t make out the words. I guess it’s personal, but I refuse to take my distance. There’s no way I’m forgetting the man demanding payment in the form of his daughter coming home for the information we wanted on Adriel.

“Leon Baliska,” my prez rumbles from behind me.

Farah pulls away and Archer offers his hands to shake. Baliska shakes it and gives him a nod before his attention slides to me.

“Luke, I presume,” he rumbles and doesn’t offer his hand.

I grunt and slide my arm around Farah to tuck her under my arm. Baliska eyes the movement and dismisses me as his attention slides back to Archer.

“Let’s get down to business, shall we? I have other pressing matters to deal with and can’t stay too long. I have the jet waiting.” He turns to Farah and adds, “Though I will always make time for my long-lost daughter. I’ve been trying to find you for the past year. After the marriage I knew for sure every threat was in the past and wanted you home again. You did a fine job at hiding, not leaving any crumbs for me to track you. Until now.”

He reaches out again, taking Farah’s upper arms to pull her free from me and rubs them as he glances her over.

“I’m so pleased to see you. Silvanna is excited to meet you. She wanted to come and had a hard time explaining there will be a lot of next times now that we’ve found you.” He pulls her against him and I get the feeling by the way Farah tenses up she’s not totally comfortable by the show of affection.

Hell, maybe it’s the mention of her new stepmother. Not so fucking tactful for him to mention his new wife when they’re reunited. The last time these two met face-to-face was when she saw her mother being murdered before her eyes and she had no choice but to take the life of the killer.

Dammit. I reach for my woman and pull her back against me. “Okay, that’s enough. Give her some space to

process shit. Not to mention, take her fucking feelings into consideration when you mention Silvana.”

The muscle in his jaw jumps and I’m pretty sure the fucker wants to put a bullet anywhere in my body. His eyes narrow and then widen when Farah places her left hand on my chest, exposing her new ink.

That’s right, fucker. My name is on her skin. Mine. I smirk and cup the back of my woman’s head with my right hand, making sure he sees my ink as well. The scale dips in my favor when it comes to his daughter.

She will always be connected to her father in some way, but her life will be shared with me. We both have our eyes on the future and have been discussing shit from pets, to kids, to different fucking wallpaper we either hate or love.

“Come on inside.” Archer opens the door. “Are you going to bring your men or are they staying outside?”

Baliska doesn’t look back but merely states, “The drivers will stay outside but the rest will come with me.”

“We have a strict weapon policy. Meaning do not draw any weapons to any member of this brotherhood.” Archer grins. “I don’t need to remind you of the fact that we work with the government and can easily dispose bodies without raising any questions.”

Baliska keeps a straight face. “I don’t work for the government but am also very capable of disposing of bodies without raising questions. That being said, we will honor your request for the duration of our meeting. Lead the way, please.”

Farah is fisting the fabric of my shirt and I know it's because of the exchange of threats. I brush a kiss against her temple and guide her inside the clubhouse. Not looking back, I take her straight into church and take a seat, pulling her down on my lap.

Before the others enter, I tell her, "Whatever is discussed, know that we have your back no matter what. You're safe and no one is going to give you orders, unless it involves your safety, or so much as demand for you to go with your father."

"I know," she fiercely tells me. "It just feels foreign to see him and act as if there's not a huge gap in between us. When I saw him and he held out his arms it felt good to hug my father but then it all crashed down on me and he started mentioning...I just--"

"It's normal to take a breath and process everything, sweetheart. No one is going to force you to do anything you don't want. You two clearly need time to talk and you'll get it."

Church fills with my brothers and Baliska steps inside behind Archer. His men stay in the main room of the clubhouse. Wyatt closes the door and everyone takes a seat. Baliska is sitting right across from me.

"I thought bikers didn't allow women to be members or be a part of club business," Farah's father states. "I've never wanted my daughter a part of any business of mine and what happened in the past is a dark reminder how women should be shielded from it."

I clench my jaw shut, knowing my prez needs to answer. Besides, Baliska is taking a mighty huge effort to ignore me.

“Our old ladies normally aren’t present during meetings unless their presence is required. Each member decides how much information is shared with his old lady. Not every woman can handle the same amount of details. This case concerns Luke’s old lady and he’s made it clear he wants his woman’s eyes wide open so he shares all the details. It’s why she’s present during this meeting because the case revolves around her,” Archer easily supplies.

“I still think we need to discuss things privately first,” Baliska presses.

“Not your call,” I grit.

Still the fucker won’t look me in the eye. He takes a piece of paper from his inside pocket and places it on the table in front of him.

Pressing two fingers onto it, he slides it toward Archer. “This contains the current, and verified, address of Adriel Camdens. On the outside it looks like a laundry and dry cleaning business but there’s a large building behind it. This is where he keeps his collection. He will only be there until noon. My source mentioned Adriel is going to move his collection either today or tomorrow.”

“Collection?” Wyatt prompts.

Baliska nods. “Collection. As in the women he collects to bear his children. He currently has three according to my source. Jacky, an Italian woman with long black hair, she’s his

first and is there because she loves him. He has a redhead and a brunette; both are being held against their will. He has separate bedrooms he keeps them in so you need a team to spread out and cover all the exits. My men and I can assist if you need more skilled men.”

“No need,” Archer states. “We can only accept your help in the form of information.”

“Understood,” Baliska grunts and his gaze slides to Farah. “If you don’t mind, I would like to spend an hour or two with my daughter.”

Archer’s eyes go to me and I grit my teeth. Fuck. I wanted to join my brothers when we head to Adriel’s place to take him down.

Yet, the thought of Farah staying behind with her father makes me grunt, “I’ll stay.”

Baliska’s eyes land on mine. “I’d rather you head out and make sure Adriel won’t have a chance to come near my daughter again. If I’m not able to make sure with my own hands, I’d rather have the man do it who says he’s falling for my daughter.”

“We already did the falling part,” I tell him and turn my head to give Farah a warm smile. “It was more like colliding mid-air and enjoying the freefall. Though now we both have our feet rooted firmly on the ground and walk together in the right direction.”

Farah shoots me a grin. “Absolutely.”

“My men and I will remain here until all of you return,” Baliska states.

“That’s up to your daughter.” Archer turns to Farah. “Would you like to have your father stay here with you or maybe meet somewhere else some other time—”

“I won’t have time to return here in the next few weeks. Of course, you’re welcome to come and visit me,” Baliska says, oblivious to Archer’s annoyed stare from being interrupted.

“It’s fine,” Farah says and gives my hand a comforting squeeze. “Bee is still here and I assume you’ll leave one or two men behind?”

“You will need all the men you have to make sure he won’t slip through your fingers,” Baliska repeats and offers once more, “You can take my men along with you and I’ll stay here to stand guard with this...Bee, whomever that might be.”

