



BOOK TWO

# DECEIVER



USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# BELLA JEWEL

**DECEIVER**

*Prisoners of Purgatory*

# Also by Bella Jewel

**Jokers' Wrath MC**

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**Prisoners of Purgatory**

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Also By Bella Jewel



# **DEDICATION**

**To all my biker babes,  
The ones with me from the start,**

**This one is for you.**

**Thank you xx**







# ~\*DECEIVER\*~



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# DECEIVER

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**Reader discretion is advised.**







# PROLOGUE



**D**ear Nightmare,  
I f\*cked up.

*It wasn't meant to be this way. I wasn't meant to hurt you.*

*I wanted the world to know the truth.*

*I wanted them to see who you really are.*

*I never thought it would end like this.*

*I wish you would hear me out.*

*I wish you would let me speak.*

*I've made a mistake. There is no coming back from that.*

*My life is in danger.*

*Your life is in danger.*

*The club is in danger.*

*I've done this to all of us, yet I can't turn back the clock.*

*I can only fight to keep you safe.*

*Even if I must make a deal with the devil.*

*I'll do it. For you, I'll do anything.*

*I hope you can forgive me.*

*Because, Night, I've fallen in love with you.*

*You've captured my soul.*

*Then you ripped it out.*

*There is only one way back.*

*I must end this.*

*For both of us.*

*Love,*

*Bonnie x*



# 1



Sitting on the side of the road, I watch brokenly as cars whiz by me, not one stopping for the pathetic girl with her knees to her chest, covered in dust with tears streaking down her face. They're probably afraid to stop, afraid I might be having some sort of break and will put them in danger. They're probably right. In this moment, as I sit numbly, I'm not entirely sure what it is I'm capable of. Crazy is an understatement for the way I'm feeling right now in this very moment.

I've screamed until my voice disappeared, dragged my nails through the dirt until they bled. I feel as though I'm losing it, like nobody will hear me out, like nobody cares. Mostly, hearing his brittle voice when he told me to leave broke something in me. He won't hear my side of the story, he won't even look at me. He's filled with the kind of hatred that is irreversible, and I don't know how to fix it. I don't even know if I *can* fix it, and that thought hurts the most.

"You can't sit here all day."

Fury's gruff voice comes from behind me, but I don't turn. My eyes stay trained on the road, on the browning trees that need a good rain, on the red car that has gone past twice now.

"Bonnie."

"I didn't release that story," I croak. "He won't listen. He won't hear me. I didn't do it."

"Did you write it?"

I close my eyes, a lone tear running down my cheek. "Yes," I whisper.

"Then it don't matter if you released it or not. You lied to him. You let yourself into his life and, I'll tell you, you're the

first person he let in in return. All along, you were doin' it for a story."

I turn, staring up at him.

He's sheltering the blistering sun with his big body, and as his eyes rake over me, they're devoid of emotion. He's closing off, too. Of course he is, Western is his family and me? I'm nothing.

"It wasn't just for the story..."

"So you would have approached him and pushed your way into his life if you weren't writin' that story?"

I look away, shame rising in my chest.

I know how it looks, I do.

I can't even deny it, really.

There is nothing I can do but accept that I fucked up.

"I never meant to hurt him, regardless of what you think. He matters to me, Fury. He ... I ..."

"If he mattered, Bonnie, you would have told him the truth."

"I was trying to help him," I say, staring down at my bloody fingers. "I wanted the world to know that he isn't a monster."

"He didn't ask you to fix his world, but he did trust you to become part of it, and you fucked it up. There is no comin' back from that. You need to get up now and leave. Pains me to say this to you, but this club means more to me than how I feel about you bein' here. Go home, Bonnie, and accept that whatever you think you had here is no longer."

His words hurt. God, they send a searing pain shooting straight through my chest. It's as if a hot knife has been plunged inside me and someone is twisting the handle. Nothing could have prepared me for just how much Western and his club would come to mean to me, and now not only is he cutting me off, but they are too. I have no one outside of Leo. I'm unprotected and unsafe.

It's all my doing, too.

"Bill is going to come after me," I whisper. "So are the crooked cops. I'm not safe, Fury."

"You should have thought about that before you dug into a fuckin' story that wasn't yours to tell."

I glance at him again, another tear escaping. "So you think he should spend the rest of his life just living behind a lie? Letting the world think he's a monster?"

"That was his call, not yours."

Shaking my head, I face the road again.

"Go home, Bonnie, or I'll be forced to have you removed."

Desperation is digging its claws into my chest as I push to my feet, turning to face the man that I had come to trust and appreciate. Now he's looking at me as if I'm the enemy.

"Please, Fury," I beg, my voice barely a whimper. "I'm not safe. Don't make me go out there alone."

"I'm sure you've got family, friends, or someone you can go stay with. It's time for you to go, Bonnie."

I shake my head, stepping closer. "I'm begging you. Please."

"Leave," he grinds out, and even though his voice is firm, I can see the hesitation in his eyes. It's almost as if he doesn't want to do this but he knows he has to.

"I just ... I'm scared."

His jaw tenses. "I can't help you. I'm askin' you to leave, Bonnie. Go. Now."

"Fury," I try again, stepping closer.

"Fuck," he barks. "Bonnie. Go home. Leave."

His words are harsher now, laced with frustration and desperation. The same kind I'm feeling. Hot tears continue to roll down my cheeks—it doesn't matter what I do, there is no stopping them. Shaking my head from side to side, I try to

come up with anything I possibly can to get him to understand, to help me, to not make me leave.

“I love him,” I croak. “Fury, please, I love him.”

“If you loved him, you would have told him who you were before it got to this point. You don’t love someone if you can so easily fuckin’ break them. You have three seconds to go, Bonnie, or I’m callin’ Blue out to send you on your way, and I can assure you, he isn’t as nice as me.”

A loud, broken sob escapes my throat as I turn, the fight slowly creeping out of my body. I walk to the side of the road, look left, and begin slowly trudging down the asphalt, crying until my body heaves and, little by little, the clubhouse fades into the distance. Step by step, I move, until a car finally slows and the window rolls down. It’s Leo. I don’t know how, I don’t even know when, but somehow ... he found me.

“Jesus, Bon,” his voice comes out rough as his eyes rake over me, “get in the car.”

I don’t argue, because I’m afraid if I do I’ll crumble, and I won’t be able to come back from that. Numbly, I get into the car and close the door. Dust coats his seats, and I know I’m a complete mess, but I don’t bother to say anything. I hang my head and hiccup. Leo reaches over, squeezing my shoulder as he drives, his voice gentle when he finally speaks.