“My old lady.” The corner of Archer’s mouth twitches. “Thanks for the offer but there’s no need. Keep your men here. We’re a well-oiled team who works best with members only. A few of them will remain here while we’re handing Adriel.” Archer turns to Ganza and hands him the note. “Run the address and get blueprints.” Directing his attention to Baliska he tells him with a firm voice, “Thanks for the cooperation. We appreciate the gesture in an effort to keep your daughter safe. Now, if you would excuse us, we have to plan our mission and head out. You’re welcome to stay in the main room while we handle this.”

Baliska nods and leaves the room. I wait till the door falls shut behind him.

I place a kiss on my woman’s temple and tell her, “I’ll come find you before I head out. Remember, you have your

weapons in case things go to shit.”

“Why would things go to shit here? Keep an eye on your own ass, Luke. I’m staying inside with Bee while you go out and do whatever it is you have to do.” There’s worry in her eyes when she whispers, “Just come home safe.”

“I grew up working cases, train for it on a regular basis, and we all work together on countless missions. I can tell you not to worry but I know it’s easier said than done. Focus on the fact that by the end of the day we’re gonna be in bed together. Pizza, a movie, and sex. Lots of sex,” I tell her with a straight face.

She blinks two times before a bark of laughter rips from her. “I’m going to make you keep that promise.”

My fingers find the back of her neck to give it a firm squeeze and pull her down to take her mouth. The kiss is hard and fast and I hate breaking it but we have loads of shit to handle. Besides, the promise I just made her is something to look forward to once we’ve put this behind us.

I watch her leave and we all focus on the blueprints of the building Ganza projects on the wall behind Archer. We throw ideas around how to handle the situation and divide into teams. We’re at the point where we weapon up and I feel an unusual amount of nerves hit me.

Unusual since there’s always a hint of nerves, a healthy adrenaline trigger to make me focus on what’s about to go down. Yet now the situation is different. I feel as if I’m leaving a piece of me behind and I’m itching to come back and feel complete. I can’t describe it any other way.

There's not just me standing in this world. Farah has rapidly become a part of me and even if this mission is to secure her safety, and I damn well want to handle it myself, I also want nothing more than to pull her in my arms and stay here. Fuck. I give a quick shake to clear my head.

"Are you okay?" Wyatt asks and jerks his chin in the direction of Farah. "They seem to be working on reconnecting."

I follow his gaze and nod. Farah and her father are sitting on the couch. He's showing her pictures on his phone and they're talking with smiles on their faces. I know deep down this is what she needs.

The men her father brought are sitting at a table in the corner, playing cards and not standing guard or taking in their surroundings for that matter. Everyone is relaxed and that gives me the vibe Baliska is here to reconnect with his daughter and nothing more.

His words remind me of the struggle he had too when he wanted to join us to take down Adriel, even offering his men if he would stay here. At least I know Farah will be safe inside the clubhouse with the added men and her father.

I mean, the fucker singlehandedly took out the rival who killed his wife and wanted to kidnap his daughter. Even if he didn't have bodyguards, he's capable of protecting my woman.

"I'm fine," I tell my VP and add a topic changer to tease and make him aware I'm fully focused. "I've done missions without my twin, you know."

Wyatt chuckles. “Louie is pussy whipped, preferring to work at the diner instead of going on a mission to close a case.”

“As if we aren’t pussy whipped.” I grin and don’t mind it at all, now knowing exactly what it means and how it enriches my life instead of thinking it’s a ball and chain weighing me down.

“True story, brother.” He slaps my back. “True story.”

I double check my weapons and when my brothers head out, I stalk to my woman for one more kiss, reminding us both this will be a turning point to ensure her safety so our future will be wide open.

The threat of Adriel’s interest in Farah is bigger than we first realized. The information Farah’s father had is concerning, knowing Adriel has a fucking collection of women and wants to add Farah as well. Motherfucker. There’s no way that’s going to happen.

We already had clearance from the government to take him down by using any means possible because he killed a man in broad daylight in front of our clubhouse but now? This information added? It’s become urgent and it’s not just a kill on sight but a rescue mission as well for those women he’s holding against their will.

“Stay safe,” Farah whispers, her fingers pressing against the bulletproof vest covering my chest.

“Right back at ya,” I tell her. “Be right back.”

She gives me a stern look. “You better. Pizza and sex, remember?”

I chuckle and brush my lips against hers murmuring, “I’ll be eating a slice off your tits while sliding in and out of your sweet pussy.”

“Nice visual,” Arrow grumbles and bumps my shoulder. “Sticky red sauce everywhere...I’m not seeing the appeal. At. All. Sex first, eat later...don’t combine that shit.”

He walks out the door, oblivious to the middle finger Farah is giving him. I chuckle and take her mouth once more, loving the way she sighs into the kiss.

“Looking forward to getting red sauce everywhere,” I simply tell her and love the huge grin she gives me in return before I slip out the door.

I jog in the direction of the three vans my brothers are already sitting in. The motor is running and as soon as the door falls shut we’re on our way. Adrenaline is pumping through my veins and I have to focus on what’s to come.

“Luke.” Bee’s voice slides through my earpiece. “Permission for your old lady to watch.”

The corner of my mouth twitches. “Permission granted,” I rumble, liking my woman to be a part of this mission while staying on the sidelines.

“Archer.” Bee’s voice once more fills our earpiece. “Permission—”

Archer cuts her off by grunting, “The fuckers can watch as long as no one interferes with your job.”

Bee snorts. “As if anyone besides you can distract me.”

Laughter flows through the van, breaking the tension before we fall silent; getting ready to end this mission the right way. Yet, at this time, it's unsure how our future will unfold.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

– FARAH –

“I don’t know how you can do it,” I muse, leaning in to glance over Bee’s shoulder at the laptop with the different camera angles.

She has another laptop right next to it with different programs running at the same time. Bee explained how Archer is leading the team but she’s the center point connecting them all. She has visuals of each member through their bodycams and can access street cameras and such in case a suspect makes a run for it.

This way she can guide them through situations or call in backup or anything else they need. She’s also wearing an earpiece so she hears what the team of brothers are saying. I, on the other hand, can only see what’s happening on the laptop.

Murmurs from across the room catch my attention and I glance at my father who is speaking with his men. The six guys were playing cards earlier and those are now disposed in front of them while they are focused on what my father is telling them.

“Don’t worry,” Bee whispers as she covers the microphone she’s using to communicate with the team. “There are two prospects out front to keep an eye on the three drivers. Kray and North slipped into Archer’s office unseen to keep an

eye on us in case your father decides to—” She mutters a curse. “Showtime. Sorry, I have to focus.”

I drag my chair closer and watch the different screens on the laptop. They are running and splitting up into teams. I want to ask which bodycam is Luke but, on the other hand, I don’t want to know because I will freak out if it goes black or if I see someone coming at him or whatever.