“Why didn’t you tell me things had gotten this bad? Who the hell laid their hands on you?”

I look to him, and I know he’ll have questions about why my face looks the way it does. I can’t even begin to tell him the story about Hazel and me, that’s the least of my problems. My true issue lies with the fact that I’m in danger, I have lost someone I care about, and I don’t know what to do about any of it.

“It’s a long story,” I whisper. “Did you see the article?”

“Everyone saw the article. Why did you let that happen? I was certain you had changed your mind.”

I glance out the window. “I didn’t let it happen. Someone released it, but I don’t know who that someone is.”

“What?” Leo growls. “What do you mean? Are you in trouble, Bonnie?”

“More than you could possibly know,” I murmur.

He slams on the brakes, the car skidding to the side of the road. Then, firm fingers curl around my chin and jerk my face until I’m looking at him. “You better start talking, right now! Your secrets are getting too much, and I can see you’re in trouble. Tell me, or I won’t let you out of this car.”

I swallow the painful lump in my throat, and I tell him. I tell him everything that he doesn’t already know. Then, I sit silently and watch his face scrunch in anger as he processes what has just come out of my mouth. Eyes narrowing, his voice comes out in a low hiss. “Bill Whart threatened you?”

“In a roundabout way, yes.”

“Now you think you’re in danger because of that article?”

“I don’t think, I *know*.”

“You have to do something. Go to the police ...”

I snort, cutting him off. “The police are just as much in on it. I can’t trust anyone. That club, Western, they were all I had to help me with this.”

“I knew this would be dangerous,” he snaps. “I knew it. You should have never taken this story on.”

“Not now, Leo,” I say, hanging my head. “I feel like my world is closing down around me, and, right now, I just need you to be my friend. Can you give me a lecture tomorrow?”

He exhales. “You’re coming to my house if it’s not safe. We will work it out from there.”

I rest my cheek against the window as he pulls back out onto the road.

I don’t care where we go.

I just want this pain to go away.





SINKING INTO THE HOT water, I close my eyes and exhale. Leo brought me back to his house and proceeded to run a bath for me, instructing that I get in while he makes something to eat. I do as he orders; I'm filthy and I just need to be alone for one minute. My brain has gone from working overtime to emptiness, utter emptiness. As the water coats my aching body, I reach for my phone and a sick feeling swirls in my stomach as I dial Western's number. The moment I do, it automatically cuts me off. A pained sob rips out of my mouth at the realization that he has blocked me. He has taken away any chance at contact.

He's done.

He never wants to see me again.

The pain I'm feeling cannot be described.

I toss my phone to the ground and slide down into the water, letting it burn as it rolls over my face. I don't care if it hurts; I want it to hurt, I want all the pain in the world to take away from my aching heart. I stay under that water until my lungs burn and all the screams have been ripped from my throat, only then do I surface, salty tears mixing with the bath water. I don't know how people make it through this, this empty desperation of knowing you can't have someone you've grown to love.

It's horrible.

The kind of feeling I would never wish upon anyone.

"Hey—" Leo cracks the door open, but doesn't look in "—you okay?"

"Yeah," I say, my voice hoarse.

"I've got your painkillers here, do you want some? They might help you sleep."

I'll take anything right now.

"Yeah, just put them by the bed. I'll come and get them."

"Okay."

He closes the door, and I finish up in the bath before climbing out and wrapping a towel around myself. I walk out into the long hall and down toward the spare room. Leo has a nice house, and he works hard for his money. He's always had expensive things, and he's always enjoyed living the high life. This bachelor pad is everything a young man could want. It's modern and sleek, fitted out with the best of everything, and he can do whatever he wants while he's living in it.

The room that I've stayed in a few times over the years is nice. It's nicer than my room back home, hell, it's nicer than most hotel rooms. The bed is big, soft, and has the best comforters and pillows. There are large windows that open out and overlook the town, and it has its own air conditioning, television, and even a little sofa. A plush rug lines the floor, covering the already impeccable carpet.

I move to the bed and lift the clothes Leo has left out for me. One of his oversized tees, and a clean pack of brand-new underwear. I don't even want to know why he has new packets of underwear, and I'm not going to ask. I take a pair out, giving them a once over to make sure they are indeed new, before dropping my towel and pulling them on. Then I take his shirt, comforting and familiar, and pull it over my head.

After that, I swallow the painkillers he put beside the bed with the new bottle of fancy water that I can't even pronounce, before pulling back the covers and sliding in. I roll to my side, closing my eyes, staring at the hint of sunlight coming through the curtains. I don't know what time it is, and, frankly, I don't care. All I want right now is for sleep to take me so that I don't have to face another minute of this awful feeling in the pit of my stomach.

The door creaks, and footsteps can be heard as Leo crosses the room and then flicks the covers back, climbing in behind me. His big arm wraps around my body, and he pulls me close. The moment he does, I feel my lip tremble with more unwanted emotions. I bite down on it, trying desperately to stop the tears that are threatening to come forward once more.

"You're strong," he whispers, "you're brave, and you're incredible. It's bad now, but I promise you, it won't be forever.

You will get through this.”

He’s wrong, though.

I don’t think I can.

“I’ve never felt this kind of hurt before,” I say, my voice scratchy and weak. “It’s like my heart is on fire, and no matter what I do, the flames just keep getting hotter and hotter. I want to reach into my chest and rip it out just to make it stop.”

“It’ll get better. I know that sounds like a cop-out right now, but I promise you it will. Time heals everything. You need to focus on staying safe.”

“I can’t let it end like this. Not with him. Not with any of it. I have to fix this. He is in danger now, and so am I. I opened a can of worms, and I can’t just pretend I didn’t.”

“Risking yourself isn’t going to fix that. For now, you need to sleep and get yourself together. Then you can decide what comes next.”

I don’t answer him, because I know Leo well enough to know that whatever I say to him will only be given back with equal amounts of protest. I understand that. He loves me and he doesn’t want to see me hurt, but this goes far deeper than he could ever imagine. Not only that, but Western deserves me to fix this for him, even if I don’t know how I’m going to do that right now. My article made a lot of people angry, and I basically put the club at war with people that are quite possibly more powerful than them.

I also need to know who did it.

Who released that article and why.

Pete was the only one who had it, and...

Wait a second. *Jerimiah*.

He made a comment about the article the day I walked out of there after agreeing with Pete that we weren’t going to release it. He is quite possibly the only other person who saw it. Would he do something like that? Release a story he was instructed not to? I mean, he has the skills and opportunity to

do it, that's part of his job, but why would he do something like that? I don't even know him.

Still, I'm going to be asking him questions.

I will find out who did this.

But for now, I'm going to close my eyes and wish the pain away.

For just one second.





“He’s not here.”

I turn, seeing Luna’s pretty eyes focusing in on me, her arms crossed over her chest, a towel tossed over her shoulder. She’s pissed, and I can’t say I blame her. I didn’t just lie to Western, I lied to her, too. We are friends, at least, that’s what I thought we were. Now, I’m not so sure. Judging by the look she’s giving me, I’m guessing she isn’t on board for our friendship any longer.

I came into the club tonight in hopes that Western would turn up.

He didn’t, and I suspected he might not, but it was worth a shot. The club won’t let me anywhere near them, so this was my only option, and I’m not going to leave any stone unturned. I need to talk to him, I’m almost desperate at this point. The feeling of not having closure, of being desperate to say something and not being able to, is all-consuming.

“I’m sorry, Luna,” I say, because there isn’t any point in saying anything else.

“For which part? Lying to me the entire time, or actually pretending to be my friend?”

I exhale, closing my eyes for a moment, the loud music in the background making it incredibly hard to concentrate.

“I was doing my job,” I answer. “I understand what I did hurt people but that was never my intention, believe me. As for pretending to be your friend, that wasn’t an act. I care about you, Luna. A lot.”

“If you cared about me, you would have just told me what you were doing. I would have helped you.”

I shake my head. “That’s not how it works. Trust me, I wish it was.”

“Releasing that story ... It was brutal, Bonnie.”

“I didn’t release it,” I say, my shoulders slumping.  
“Someone else did, and I don’t know who it was. I would have never released it because the more I dug, the more I realized I was out of my league, and now my life is in danger and Western hates me. So, trust me when I say, there is nothing you can say that is going to make me feel any worse than I already do.”

She stares at me for a moment, then exhales. “Dammit, I can’t even be mad at you. You look like a wounded puppy. Come with me.”

She calls out that she’s taking her break and we walk out to the back room, where it’s quieter and I can actually think. Luna turns to me once the door is closed and steps forward, putting her hands on my shoulders. “What kind of danger?”

I explain it to her as best I can, and the more I speak, the wider her eyes get. When I’m done, she drops her hands and shakes her head. “You need to go to the police, get some sort of protection.”

“That would be a fantastic plan if the police weren’t as corrupt as the rest of them when it comes to this.”

“You could get hurt, Bon, or worse. Surely there is someone that can help you?”

I purse my lips, and a name springs to mind. *Nathan*.

He helped me with all of the information; if I call and tell him I’m in danger, he might be able to help me out. He is in law enforcement, after all. I’m sure he has someone he trusts that he could put on the case.

“I do, and I’m going to make contact with him, but I wanted to come and see you first and explain.”

“So Western has shut you out completely?”

I nod. “He blocked my number, everything.”

“You could try my phone,” she says, pulling it out of her pocket and wiggling it around.

My eyes widen.

I didn't think of that.

"Really?" I say, pulling out my phone to get his number.

"It's worth a shot, right?"

She hands me her phone, and I punch in Western's number. I pause before calling. I don't know what I'm going to say, hell, I don't even know if he'll hear me out. My heart leaps into my throat, and my hand begins to tremble. Luna reaches over, squeezing it. "You have to try."

I nod, taking a deep breath, then I hit the dial button.

It rings, and rings, and rings.

I am starting to think he won't answer when suddenly, his gruff and gravelly voice comes across the line.

I freeze, everything inside me just stops. Pain slams into my chest and tears burn under my eyelids. I open my mouth, but nothing comes out. I can't speak, my entire body is betraying me.

"Anyone there?" Western demands.

Luna takes the phone quickly, and then, without thought, she says, "Western, it's Luna, from the club."

A long silence.

"Why are you callin' me?"

Luna glances at me, and I press a hand over my chest.

"I know you probably don't want to hear it, but please don't hang up. Bonnie is in danger, she has no one. Please, I just need you to talk to her."

Another extended silence.

"No."

"Western ..."

"Did I fuckin' stutter? I said no."

I reach for the phone, taking it into my hand.



“Western,” I say softly, my voice crackly. “Please hear me out.”

He doesn’t even respond.

He hangs up the phone.

Once again, it feels as though my soul is being crushed that much more.

With a shaky hand, I pass the phone back to Luna who gives me a look of pity. I know she probably doesn’t mean it to come across like that, but it’s a look I don’t want to see.

“You know what,” she says, her voice determined, “I’m going to find a way for you to see him. I get he’s hurt, but he can’t just cut you off and never speak to you again. Surely he cared more than that.”

I thought so, too, but it’s seeming like I might have been wrong. Western and I, we shared a lot, but now I’m wondering if it’s even at all possible for a man like him to hand over his heart. Then I remember him giving me that necklace in the hospital, and I know for certain that meant something.

“I don’t know how we’re going to do that. I can’t even get into the club.”

“No, but I can. Don’t they have parties all the time?”

I give her a side eye, pursing my lips. “What are you plotting?”

“Well, if they do, it’s simple. You hide in the car, I drive in. They’ll let me in if it’s a party. They won’t even blink.”

She’s right, they wouldn’t. They’ll only stop me because they know who I am. If I can get in there, then at least Western will be forced to physically remove me himself if he wants me to leave.

“How crazy are you willing to go to get him to listen?”  
Luna asks.

“I’m about ready to do anything,” I tell her, tightening my mouth.

“Good, then I have a plan. I’ll find out when the next party is, and you just be ready to go.”

“Why would you want to help me after what I did?”

She steps forward, pulling me in for a hug. “Because I know you’re a good person. And I need friends.”

I laugh, pulling back. “Well, I’m glad to be of service.”

She winks at me. “I have to get back. I’ll call you when I find out when the next party is. Until then, I think you need to contact your friend for protection and lay low. Western is going to help us, even if I have to make him.”

I love how confident she is, but it’s clear she has no idea just how powerful that club is.

I hug her once more and then leave the club, going to my car quickly and driving back to Leo’s house. I’m still not sure it’s a good idea to go to mine, considering just how dangerous this situation really is. Pulling up into the drive, I pull out my phone and dial Nathan while glancing around to make sure nobody is waiting to jump out at me. When I’m certain they’re not, I rush inside just as Nathan answers his phone.

“I’ve been wondering when you would call.”

“You saw it then,” I exhale, closing the door and locking it before setting the alarm.