Shit. The same question I asked her before tumbles from me, “I don’t know how you can do it...I’m so nervous.”

Bee covers the microphone. “I was born into the MC life and it might be a different one than Broken Deeds, but they were still connected. Archer and I were always drawn to one another and I guess the last few years have been better. With me working with them I have a task and know exactly what’s going on. Doesn’t lessen the worry but it occupies my brain enough to fully function if that makes sense.”

“Totally,” I muse and watch how someone uses a battering ram to crack the door, letting others burst inside with their weapons drawn.

“They should use the battering ram to get in the rooms where he keeps the women,” my father says from beside me. “He’s keeping the ones he still needs to groom locked up.”

“That’s just twisted,” I mutter and then remember the case of Kessie’s friend and how she wanted my father’s help.

I righten and turn to face my father. “Do you know anyone connected to human trafficking?”

There’s not one single twitch, frown, or outer display of shock from my words and he merely says, “I don’t see why

your question is relevant,” and slides his gaze back to the laptops in front of Bee.

“Well, it’s not relevant to this case but to another one where a woman was taken and a while later she was found dead. There’s a human trafficking ring and—”

“Not now,” my father muses.

I hear Bee snap out orders and I whip my head to face the screens, my heart skipping a beat when I see the flash of gunfire.

“Fuck, he’s getting away,” Bee grumbles and pulls one of her laptops closer, letting her fingers glide over the keyboard. “He’s out through the back, trying to get into a Lamborghini. Dammit. Depay, he’s coming your way! Arrow, take out the tires.”

I’m holding my breath and am so focused on the screens that I’m lost on what’s going on around me.

A painful mistake when I hear my father murmur beside me, “Don’t say anything and come with me very quietly or things will turn ugly very fast.”

When I glance down, I notice he’s not pointing a gun at me but at Bee. Anger hits and I want to snap something but his arm circles me from behind, his hand covers my mouth, leaving me frozen.

Only for a second or two because instinct kicks in along with the things Bee and Lynn taught me. I have to try and break loose by grabbing his forearm and simultaneously slapping the wrist of the hand he’s holding the gun with.

“Don’t even think about trying something,” a voice states from across the table.

“Houston,” Bee growls just before someone rips out her earpiece and another man slams the laptop shut.

The six men my father brought all have their guns aimed at us.

“Stop this, Dad,” I snap. “Right now, before you ruin everything.”

“There’s nothing to ruin,” he replies, dragging me toward the door. “You should have never crossed paths with these people. I’ve only ever wanted you safe and now that I’ve finally established a steady foundation where no one can touch my family, I find you with people who dive head-first in danger? Not going to happen, Farah. You’re coming home and they will stay within their own state if they know what’s good for them.”

“You know they have Broken Deeds chapters in every state, right? And you just pulled a freaking gun on their president’s old lady!” I seethe. “Hell, you’re kidnapping an old lady.”

“You’re not one of them. You’re my daughter. I refuse to sacrifice everything to make things safe and finally find you to bring you home. Only to find out you’ve been taken by one of these bikers who brand their woman by inking their claim on skin. That’s why I gave them the information on Adriel. They all know how damn special you are and tell me, Farah. What’s the difference between Adriel and this Luke? They both want to possess you.”

“Don’t you dare compare Luke with that piece of scum,” I snarl.

“We’re leaving,” my father tells the three drivers and I now notice the two prospects sprawled on the floor.

“You killed them?” I gasp. “This is bad. This is really, really bad.” I tug at my father’s wrist. “Bee warned the others. Did you not get the hint when she snapped ‘Houston?’ It might have been a problem back then but it’s practically war right the fuck now.”

“Calm down, we’ll talk once we’re on the jet.” He doesn’t look in the direction of the prospects but merely adds, “They’re not dead and I’m only bringing my daughter home so they can’t fault me for protecting my own damn blood.”

“I am home.” Twisting his wrist, I turn and push, managing to step out of his grip and whirl around to face him. “You’re screwing things up. Not just between me and the man who holds my heart but between us as well. I thought you came here to see me, to reconnect. The havoc of your world is still lying naked at the surface while these men.” I point at the clubhouse. “They jump in to gain justice to those in need, ridding the world of evil. I’ve never thought of you as evil but the way you’re standing on the opposite side of the people I now consider my family makes me doubt every warm childhood memory I still have.”

“No,” he says in disbelief.

There are three faint pops and I glance behind me at the sound of stumbling, noticing the three drivers sagging into the dirt one by one.

“You’re next if you don’t drop that weapon,” I hear
Bee bellow from the entrance of the clubhouse, Kray and
North standing behind her.

Shit. This isn’t going to end well.

– LUKE –

Houston. I heard Bee say it loud and fucking clear. It's a safe word to be used when things go to shit. We knew there was a possibility Farah's father would try to pull something and it's why Archer told my father and uncle to slip into his office.

They function like a unit the way Louie and I know how to communicate without words. Those two have been going on missions even before my mother met my father. If there's anyone I trust with the safety of my woman it's those two. But fuck if my emotions aren't all over the damn place.

“Go left,” Arrow snaps and I jump into a run.

We're chasing Adriel who managed to escape the building. I had to take down one guard and a few of our brothers stayed behind to free the women but when I noticed Adriel making a run for it, Arrow and I followed him out.

The fucker jumped into a sportscar and that's when Bee ordered Arrow to take out the tires and alerted Depay that Adriel is heading his way. Right after the connection broke when she snapped her safe word. Right now, I try to force myself to focus as I push my legs to run faster.

Someone slams into me from the side and we both grunt, barely managing to stay upright. I'm about to snarl some insults but Arrow fires his gun and I'm suddenly aware of the burning pain in my shoulder. Dammit. I fucked up.

“You good?” Arrow asks, gun still aimed straight ahead while we advance on Adriel who is ducking behind a

vehicle.

I give Arrow the finger and point to the left while I go right, both circling the car with our guns raised. We both reach the front at the same time but Adriel is facing Arrow and fires a gun at the same time we do. I end the fucker with a single shot to the back of the head and he falls to the side.

My gaze slides up to Arrow and dread slams into me as powerful as the blood gushing from his damn neck.

“Man down. Man. Fucking. Down,” I bellow so everyone is aware.

We always have an ambulance on call a few minutes out and Depay is an EMT. I hope the fucker is coming this way now because he was already alerted by Bee who told him Adriel was heading in his direction.

I kick the gun lying close to Adriel to make sure he can't reach for it. Though the fucker won't be reaching for anything with the dead look in his eyes. But dammit to hell and back one can never be too sure.