Leo showed me all of it, making sure to remind me three times to ensure the alarm is set so I know if someone is trying to get in.

“I think everyone saw it. That was a ballsy move, Bonnie.”

I explain the situation to him, and when I’m done, he exhales. “Shit. That’s bad.”

“It’s really bad. I’m scared, Nathan. A man like Bill Whart isn’t going to just sit back and let this slide. He is going to want revenge, and he’s going to come looking for it.”

“He isn’t the one you should be worried about. It’s all of them, it’s every shady scumbag that works for whoever it is

that is running this. Bill is a piece in a rather large and deadly puzzle.”

“Well, now I feel better,” I mutter.

“I’m not trying to scare you, Bonnie, but this isn’t a good situation. What do you need from me?”

“I have nobody. I can’t go to the police here because I honestly don’t know that they’re not going to hurt me, too. Everyone is in on it. I need protection, someone to be with me until I can figure this out.”

“Not all cops in that town are shady, only a small handful. I’ve got friends down there, I’ll contact one of them to come and talk to you.”

“What if they’re not safe ...?”

“I promise you, they are. You can trust me. I’ll be in contact. Until then, you need to lie low, this is a very bad situation for you. You should have picked another case.”

Bit late for that now.

“Maybe, but at the same time, those men are monsters, and Western spent a long time in prison because of it. Not to mention the foster children who continue to go missing. They’re running an operation that is dangerous and risking the lives of children. I’m not sorry that I raised awareness to that, because even if the article is removed, it’s in peoples’ minds now, and that’s what I want.”

Nathan makes a displeased noise. “It’s not worth the risk to your life.”

“There is nothing I can do about it now.”

“No, you’re right, there isn’t. Sit tight, I’ll be in contact.”

I hang up and sit on the sofa, staring down at my phone, desperately praying that it’ll just magically ring and Western will decide he’s ready to talk to me.

Come on, Western.

I just need five minutes.

Five. Damned. Minutes.



“LAY DOWN,” LUNA HISSES as we near the clubhouse entrance. “Like, flat on the ground.”

“I’m trying,” I grunt, trying to squish myself down in her ridiculously tiny car. My limbs are twisted, and, my word, my back hurts. It’s not as easy as it looks.

“I can see your head!”

“I’m trying,” I snap again.

I take a deep breath and flatten myself out as much as possible as the car comes to a stop.

“Well, hey there, handsome. I heard there is a party here tonight?”

“Heard right,” a gruff male voice comes through the car. “Just you?”

“Just me. I’ve got friends here, though.”

“Park your car down the back, out of the way.”

“I will do, thank you.”

Luna begins to drive again, and I pop my head up, peeking out the window as we go past the clubhouse that is already full of people, a large fire roaring in the yard. Music blares through the speakers, and my heart skips a beat. I don’t know if this is going to work, but I’m praying it does because I’m running out of options.

Luna comes to a stop, and then we both climb out of the car. We’re down the back of the lot, out of the way, and more cars are coming in and parking. I pull my black hoodie up and over my head as Luna steps up beside me, her eyes scanning the compound. “Wow, I’ve never seen a clubhouse before. This is awesome.”

“Yeah,” I murmur, staring around. “It is. What is the plan?”

“You’ll see. Come on, let’s find Western.”

Taking a deep, long breath, I follow her toward the clubhouse.

It’s safe to say we’re noticed right away, I would be shocked if we weren’t. Putting my head down, I take Luna’s hand, and we move as quickly as we can toward the house, praying Western is there. A familiar voice calls my name—Fury—but I don’t stop. We pick up the pace, shoving past people until we get inside. Eyes scanning the room, I see him. He’s sitting over on a sofa toward the back behind the pool tables, Hazel by his side, her legs slung over his lap.

My heart cracks a little more, and my breathing becomes tight as my eyes zero in on him. Everything about him just makes the emotion inside me swirl around that much stronger. I want to go to him, run my hands through his dark hair, kiss his lips, tell him how sorry I am, and, yet, at the same time I want to scream and punch him for acting as if I never existed, as if what we had was simply nothing more than a fling. We both know that isn’t the case. At least, I hope that’s the truth.

“You ready?” Luna asks, just as Western’s eyes lock onto me and his face hardens.

“I guess I don’t have a choice,” I say, softly.

“Got some nerve, comin’ in here.”

Colt’s voice comes from behind me, and I turn quickly to see him standing, arms crossed over his chest, giving me a look that is more than a little terrifying.

“I don’t want any trouble, Colt. I just want to talk to him.”

“Think he’s made it clear he don’t want to talk to you. Do you know what I would normally do to someone who came into my club without permission?”

“We won’t be long,” Luna interrupts, unbothered by Colt’s terrifying demeanor.

“Get. Her. Out.”

Western’s voice comes out like a whip. Slowly, I turn back toward him. He’s standing right in front of me, rage filling his

dark brown eyes. Hazel is standing next to him, clutching his arm, giving me a look that tells me she's more than a little ready to throw down once more. I take a shaky breath and square my shoulders before saying, "I'm not leaving until you talk to me."

"Thing about that is," Colt pipes up, "we're quite capable of makin' you."

"If he wants me gone, Colt," I say, not moving my eyes from Western's, "then he can do it himself."

"Get the fuck outta my club," Western grinds out, the rage in his voice more than a little terrifying.

"Not until you talk to me, and if one of you so much as thinks about touching me, I will throw down. In a big way."

Western's eyes flash.

I stand my ground.

Luna takes hold of my arm, but I don't stop to see what it is she's doing. Western is standing so close, his eyes locked on mine, that neither of us notices when she snaps a pair of cuffs on his arm, then jerks mine so quickly I'm caught off guard, snapping the other end to me. Then, taking a step back, she smiles. "Well now, I guess you get no choice."

I stare down at my hand in shock. I didn't see that one coming, hell, she moved so quickly even Western didn't know what she was about to do. I look to her, my mouth slightly agape. "Luna ..."

Western jerks his arm, which only causes me to stumble forward and crash right into him. An angry growl leaves his throat as he shoves me back and barks, "Get this motherfuckin' shit off me, right now."

Luna shrugs, giving him a smile. "Once you've talked to her, I'll tell you where the key is. It's pretty simple. Before any of you think you can force it out of me, just try it. I'll never tell you where it is."

Colt looks slightly impressed.

Western doesn't give her a moment more of his time, instead, he jerks me in his direction and begins walking through the crowd that has now stopped to watch. "I'll do it my fuckin' self."

Desperately trying to get my footing, I have no choice but to follow him, my little legs barely keeping up with his big strides as he storms toward his shed, Hazel running after us.

"You stupid—" she begins, but Western pauses and spins on her.

"Fuck off, Hazel."

My eyes widen and so do hers, but she doesn't fight him. She scowls at me and then turns and walks away. Western continues his mission to the shed, where I have no doubt he is going to try and find something to get these cuffs off. I have minutes, and I'm not going to lose my chance to speak when he can't get away from me.

"Western, I know right now you hate me, and I understand why, but I need you to hear me out."

He doesn't answer, he just keeps charging toward his shed.

Panting, I pick up the pace to keep up with him as I continue.

"When I started writing that article, I honestly had no idea what I was going to find. I just wanted the truth for a stranger who we all knew about, a stranger who spent his life in prison and, yet, none of it made sense. I never thought I would uncover what I did. I never expected to care about you. When I realized what was happening, I called it off. You have to believe that I told my boss we weren't going to release that story."

No answer.

He reaches the door to the shed and swings it open, pulling me inside. I gasp as I see the mess covering the floor. It's not trash, or clothes, no, it's his beautiful bike. The one he was painting. The perfect reflection of Braithe and everything he stood for. It is broken into a few pieces, and they're all crumpled. The masterpiece, ruined. I don't know what he used

to destroy that, but it has left a crumpled mess in its wake. I try to stop, but he doesn't let me, and I tumble, falling to my knees.

“God dammit,” I cry out. “Slow down.”

He comes to a stop, panting with a rage I didn't think was possible coming from just one person, and as he looks down at me, his voice comes out hard as stone. “Get. Up.”

With my spare hand, I reach for a piece that is lying on the ground. What once was a beautiful bike has just been destroyed. He has smashed anything he possibly can, crushing every single bit of it. That is an anger I could never understand. I lift the large piece of metal into my hand and see it has some of the painting on it. I narrow my eyes, and notice that the eye on this piece looks a whole lot like mine ...

Western was painting me on there.

Oh god.

“Western ...”

“Get up,” he bellows.

I push to my feet, fighting my tears as he pulls us toward his workbench and begins scrounging around to find something to disconnect us.

“Please, just give me five minutes. I'm begging you. Then, you won't hear from me again.”

He looks to me, his nostrils flaring. “Five minutes? You want five fuckin' minutes? To tell me what? That you're a fuckin' liar? That I gave you somethin' and you stomped all over it? Not a single thing you can say will ever make me see you differently. You're just like everyone else.”

Those words hurt, they hurt because he's so wrong.

I'm not like everyone else. He should know I'm not like everyone else. I'm the first person outside of this club, in a long time, to even look in his direction. Did I make a mistake? Yes. Does it mean that I'm a monster? No.



“I’m nothing like everyone else,” I say, my voice a low whisper. “I believed you. How many others can say the same?”

His eyes flash as he steps up close to me until our bodies are slammed together, the hard ridges of his muscles warm against me. I suck in a breath, all thought leaving my mind as I look up at him, trying hard not to reach up and run my fingers down the chiseled planes of his jaw. I’m in love with him. I’m terrified of that. I know it’s going to get me hurt. Between us, his cock hardens, an almost immediate response, and my lips part on a gasp.

“I can’t stand you,” he growls, his eyes never leaving mine.

“Your cock says otherwise,” I throw back.

“You think because I want to stick my dick inside you that it means I care?”

Ouch.

Those words hurt, and he knows it.

“What’s stopping you then?” I challenge, acting as if my heart isn’t aching from his cruel sentence.

“I don’t fuck liars.”

“Really? Because your wife is a pretty good liar, yet it doesn’t stop you fucking her.”

“You’re right, it doesn’t. At least I know she has my back.”

Those words slash right through my heart, and I swallow the thick lump that rises in my throat. Out of all the things he could have said, that one hurts the most. It’s in this moment, I realize that nothing I can say to him is going to make a difference. He has made up his mind about me. Everything we shared clearly means nothing.

The roaring pain in my body is almost deafening as I rasp, “Get these cuffs off.”

He looks momentarily confused, shocked by my outburst.

“Get them off,” I scream, so loudly he flinches and takes a step back, the space between us feeling cold almost immediately.

He reaches for a tool on the bench, I don't know what it is, and I don't care. My entire body is shaking, my stomach is turning and tears are rolling down my cheeks. I'm angry, I'm ashamed, I'm hurt and I'm disappointed in myself. So many emotions that I can't make sense of. Western tugs and pulls, and then I hear a loud click and my hand drops to my side. I turn immediately, walking toward the door, the tears threatening to send me into complete undoing.

I pause when I reach it and turn, glancing at him.

“For someone who has been through so much, I expect bitterness. You have had an unfair life, you got dealt a bad hand. I don't blame you for that, how could I? It has made you cold, it has hardened your heart, and I know I'll never change that. You should know, though, *Nightmare*, that I never set out to hurt you. If you knew me at all, you would know that I was doing it because I knew someone had done you wrong. I was on your side. I was fighting for your freedom. Thanks for showing me that all along I was wrong, you really are a monster.”

With that, I turn and leave the shed.

The still silence following behind me.



### 3



Leaving the clubhouse, my mind a complete mess, I momentarily forget that I'm here with Luna. I'm so caught up in my own emotions, so tangled in the pain consuming my body, that I walk out of the front gates and onto the road. Moving down it, my head a complete blur, I force my body to move. It's only after a few minutes that I stop and remember that I have a friend inside who can give me a ride.

Turning, I face toward the clubhouse once more.

A set of headlights flash into my eyes as a car moves down the road, going rather quickly. I didn't even hear it coming, it's as if it appeared out of nowhere. I step off the road and onto the soft dirt along the side, but the car doesn't slow down. As it approaches, something inside me goes on full alert. I'm not entirely sure what exactly it is, but something tells me danger is present. As the car nears, I can very clearly hear it accelerate. I can't see the driver, or even what kind of car it is—the headlights are nearly blinding.

I take another step off the road, but as the car nears, I watch in horror as it swerves. Instinct kicks in, and I throw myself backward just as the deafening sound of tires screeching fills my ears, a sharp pain in my leg shooting through my body as I tumble backward down the small ledge off the road. By the time I hit the bottom, panic filling my body, my shock outweighing my instinct, the car has gone.

Someone just tried to hit me.

Someone ... *wanted* to kill me.

Lying in the dust, panting heavily, my leg aching, I'm too afraid to move. I'm scared that if I stand, I'll crumble.

Voices fill my ears as the light on people's phones come near, and at the top of the ledge, a group appears. "Someone

has been hit!”