Pressing my hand over the gushing wound I grip Arrow's neck to keep him in place and bump my forehead against his. “Hang in there, you hear? Your dad is—”

“Here. I'm right fucking here,” Depay grunts from beside me and grabs my wrist. “Tell me what you're putting pressure on?”

“Ambulance is coming around now,” Archer bellows as he comes running into the alley.

“Adriel fired off a round and hit him in the neck. I don't think it's an arterial rip or something but there's blood

gushing out,” I ramble.

“Keep pressure on it,” Depay orders and he checks Arrow’s eyes and vitals. “Stick with me, son.”

EMTs come running and the minutes drag for us while we get Arrow stable and into the ambulance. Depay is going with him and I’m standing in the alley, Archer next to me as we watch the taillights of the ambulance disappear.

“I hope he’s going to make it,” I whisper. “What a fucking mess.”

“Vachs, Wyatt, Ganza,” Archer bellows. “Round this shit up, we need to leave.” Archer grabs my shoulder and we jump into a run.

Nothing like bullets, blood, and people dying to get your mind off the fact that our old ladies are in danger. We head for one of the vans and Archer gets behind the wheel. Tires screech as they eat up the road. Minutes tick by, the both of us silent, not knowing what the fuck we’re going to run into when we get home.

We finally arrive and the gate slides open, revealing three bodies on the ground next to the vehicles that belong to Farah’s father. Baliska is standing in the middle of the parking lot, gun in hand. Farah is in front of him, as if they decided to leave together. Both of them have their heads turned in the direction of the clubhouse.

Bee is standing in the doorway, my father and uncle standing strong behind her, all of them guns raised. I wonder what the hell is going on but mostly? How the fuck is this going to end?

– FARAH –

“Stop.” The word rips from my throat, loud and harsh.
“Just stop!”

Emotions form a lump and I’m unable to push more words out. My eyes sting and my vision threatens to become blurry. Why I’m always at the brim of crying when I’m pissed as hell is beyond me.

“If you weren’t the father of my future daughter-in-law I would put a fucking bullet inside you,” Kray growls.

“Farah is my friend, asshole. How dare you put all of us on the line? You’re hurting her by doing this and she’ll never forgive me if I shoot you,” Bee seethes.

“Strange,” North mutters and fires his gun. “I don’t have issues putting a tranquilizer in the asshole’s asshole.”

The gun falls from my father’s hand and he has a shocked face as he reaches behind him. His knees buckle and it’s as if he’s slowly sinking away. I rush forward and grab his coat as I whip my head in North’s direction.

“What did you do?” I gasp.

North, Kray, and Bee step closer. I hear tires screech but I’m too busy staring at my father who is closing his eyes. I don’t see any blood but I’m sure North shot him. My brain is trying to process everything when North chuckles.

I whip my head up to snap something but he says,
“He’s sleeping like a baby. Come on, let’s move him to one of the holding cells where he can sleep off the sedation.”

“You...you put him to sleep with a bullet?” I question.

Archer is suddenly in my face. “It’s not a bullet but a tiny dart, new stuff the government wants us to use on a trial basis. The stuff kicks in fast and can save lives and criminals we otherwise have to kill can face trial instead.”

I don’t know if I should be relieved, angry, scared of whatever else they have, or whatever the hell I should be. Then my eyes land on Luke and nothing else matters but him. I drop my father and jump to my feet, rushing over to Luke.

“What happened?” I feel as if all I do is ask the same question over and over and not get any answers at all. “Are you hurt? You’re bleeding. Oh. My. Gosh. There’s so much blood.”

There’s wariness in his eyes and his arms are still frozen beside his body. It’s not lost on me how he doesn’t pull me into his body, hug me, or so much as look at me the way he’s been doing for days.

Luke glances down as if to check what I’m rambling about. “A bullet only grazed me when Arrow shoved me out of the way. We went after Adriel together when the fucker ran. Arrow took a bullet to the throat, he’s at the hospital.” He jerks his chin in the direction of my father. “What’s going on here? Were you taking off with your father?”

“What? No,” I sputter.

“Don’t be an asshole, Luke. It might look like she had a choice, but the fucker shoved a gun in my face while he forced her to go with him,” Bee says and snuggles against Archer.

I cross my arms in front of my chest and glare at Luke. I can't believe he thought I'd leave everything behind, including him.

Jerking my thumb over my shoulder in the direction of the clubhouse where Bee, Kray, and North were standing earlier, I grumble, "I was telling my father how he screwed up. Not just between him and me but also for me and the man who holds my heart. I really thought he came here to see me, to reconnect. Instead, he wanted to drag me home with him. I might have added some more nasty stuff in my angry rant how the havoc of his world is still lying naked at the surface while you guys jump in to gain justice for those in need, ridding the world of evil." I swallow hard. "I told him that I never thought of him as evil but the way he was standing on the opposite side of the people I now consider my family makes me doubt every childhood memory I still have."

Sadness hits me and the adrenaline rush I had is starting to wear off, leaving me cold. Luke steps forward and scoops me into his arms.

"You had every right to spill your guts to him," he firmly tells me. "Let's hope the sedative won't blur that shit 'cause I'm pretty sure he won't remember anything from a few minutes before the dart kicked in."

"Are you kidding me?" I huff. "I might have felt shitty telling him all of that, but I felt relieved at the same time to tell him the truth. He shouldn't have done what he did. I wouldn't have gone with him but we could have some form of a connection, visits back and forth, calls, whatever."

“You still could,” Archer says, causing me to turn my head to face him.

Confused I ask, “How?”

Bee grins and slides her hand over Archer’s chest. “Kessie mentioned something about having your father by the balls. I’d say the dick move he pulled puts him right where we wanted him.”

Her grin is infectious and I ask Archer, “Would you give him a second chance if he agrees to cooperate, values my choices, and gives Kessie the information she needs?”

“I’d say it’s worth a shot.” Archer shrugs. “Though, we won’t know for sure until later tomorrow when the sedative has worn off completely.”

I can feel my eyes widen. “It takes that long to wear off?”

“Fuck no,” Archer grunts. “But he’s staying in the damn holding cell overnight for pulling a gun on my old lady. I’d consider him lucky because I feel the need to tell him with my fist what I think about that shit.”

I keep my lips sealed and my opinion to myself. Even if I completely agree with the man.

“Come on,” Luke murmurs. “Let’s head inside. I need a shower and then I want to text Depay again to ask an update about Arrow.”

“I’ll send Ivy to your room when the kids and the rest of the old ladies come home,” Archer says behind us as we stroll toward the clubhouse.

Luke waves a hand in the air, telling his president without words he got the message.

Once inside the room I can't help but say, "You really thought I'd leave?"