I watch, my lungs burning from the fall, as the crowd gets bigger and two men come running down the slope toward me. They skid to a stop, flashing their lights on me. I’m not moving, I’m just lying on my back, scared and confused. “Hey, are you okay?”

“I don’t ...” I croak. “I don’t know.”

A man with long, dark hair squats down beside me, reaching out and carefully running his fingers over my face and flashing his light over my body.

“That car ... did it hit you?” he asks.

“My leg, I think. I dove out of the way before it could do anymore damage.”

He moves down to my leg, running a hand over my knee. I wince, and he carefully lifts my leg up, inspecting it. “Doesn’t look broken, but you’ve got a good amount of blood here. Do you want me to call an ambulance or take you inside and clean you up?”

I don’t know who this man is, but he’s kind, and I appreciate him right now.

“I’m okay, we’ll just clean it up,” I whisper.

“Alright, count of three, I’m going to help you up.”

He counts to three, while leaning down and letting me put my arm around his shoulder. Then, he hauls me up. My leg is sore, but I can put weight on it, so he’s right about the fact that it isn’t broken. My body is tender, and I know I’ll be sore tomorrow, but, mostly, I can’t get my mind of the fact that someone just tried to kill me. Someone was going to hit me as if I were nothing more than a stray animal.

I knew I was in danger, but the reality of just how much became clear tonight.

“What’s goin’ on?”

Western’s deep voice has me gritting my teeth and closing my eyes as the man comes to a stop on the side of the road. I

keep my head down, I can't stand the thought of him doing any more damage tonight than he already has. I'm exhausted. I can't take much more.

"Someone just tried to hit this girl."

"Bonnie?"

Fury's voice fills my ears, and I lift my head to see him standing beside Western, both of them looking at me.

"I'm fine," I mutter. "I just want to go home."

"She's bleeding," the man holding me explains. "I'm going to clean her up before she can go anywhere."

There are so many people gathered around, and Luna's voice fills my ears as she shoves through the crowd, rushing over to me. "Oh my god, Bonnie, what happened? What were you doing out here?"

"I ... It doesn't matter. Someone tried to hit me. I'm okay."

"What?" she shrieks, her eyes widening. "What do you mean someone tried to hit you?"

"I don't know, it's ... Let's just get cleaned up so we can go home," I say.

"Night," Fury mutters as we move past them, "this ain't good."

If only Fury understood ...

Western doesn't care.

Luna takes over helping me into the club, and the man who assisted me, follows. Moving into the main area, I sit on the sofa and try to avoid any eye contact with the group of people staring, some of them whispering as they watch. I'm the talk of the town right now. At the very least, I got the attention off Western for a moment.

Luna squats down in front of me, inspecting my leg, and someone brings a first-aid kit. It's the guy who helped me, and I feel guilty that I didn't even bother to ask his name. "Thank you, for what you did," I say to him. "I'm Bonnie, by the way."

“Jonas,” he responds, giving me a small smile, “and it was no trouble.”

Jonas helps Luna clean up my leg, and they assure me it’s only a graze. My eyes move to Western who is standing by the bar, arms crossed over his chest, just watching me. He hasn’t spoken a single word to me, not one. The fact that he didn’t rush over to help, or doesn’t even look a little concerned that I could have been killed, is the icing on the cake. It hurts more than I could have ever imagined.

Little by little, I know my heart is shutting down.

Fury approaches, Colt by his side, and the two of them stand in front of me.

Preparing myself for the lecture that’s about to come, I hang my head and wait.

“We need to talk,” Fury tells me, his voice gruff.

“We’re done here,” Luna says, placing a bandage over the grazes on my knee and stepping back.

“Follow,” Colt orders, turning and walking off down the hall, Fury and Western falling in step behind him.

I guess I don’t get a choice.

I look to Luna, and her eyes follow the three men before coming back to me. “You don’t have to go.”

I exhale, standing. “Yeah, I do. I won’t be long.”

She nods as I hobble down the hall after them. We reach a room at the back, and Fury stands at the door, waiting for me to step inside. Once I’m in, he closes it, and I’m faced with three very angry bikers. I’m not certain exactly what it is they’re expecting me to say, but I’m more than sure they’re not about to help me. They’ve made that abundantly clear.

“You need to tell us what you know,” Colt orders. Gone is the man I met before all of this came out. “We need to know exactly how much you found out about this, who is involved, and what information you have.”

I clench my jaw. They're not willing to help me, now they're demanding help in return.

"Why should I tell you anything?" I ask, crossing my arms. "You've made it clear I'm not welcome here, that I'm on my own, so why would I share?"

Colt steps forward, his eyes so cold I take a step back. "It isn't them you should be fuckin' afraid of, Bonnie. I can do *far* worse."

"If threatening me is how you wish to get your answers, go ahead. You think I'm not going to end up hurt one way or the other? They want my blood, so get in line," I mutter.

Colt holds my gaze, but I don't back down.

"I won't ask again. What *the fuck* did you find out?"

It's in this moment, I decide I'm not telling them a damned thing. Whatever they're involved in, whatever the other side is involved in, I am going to find out, but I'm not going to do it because I'm afraid; I'm going to do it for Braithe, and for all the other kids out there who are tangled up in this mess.

"Whatever you read in the article that I *didn't* post, is all I know."

"You're fuckin' lying," Western grinds out.

I look to him, shaking my head in bitter disappointment. "Well, according to you I'm a liar anyway, so what's one more to add to the list? Are we done here? I want to go home."

Colt steps up close, his intimidating frame almost enough to make me back down. *Almost*. "We're not done."

"I say," I grind out, now wavering, "we are."

Turning on my heel, I make my way toward the door. Colt's hand lashes out and grips my upper arm, spinning me around so fast I stumble but he doesn't let me fall. He holds me so tightly that a little fear grips my chest. He wouldn't hurt me, would he? I swallow, but I don't back down, even though I'm now seeing just how dangerous these guys actually are.

"Leave this room, and you won't like what I do."



“Remove your hand,” I grind out, my voice shaky.

Colt jerks me closer and it hurts. “Do not fuckin’ dictate to me, lady.”

Fucking pig.

I liked him, until now.

“Let. Me. Go.”

“Release her,” Western orders.

Colt glares at Western, but he does as he asks. He releases me.

“You *will* tell us what we want to hear or we’re goin’ to have a *big* fuckin’ problem.”

Western’s voice is like a whip.

I’m done.