Luke becomes very still, his words a mere whisper when he confesses, "Losing you is my biggest fear. Knowing how life blooms with brightness in all ways possible since we connected is a stark contrast to what it was before you became a part of me. You bring color, taste, warmth, all the fucking difference that puts value to the little things. It was a harsh confrontation to realize something so precious could easily be taken away. Either by you walking out or being forced to leave. A moment before that I had to keep pressure on the wound on Arrow's neck, blood gushing out. Fuck. It's been a day. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have doubted you."

Understanding hits me hard and I wrap my arms around his waist to press myself against him, making him feel rather than telling him.

I know he needs the words and it's why I tip my head back and tell him, "How could I leave while you're the one who holds my heart? I might have stolen yours but one won't work without the other, so we're doomed to stay together forever."

"Doomed, hey?" He chuckles. "Sounds fucking fantastic."

I pat his chest and cringe at the sight of all the blood spatter. "Fantastic or not, you need a shower."

Another chuckle and the man rips his bulletproof vest off and pulls his shirt over his head, treating me to the sight of his ripped upper body. I notice the wound on his arm and shake my head.

“The shower will have to wait. We have to treat this wound first and then I’ll cover it so it stays dry.” I point at the bed. “Sit.” And stalk into the bathroom to get the first aid kit.

“Bossy,” he murmurs. “I like it.”

“You love it,” I correct him with a load of sass.

“Damn right I do,” he says with a load of laughter in his voice, but it turns husky when he adds, “I fucking love you, woman.”

My steps falter and I turn to face him. Emotions running through me hard and fast as I let his words wash over me, lighting up every cell in my body.

“Good.” I try to make it sound like a bit of a snap and firmly tell him, “Because I love you equal as fucking much.”

His laughter drains the last of my worries and wariness over everything that happened and I finally take a breath knowing all will hopefully be right. Or at least as right as we’ll try to make it.

EPILOGUE LUKE

Three weeks later

– LUKE –

“Need any backup?” my prez questions.

I shift in my seat and peer at the stack of files sitting on his desk. “Nah, there’s no way he’s going to fuck up a second time. Not after we made him spend the night in a holding cell.”

We both chuckle at the reminder of seeing Baliska’s angry face when we stepped into his cell the morning after he tried to take Farah from me. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a man’s head turn that shade of red from anger.

After calmly explaining the fact that we could throw his ass in jail—due to the kidnapping attempt we have on camera inside the clubhouse and out—he was all ears for the deal we had to offer.

In exchange for information he would be able to get about the human trafficking ring, we would put the kidnapping attempt in the past. Of course, Archer made him apologize to his old lady for pulling a gun on her.

After all of this was done the fucker finally turned to me and asked where his daughter was and if he could talk to her. Farah was still angry and didn’t want to see him, but I know deep down she might regret the choice because this asshole is still her father.

His actions were wrong, but his intention was born out of the love for his daughter and that's something I have a hint of respect for. It's why I gave him my personal phone number instead of the burner he used to contact me. I told him to give us a few days to let things settle and then we'll talk. He offered me a firm handshake along with a murmured thanks.

Just as I thought—though it took ten days—Farah told me she regretted not talking to him, even if it was to yell her frustrations about the situation and words they threw back and forth. She was relieved when I explained how her dad and I exchanged numbers for personal contact instead of business.

With the clean slate he had with Broken Deeds after accepting the deal there are no obstacles when it comes to personal contact between a father and a daughter, even if the fucker is mafia. So, here we are, about to leave for a planned meeting with her father, right after my meeting with Archer.

“Besides,” I rumble. “Louie and Bono will be at the diner as well.”

“Broke already left with his old lady, wanting to have lunch there, and I heard Wyatt mention something about swinging by the diner with Aveline to grab coffee.”

I snort. “The diner has become our second clubhouse.”

Archer grins. “Hell yeah. My mother knows how to pick the best places and make sure everything stays connected.”

“It's a great solution for everyone,” I agree. “Lou knows we have her back with her belly rapidly growing. My

old lady and I are there to run the place and she hired Bono for the extra pair of hands.”

“Broke and Wyatt like showing off their skills as well and are ready to jump in when needed,” Archer adds. “Your twin handles shit perfectly for his woman, not taking over the way Rack interfered with his sister’s life but simply offers Lou options to accept or not.”

“It’s a lot easier when you’re invested as much as the woman who holds your heart. I know because my woman loves her job and that place as well and I don’t mind spending time there. Like you just pointed out, many of our brothers grab a drink or some food to go over a case because it feels homey.”

Archer glances at the doorway. With the door standing ajar it gives a glimpse of the main room in the clubhouse.

“Can’t you drag Ganza out of the clubhouse? He seriously needs a break from sitting behind his laptop,” Archer grumbles.

I follow his line of sight, knowing exactly what he means. “He’s invested in a case and a woman who are both out of his reach.”

“I know he’s doing shit he’s not supposed to do but I don’t have it in me anymore to stop him.” Archer’s eyes find mine and I nod in understanding.

“Once that feeling hits it’s impossible to ignore or fight for that matter.” I rub my sternum. “I tried. Fuck, even my twin did and we both fucked up. In the end? It’s inevitable.”

“Yeah. We just have to see how much of a shitpile we’re in for with those two,” Archer grumbles.

“Heard anything from Kessie?” I ask, curious if there’s any insight on her side when it comes to ‘the Ganza issue.’

Archer shakes his head. “Nah, she took some personal time. She’s busy moving into a new house she recently bought. I expect her to call somewhere next week to pick things up again.”

There’s a soft knock and I see my old lady standing in the doorway. She’s wearing blue jeans, painted perfectly on her curves. The leather jacket reminds me of the fact that she’ll be on the back of my bike in a few minutes and I can’t wait to feel said curves plastered against me.

“Ready?” I quip.

Farah sighs and steps inside Archer’s office. “I guess. At least I don’t have to work and Bono will have to serve me.”

“Even the personnel likes being there on their off days,” Archer remarks. “All right, you two. Have fun and I’ll talk to you later.”

“Say hi to Bee and the kids for me,” Farah tells him.

“Will do,” he rumbles and he grabs the keys.

We follow him out and when he gets into the SUV, I get on my bike and wait for my woman to slide her sweet ass on there behind me. Pure perfection with the heat of her pussy tucked against my ass and her arms circling my waist.

I fire up my bike and feel it rumble underneath us. Taking my time, we arrive at the diner about half an hour later.

There's a handful of customers and a few tables are occupied by Broken Deeds members. Farah dashes around the counter and hugs her best friend.

"That's enough, give her some room to breathe," Louie grumbles and pulls Lou free from the hug.

Farah rolls her eyes. "I can't believe you're pulling a Neanderthal move when all I'm doing is hugging my friend. It's not like we're squashing the babies in between us or something. She's barely starting to show a little baby bump."

"I'm practicing. Our kids are rapidly growing and I don't want her getting hurt," he grumbles and his eyes find mine. "You should have my back."

"I repeat, it's a damn hug," Farah exclaims, shoving her hands into the air.

The corner of my mouth twitches and I slide my arm around my woman's waist to pull her against me. "I agree with my old lady, you're tipping the insanity bucket, man."

Lou chuckles and pats my twin's chest. "We had another checkup this morning and I might haven't had any problems concerning the pregnancy, my body however deserves to be treated differently. After hearing the advice to take it easy I agreed for Louie to step in and remind me when to delegate, to step back, or simply take a day off." She tips her head back to glare at him. "Hugging isn't harming anyone."

"Fine," Louie grumbles.

The bell above the door chimes and we glance back to see Farah's father step inside.

“Why don’t you two take a seat and I’ll swing by to—”

“No,” Louie grunts. “I don’t want you near that fucker. I’m still pissed he lacks respect and pulled a gun on one old lady while trying to kidnap another.”

“That’s in the past,” I remind my twin and glance over his shoulder to meet Bono’s gaze. “Mind getting us two coffees and a few muffins? When you bring them over you can take Baliska’s order.” I smirk at Louie. “There. Satisfied?”

He huffs and I shake my head as I guide my woman toward a table in the back. Baliska strolls toward us and slides into the booth across from us.

“Relax,” I whisper beside my woman’s ear.

“Easier said than done,” she whispers back.

I brush my lips against her temple. “He’s making an effort. Clean slate. He’s here, you’re here. We’re just having some coffee, that’s all.”

She releases a shuddering breath. “You’re right.”

“I usually am,” I deadpan, earning a smack to my chest.

There’s a smile tugging her mouth and it’s better than the tightness she was sporting earlier.

“I love you,” she murmurs.

Taking her mouth—not caring her father is sitting right across from us—I pull back and fiercely tell her, “I love you too, darlin’. So. Fucking. Much.”

I brace for the angry glare her father will probably give me when I lock eyes with the man. Instead, I find approval and

his head slightly bobbing. I'll be damned. Such a change from the last time we faced one another.

– FARAH –

I can feel my cheeks heat when I face my father. Luke completely made me forget my surroundings.

My father surprises me when he says, “I like seeing you happy.”

I lace my fingers with Luke’s and glance at our tattoos and find myself saying, “I definitely am.”

“When are you two getting married?”

“Dad!” I gasp and the man chuckles.

I’m well aware that if I would still be living in his world, I would have been married by now.

“We’re planning a double wedding since my twin and Farah’s best friend are expecting twins in a few months,” Luke easily supplies.

I can feel my eyes bulge.

“Good,” my father says to my utter surprise. “I look forward to the invitation.” His face turns soft and his voice carries a hint of pain when he tells me, “Your mother’s wedding dress is still hanging in her closet. If you want it, it’s yours.”

Emotions clog my throat and I’m only able to think about one thing and the words fall right out, “Doesn’t your new wife think it’s odd to have it in her closet?”

There’s a mixture of grief and love sliding over his face and I’m taken aback by the fact that he’s openly showing

emotions. Growing up I was well aware my father is capable of hiding his feelings and would only show his true self behind closed doors when it was just our tight-knit family.

“I haven’t touched the bedroom since the day she died,” he confesses. “I’ve moved her things inside that room and it’s all there for me to visit and for you as well. Maybe we can go through everything together? Silvanna is a very understanding woman and has helped me with the grief, to give it a place and keep her memory alive.”

“Oh,” is all I manage to say.

Bono appears and Baliska orders a coffee along with some pastries.

When he leaves my father reaches across the table to take my hand in his. His thumb trails over the Broken Deeds patch I have inked with Luke’s name in it.

“I would love to invite you and Luke to come visit. If you feel up to it of course. You could meet Silvanna and her son, Pierson. He’s a teenager and a royal pain in my ass.” He releases a deep sigh and winces. “Sorry. I guess you were such an angel growing up and there’s a sharp contrast to boys and girls.”

“It probably also doesn’t help he came to live with you when he was older,” Luke quips. “Be glad it’s just one. Me and my twin drove my parents crazy.”

We all laugh and fall into small talk about childhood memories. It’s less painful to talk about my mother and the way my father’s face turns sad I can tell it affects him just as much.

“We never really discussed it, but I assume the Adriel case is handled?” he suddenly asks Luke.

I glance in Luke’s direction. The day Luke and the rest of the guys dealt with that man is still a painful reminder since it’s tangled with my father’s attempt to kidnap me. Ugly memories and one of them is also treating a wound on Luke’s arm where a bullet grazed him.

Not to mention, Arrow almost lost his life that day. They barely managed to save him with the blood loss he suffered and if it wasn’t for Luke he would have died. I’ve never asked the details about Adriel. Mostly because I’ve heard Luke mention the case was closed and that’s all that matters.

“Adriel is dead and the women he was collecting were saved. He had a few loyal men. Two of them died with him that day and three others were arrested,” Luke states.

My gaze slides to Alouette who disappears into the kitchen. “I’ll be right back.”

I slide out of the booth, but Luke wraps his fingers around my wrist to stop me. “If you need help carrying boxes just holler, or ask Bono to stash away the deliveries.”

The smile sliding on my face hurts my cheeks and I lean in to brush my lips against his. “You know me too well, along with the routine of the diner.”

“Inside and out because every single detail matters when it comes to you, sweetheart,” he says against my lips.

My chest fills with warmth and I glance at my father who is wearing a grin.

“I’ll be right back,” I tell him.

“Take all the time you need, ladybug. I’ll be right here talking with your old man. We have a few things to discuss when it comes to your wedding.”

“Dad!” I squeak, making him chuckle.

I shake my head, knowing he’s just teasing me and it’s comforting to know we’ve moved past everything and easily fall into a nice get-together. It gives hope and joy for the future and maybe I should take him up on the offer to come visit him.

I still can’t completely trust his easy turnaround but I’m also sure it has something to do with the MC holding evidence where he has a gun aimed at an old lady. At this point I’m just thankful to have the past and present in calm water. My father is part of my life once more and it’s on my terms how we move forward.

Walking toward the back of the diner, I push the kitchen door open and see my boss and best friend standing near the counter. There’s a huge rat on the counter and if I didn’t know the rodent belonged to Louie, I would be screaming my lungs out.

“Are you seriously letting your old man’s rat check every bag the delivery man brings?” I question.

She gives me a sheepish look. “Can you blame me? If Teela here didn’t react the way she did with the last delivery man, we never would have known he killed his wife and kept her in his refrigerated truck as his personal spank-doll.” She cringes. “Yikes. That man was seriously twisted inside the head.”

Now I'm the one cringing. "Definitely."

"Funny how our men came into our lives when we needed them," she muses.

I bob my head. "Carbon copies and yet so different."