*So done.*

I turn slowly, my stomach in knots as I look him in the eye. “You know what, we already have a problem. We have a problem because not once have you stopped to listen to me. Did I screw up? Yes, I did. But I did it because I thought it might just save you. I’m walking out of here with you on my back, but what does it matter, my life is far from safe. The fact that you can stand there and look at me like what we shared was nothing, is heartless. I get it, you had a rough time, but are you so ruined that you can’t even show any kind of emotion for the life of someone you once cared about?”

He doesn’t say anything.

As always.

“I was falling in love with you.” I laugh, bitterly. “Now I say it, it seems pathetic. I was warned, God, I was warned by everyone around me, but I went ahead anyway because I believed that the world had wronged you. Now, you’re no better than them.”

His face flashes with something I haven’t seen before—  
shock.

“What is it, *Nightmare*,” I say, tipping my head to the side, “never thought you were capable of being loved? Well, you *were* ... until you *weren't*.”

This time, I leave.

They don't stop me.

I know I probably shocked them all.

Good. Maybe this time they'll understand.

I'm not waiting to see if they will.

No, I'm going to finish this, because I have nothing left to lose.



A KNOCK ON MY DOOR has me pausing, not sure if answering it is a safe option. I've come home, just to get a few things, and Leo is outside. Maybe I accidentally locked him out? I place down the bag of clothes I just packed and walk over, opening the door. In front of me, Leo is standing beside a police officer. He isn't familiar to me, a face I haven't seen before, and he's only quite young, maybe early thirties.

“He showed me his credentials,” Leo assures me when my eyes dart to his. “He's safe, but I'm here anyway, just in case he's not.”

The officer looks to Leo, with an expression that is less than impressed.

“Bonnie. My name is Ryan, I'm a detective. I was wondering if you would mind having a word with me?”

A detective.

As if I trust them.

“I mean this in the least rude way possible, but I don't trust a single one of you people after what happened to me,” I say, carefully.

Leo gives Ryan a satisfied look.

Ryan ignores him.

“I respect that. You don’t have to tell me anything you’re not comfortable with, but if you wouldn’t mind giving me five minutes of your time, I might be able to help.”

I’m intrigued, I can’t say I’m not.

I at least want to know why he’s here.

“It’s okay, Leo,” I say. “You can go back to the car. We’ll stay where you can see us.”

Leo gives Ryan a skeptical look, but goes back to the car. The moment he’s in, he looks over at us, and I know he won’t look away. He won’t let me come to any kind of harm if he can help it. I look back to Ryan. “What can I help you with, detective?”

“I understand you’re involved with the Prisoners of Purgatory Motorcycle Club?”

Wait, he’s here to talk about the club? Not the ex-mayor? That’s news.

“I’m not involved with them,” I point out.

“You wrote a story about Western Aiken, you must have spent some time with him to get that kind of information.”

“What is this about? Just get to the point.”

Ryan is quite handsome, and if it wasn’t for the fact that I trust literally no one outside of Leo and Luna, I would appreciate his looks a little more. He’s tall, well-muscled but lean, and against his olive skin, his dark, thick, neatly styled hair looks pretty nice. His eyes are light blue, and he has perfect teeth. He’s the kind of man who would grab your attention, no doubt about it.

“I want your help, in return for something you might want,” Ryan says, studying my face, as if he’s taking me all in.

“And what, dare I ask, might I want?”

“Proof that Bill Whart is the one who killed Daniel and Braithe. The proof you would need to free Western, not only that, but clear his name entirely and put Bill, and whoever else he is working with, away for a very long time.”

I can't deny it, my ears prick up at that.

"And in return, you would want what exactly?"

"I would ask for information on the club, but I know you won't give it to me. Instead, I'll ask for one member - Colt. Information that proves he has his hand in human trafficking."

I don't mean to, but my eyes widen with shock.

Colt involved in human trafficking? No, there is no way. He might be a biker, but he's not a monster. He wouldn't sell people for money.

"I think you've got it wrong."

"I don't," Ryan answers, his voice determined. "The boys you talk about, the ones that go missing, he knows something about it."

I shake my head. "No, no way."

"Believe me when I say, he does. I just need proof of that. I can't get close enough to get what I need, so I need someone on the inside."

"Let me get this straight." I shake my head before speaking again. "You want me to trade one dangerous group for another? Because if Colt finds out I shared information with a cop, I don't think I'd live to see another sunny day."

Ryan's eyes flash. "He'd never know. I can assure you."

"Somehow, I don't believe you."

"I can promise you that you would be safe. All you'd have to do is find out what I need, and I'd give you proof to back up your story. Bill would go away, and you'd be safe."

I can't.

I *won't*.

"I'm not doing it, I'm sorry. I'll find my own way to deal with Bill and whoever he is working for, but I'm not betraying someone else to do it."

Ryan exhales. "The people who are after you, they're not going to stop. They're going to shut you up because you are

already too close to knowing the truth. Is your life truly worth a little bit of information?”

“I’ll be okay,” I say, even though I truly don’t believe it. “I’ll find a way to be safe.”

Ryan shakes his head. “Your bravado is impressive, but it won’t protect you from the people who can and *will* make you disappear.”

“You’re a cop, why aren’t you protecting me? Isn’t that your job?”

He doesn’t answer me. “If protection is what you need, it can be arranged, but it won’t last forever. Eventually, they’ll find a way to get to you.”

“Not if I get to them, first.”

He’s frustrated, I can see it written all over his face. “You’re not safe.”

“That’s my problem. I’m not helping you.”

It’s not just that the club would be after me, it’s that I wouldn’t do it to them.

I have already dug myself into a hole I can’t get out of, I’m not about to dig that much deeper.

“If you change your mind, here is my card.”

He digs into his pocket and pulls out a card, handing it to me. I take it, glancing down at it for a moment before looking back at him.

“Be careful, Bonnie. The people you exposed aren’t about to sit back and let this go.”

With that, he turns and walks away.

I exhale as I watch him go.

The problem is, I know he’s right.

I know they’re not going to let this go.

I know I’m not safe.

But I’m not going to betray the man I love to protect him.

For now, I'll just keep on doing what I'm doing.  
And pray it works.





“You know, I have to say I’m surprised,” Luna says, flicking a towel over her shoulder as she places the clean glasses back down onto the counter.

She gave me my job back, mostly because I am now without one and because she feels like it’s safe here because of the security. She is right, it is likely one of the safest places for me right now, because we can see everyone who comes in and out. It’s good to take my mind off things and not think about Western day and night. I’m a mix of angry and hurt, and most days I don’t know which one I’m clinging to the hardest.