"Right?" She wrinkles her nose. "I don't see why people can't tell one from the other."

"Both share the possessive side, though." I grin. "It's annoying sometimes but once we're naked it's—"

"Zip it." Lou laughs. "It's how I ended up pregnant with twins and we weren't even fully naked when it happened."

Luke pops his head inside. "Everything okay?"

"More than okay," Lou replies and holds up Teela. "No dead body scent on the delivered products. I'm going to put this girl back to bed so feel free to stay here." She turns and shoots me a wink. "Just wipe the counter when you're done making babies."

"Lou!" I snap and she leaves with the sound of her laughter trailing behind her.

"She's devilish," I grumble when Luke steps closer.

Luke glances at the door Lou just slipped through and shakes his head. "Right up Louie's alley."

"I'm glad those two found each other, they fit really well together."

Luke slides his arm around my waist and pulls me close. "The way you fit so perfectly in my life."

He leans in to press a kiss onto my lips, but I place a finger against his mouth. “This is where they conceived their twins. We’re not kissing or doing any sexy time here.”

His head tips back and laughter rips out, but he sobers just as quickly and says with a determined voice, “Agreed. Let’s go out front to finish the meeting with your father and head back home. I can’t wait to be inside you.”

I bite my lip at the reminder of being skin-to-skin with this man. Nothing feels better than to be worshipped by the person who loves you the way you love him.

“Let’s go. Maybe we can pick a date to visit my hometown,” I suggest. “We could take the bike and rent a hotel or two on the ride over, make a week worth road trip.”

His gaze turns heated and he softly croaks, “Sounds like a brilliant plan.”

My belly flops with the promise of bliss lying in our future. Plans that consist of pleasure, fun, excitement. We have loads to share and are both dedicated to making the most of what life has to offer. One step at a time while we keep our gaze locked on forever.

The smile on my face hurts my cheeks and fills my heart with joy and love, knowing that whatever comes our way I won’t ever be alone again. Not when I have the man I love right beside me and the family—a whole brotherhood—at our backs.

Exactly how it should be, and I can’t wait to experience all of it; one day at a time.

EPILOGUE LOUIE

Two and a half years later

– LOUIE –

My sister looks stunning on her wedding day. Not just the dress but the glow she's sporting, showing she's happy. I glance in the direction to the cause of her happiness. Rack. The fucker is standing next to my mother and is glowing just as bright as my sister.

I'm damn proud of what she's accomplished by following her heart. First to become one of the best snipers out there and then shift to follow a different path. One that clearly completes her life in every way.

Tugging on my pants brings my attention to my twins. Each of them have their tiny fists buried in the fabric of my pants, anchoring themselves for comfort as they take in all the people, the music, the chatter, and everything else.

I bring my hands down to stroke their wavy red hair. Both are a carbon copy of my woman with her stormy gray eyes and I know these two are going to bring many dudes to our doorstep. Fucking hell, I can't even think of my kids growing into adults.

They are a handful now but wait till they're teenagers or adults and will hit the town. I give a quick shake of my head, ridding myself of those thoughts for the time being. Thank fuck they're still tiny.

Alouette steps into the room and my heart skips a beat and my cock simultaneously twitches. She's had this effect on me from the second I laid eyes on her and after years she still manages to make lust spike my veins.

Thank fuck fate intervened when we collided hard in more than one way. Our daughters tangling our lives gave us a chance to reconnect and it's been one elevated ride that definitely lights our road to an even brighter future. Time goes by so fast as it is. Hell, the thought of our kids growing up is a hard reminder.

Farah leans in to tell my wife something and they both laugh out loud. Those two are best friends and run the diner together along with a few members of the club who also like to take shifts whenever they need a day off.

We don't have many days off because we all love working at the diner as much as we like solving cases. Farah and Luke live in the house my twin and I own while my wife and I live above the diner.

We knocked down a wall or two and combined the two sections the apartment was divided into. This way we have enough room for our kids and a spare room in case we have guests. My parents occasionally stay the night to take care of the twins while I swoop my wife away for a night on the town.

Sounds fucking amazing but most times we manage to stay out for an hour or two before returning home and snuggling on the couch, sending my parents home. Yeah, we both love our kids and spending time together any way we can get it.

Our lives are far beyond perfect but it's our life. Even if we pull long days at the diner, pick fights only to collide with love and have sex with orgasms hitting mere minutes of entering her body. We enjoy every second of the choices we made and still stay hungry for whatever else we decide on.

Different for others around us. My twin for that matter who still hasn't knocked his woman up. They do enjoy a night on the town or jumping on a bike to ride across the country to visit Farah's family and stay gone for a week or so. Good for them. Everyone makes their own life choices and I've just made a new one; knocking my woman up tonight.

We've been discussing it for the past few months. The both of us want a big family and let's face it...we weren't even trying the first time we had sex and ended up with twins. So, the risk is there if we would like to welcome another child we might get a two for one option.

My twin takes Farah's hand and drags her onto the dance floor. All I want is to drag my woman off too, but definitely not on the dance floor. My cock wants to do all the dancing, especially when I see Lou wearing that amazing green dress that hugs her curves perfectly.

I remember our wedding day as if it was today. She had her hair up in a bun, curls falling out here and there, framing her beautiful face while there were tiny jewels buried in her fiery red mane.

The ivory color of her dress, mixed with lace, was somewhat the same as Farah but somehow more stunning on my woman. Especially since mine had a slight baby bump to

show off. Fuck. I loved seeing my woman round with my children.

My twin and I might have picked best friends to marry on the same day, but they have different characteristics, just like my brother and I. We shared huge parts of our lives and it seemed fitting to marry the love of our life on the same day.

Though, we ditched the party afterward and each took our wife in a different direction to spend our honeymoon in private. Honeymoon. Great sex. A plan forms inside my head, one I only half planned, when I see Rack—who is standing next to my mother—staring at my sister.

Glancing down at my daughters I ask, “Mabel, Marlow, do you want to stay with grandma and grandpa tonight?”

Red hair bounces around their gorgeous faces. Fuck, I love them so damn much.

“Start screaming like last time so she’ll come to swoop you away.” I shoot them a wink.

Okay, I’ve might have used this tactic more than once and the words haven’t so much as tumbled from my mouth or my two smart daughters test their vocal cords to the limit. Multiple things happen simultaneously.

My wife glares at me while she stomps my way, Rack laughs and points in my direction, making my mother come to my rescue while my father is already appearing at my side. Should. Not. Laugh.

“There now, sweethearts,” I murmur. “Calm down.”

My parents get there two steps before Alouette does and they each take a kid into their arms.

“I think they’ve had enough of standing around,” I conclude.

Alouette shoves her hand into her bag and pulls out two dolls. Seriously, I don’t know how she manages to have such a huge variety in that bag of hers, but it definitely holds a solution for every occurrence. Mabel and Marlow both have grabby hands and greedily take a doll to press against their chest.

I place a kiss on Mabel’s head and whisper beside my mother’s ear, “Mind taking the kids so I can swoop my wife away? Lynn booked the penthouse for Rack and Liah but I’ve booked the honeymoon suite and wanted to remind her how much I love her.”

My mother is a sucker for romance and even more when it involves watching her only grandkids.

“Who knows,” I add. “I might hit the jackpot again and give you folks some more grandkids to watch.”

I swear my mother’s eyes go a bit teary when I pull back and she quickly nods. I kiss my daughter’s cheek and my mother’s before turning and pressing a quick peck to my other daughter.

Smacking my father’s shoulder I grunt, “Thanks, Dad,” and snatch my woman by the wrist to drag her off.

She digs her heels in and asks with a bewildered voice, “Louie, what are you doing?”

I turn and catch a glimpse of my brother-in-law dragging my sister, his new wife, out of the room.

Pointing in their direction I tell her, “The exact same thing Rack is doing with Liah...except today is their first but I intend to relive my wedding night right fucking now.”

Her lips turn into a perfect O and it’s a reminder how perfectly it fits around my cock. A growl escapes me and I lean in to place my shoulder against her belly, hoisting her up—fireman style—and rush out of the room.

Everyone’s focus is on the newlyweds, and everything else, allowing me a quick escape. I let her slide down my body as soon as we’re in the elevator. Sweet, soft curves mold against me as I press her against the elevator wall to cage her in.

Grinding my hips against her, I let her feel how hard my cock is for the woman who still lights my body on fire. The elevator doors slide open and I regretfully step away. Lacing our fingers together I step out and hear the other elevator ding. The doors slide open and I’m shaking my head when I see my brother stepping out.

Both Alouette and Farah giggle but my twin and I exchange chin lifts and grab our women as we each head into a different direction. Seems like the both of us still share somewhat of the same mindset. I take the card from my back pocket and open the door to our penthouse suite.

I grab Lou by the waist and kick the door shut the second my lips land on hers. There’s nothing that holds my attention on this damned planet more than her soft, sensual

lips. Her tongue swirls against mine and it sets off an electric current straight to my already hard cock.

My hands roam her body, soft curves hidden by the fabric of her magnificent dress. A growl rumbles through my chest and I start to grab fistfuls of her dress, pushing it up and over her head to leave her standing in a scrap of lace that's barely covering her pussy and tits.

Better. Not perfect but absolutely a treat for my eyes. I step back and rip my clothes off so I'm standing before her naked, holding my cock in a tight grip as I start to stroke and take in all her beauty.

"No condom tonight," I announce.

Her eyes flare and her lips turn into an understanding grin. She was on the pill for a while due to the twins. Even if her periods are irregular and there's no telling if we can get pregnant again, it still didn't stop us from planning.

The last three months she stopped using the pill and we've been using condoms, waiting for everything to align to the point where we now feel ready for another chance to add to our family.

There's no rush, no obligation, no pressure; just living life and grasping the bonus shit thrown our way. We have loads to be thankful for and it's why I take my time as I slowly advance on the woman who holds my heart.

Her chest rises and falls as she takes a step back, reaching for the bra that's cupping her damn fine tits. The lace falls to the floor and her breasts swing free. Lush. More than a

handful and those rosy nipples feel damn good when I suck one of them into my mouth.

I let my tongue slide over my bottom lip at the mere thought of it. Her panties hit the floor when I finally reach her. I move my hand forward, but she dashes out of the way. A growl rips from me and her little scream makes me fucking laugh as I give chase.

She takes a sharp turn and I lunge at her, grab her around the waist, and turn us just in time to land on our sides on the bed. Within two breaths I have her naked body pinned under me. Delicious curves pressing against my hard body, awakening something primal inside me.

I crash my mouth against hers. The softness of her lips, her feisty tongue trying to dominate mine, it's everything that fires up the electricity coursing through my veins. It's a fire that burns hot and deep, an eternal love that can't be extinguished.

Her hips grind against me, searching, urging me to drive home. How can I not? The tip of my cock is already sliding through her wetness and I slowly sink inside her hot little body. We both groan, relishing the exquisite feeling our bodies create.

Pulling out and sliding right back in, I jump to my knees, grip her hip with one hand and grab her shoulder with the other. Carnal longing possesses me and I keep her in place as I start to fuck her hard.

Her nails dig into my shoulder. "More," she croaks.

Fucking perfect. Sweat drips down my brow as I push my body to give my woman what she wants, what she needs; what we both long for. She's my match in all ways and it's right there in her gaze as she stares up at me with white hot bliss.

“Louieeeeeee,” she whispers, my name turning into a soft moan that puts fire underneath my balls.

There's no other choice but to surrender to the demands of my woman when I let my own orgasm steamroll through me. I feel the force of it in every cell of my being as the cum rips from my body, pouring everything I have into the love of my life.

She shudders underneath me, our bodies heated and slick as I crash down. I wrap my arms around her and feel both our chests rising and falling as our hearts race from the energy spike. Quick, hard, and so damn good. Exactly how we handle everything in life.

Alouette snuggles close and rubs her cheek against my chest. I tighten my arm around her and place a kiss on the top of her head. Fucking perfect. It takes a few minutes to catch our breath and then she's turning to face me.

I know that look she's giving me and I can't hold back the lip twitch when I ask, “Wanna call my Ma so she can bring the kids up? Or let her know we'll swing by to get them if they already left? Or we could pick them up early tomorrow morning before we open the diner.”

Lines of laughter appear around her eyes. “Tell me we're crazy. We should be enjoying the time to ourselves and yet I want nothing more than to spend time with the kids until

they fall asleep so we can enjoy the rest of our night. I love watching them sleep, knowing they're near."

"Feeling complete has different meanings. For us it's taking what we want out of life, however we fucking want it. Either hitting pause to take a few minutes to ourselves before we're united with the kids. There is no manual or rules to follow when it comes to personal happiness."

She leans forward and brushes her lips against mine, leaving fucking tingles in their wake. "You're my kind of perfect," she muses. "I love you so damn much."

"I love you more," I growl and give her a fierce kiss, one she feels deep in her soul because that belongs to me as well.

There was never any doubt. One look in her eyes a few years ago and I saw my future. Even if we had to overcome difficulties there won't ever be a risk too high when it comes to following your heart and dreams.

They might not all come out perfectly but then again... perfect is a word we give meaning to and it can be ugly for some and beautiful for others. Exactly how life flows in one direction and turns to show you the many roads ahead of you.

And I can't wait to ride that fucking road with my old lady by my side and to show our kids the scenery of what lies ahead.

Thank you for reading both Luke and Louie's story.

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