“Surprised about what?” I ask, sliding a drink across the counter to a customer.

“You giving up so easily.”

I pause and turn to her, frowning. “Giving up?”

“When I met you, you practically drove that man insane trying to get him to talk until he couldn’t avoid you any longer. Now, you’re just going to let him treat you as if you don’t exist? After everything you did to help him? After the danger you put yourself in?”

Shaking my head, I exhale. “It’s not that easy. He refuses to even look at me. The club can’t stand me. I have no place there.”

“Don’t give him a choice. Honey, you’re the most determined person I’ve ever met. You make him listen. You make him see. You make this go away. Bring out the Bonnie I first met, because that girl wouldn’t take no for an answer.”

I ponder this.

Really ponder it.

Is she right?



Do I just need to push harder?

“Maybe,” I say.

“Not maybe. Find your spirit, girly. And make that man listen.”

A customer approaches the bar, so our conversation is cut short, but it plays on my mind for the remainder of my shift. When I’m finished, Leo meets me at the bar, refusing to let me walk anywhere alone. We’re then escorted out by security. I love that they all care about me this much, but I can’t deny that I’m frustrated with the lack of freedom. I’m more than a little tired of having people in my space all the time.

“How was your night?” Leo asks when we get into his truck and begin making our way home.

“Good to have something to take my mind off everything.”

Pursing his lips, Leo glances at me briefly. “Maybe you should go on a date or something, try and step away from that man. He’s no good for you, Bon. I don’t want to see you holding your life up.”

“It’s not just him, Leo. It’s all of it. It’s the fact that I’m not safe, and until I find a way to be safe, this is my life.”

“Can we go somewhere else? Talk to another cop?”

“I have, but, again, this isn’t something that’s going to be easy.”

Grumbling, he doesn’t say anything more.

My phone rings just as we pull up at his house, and I see it’s Nathan. I’ve been waiting to hear from him, and I’m glad to see his name flashing across my screen.

“Hey,” I say, answering it. “Tell me you’ve got something for me.”

“I have someone who is going to come and look out for you. A friend of mine. He’s no longer working as an officer, but he’s trustworthy and lives close by. He’s happy to help out.”

“A bodyguard,” I mutter. “Fun.”

Nathan chuckles. “Trust me, when you see him, I don’t think you’ll be sad.”

Meaning ...?

“Well, I appreciate it,” I say, because I mean that.

“I know you do. He’ll be over later tonight; his name is Remy.”

I thank him once more, and we finish up the call. Leo and I head into his house, and I explain that I will have some extra protection. A look of relief floods his face, and I can’t help but feel bad that he has had to put himself out for me. He’d do anything for me, I know that, but he has a life, too.

I’ve just gotten into my pajamas when a knock at the door sounds.

That must be Remy.

Nathan said he would be over tonight, but considering it’s nearly midnight, I figured he had just confused his words.

Frowning, I walk over to the door and open it.

My breath is ripped from my lungs.

Standing in front of me is, quite possibly, one of the most incredible looking men I’ve ever seen in my life. Not because he’s rugged and dangerous, but because he’s so well put together, that every one of his features looks as though he has been hand-sculpted by God himself.

“You must be Bonnie.” Extending a hand, he reaches for me, but I’m too stunned to speak. “I’m Remy.”

*Snap out of it, Bonnie.*

I reach out and take his hand, still dumbfounded.

Remy is tall, dark, and handsome.

Those words though, they’re only scratching the surface.

He’s got to be at least six feet tall and made up of solid muscle. His arms, his torso, everything my eyes run over, is firm and ripped. He’s wearing a pair of military pants and a black shirt that hugs his chest in ways that can’t be unseen. His

hair is as black as the night, messy and curling at the ends, strands falling over his forehead. His eyes are the starkest green I've ever seen and when combined with a shadow of stubble on his chin, makes them even brighter. His skin is olive and completely clean from what I can see. He's ... *spectacular*.

"I ... I wasn't expecting you so late," I manage, my voice shaky.

"I just finished up a shift at the military base."

"You're in the military?" I ask, dropping my hand back to my side.

"I am. Going on my third year now."

"Nathan said you used to be a police officer?"

"It wasn't for me." He smiles, flashing perfect white teeth.

"So, ah, you're going to do what exactly?"

He reaches down, lifting a duffel and giving me a look that has me weak at the knees. "I'm your new protection. I work from lunchtime daily until midnight, and then I'll be here to make sure you're safe."

"You're staying here?" I squeak.

"If that's okay with you? I can be around during the day until lunchtime and then I believe you go to work not long after? I will then return at night, around when you finish. Is that okay?"

"This isn't my house, but I'm sure it's okay. It's probably better here; Leo will be around when you're not."

Leo appears behind me, I feel his presence and then his low voice ask, "What will I be okay with?"

I very quickly introduce the two of them and explain to Leo who Remy is and then ask if it's okay if he has the extra room. Leo studies Remy for a minute, tipping his head to the side, as if that might indicate if Remy is telling the truth or not.

"How do we know you're not just working with the men she's being protected from and this is all a set up?"

Remy doesn't even flinch.

"You don't, but I can assure you I'm not. Nathan and I have been friends for a long while. I'm happy to have a background check run, a criminal check, whatever you'd like. I don't have to stay here if you're not comfortable."

Leo glances at me. "You okay with this?"

"I trust Nathan."

Leo nods. "Okay, come on in."

Leo gets Remy set up, and I quickly snap a picture of him and send it to Luna. She replies immediately, and her response brings one of the first smiles I've had in weeks.

**L – What is that? Where did you get it? How much? Where do I find one? Did you get it from the hot military base? Wowza!**

**B – That is my new protection.**

**L – I'm going to get myself into trouble, I'll be right back.**

I chuckle and put my phone away.

Her words from earlier ring in my mind as I make my way to my room.

I've been back and forth on what my next move should be. Do I just give Western some space? Or do I go all in and finish this, for him, for the club? How will I do that? Where do I even start? Digging further into this mystery is dangerous, and I'm not sure I'll actually walk out of it alive. That's a terrifying thought, one that brings me pause.

As for Western, though, he can't avoid me forever.

Luna is right about that. I don't have to sit back and accept that he is done. Not after what we've shared. I know he has emotion there, and the old Bonnie wouldn't lie down and just let him get his way with this. He could help me. Together, we could fix this, and maybe, just maybe, move on with our lives. The problem is, he's not willing to hear me out. He's so

broken and so damaged that his only response to hurt is to shut someone out.

Do I take Luna's advice?

Do I force my way back in, even if he doesn't want it?

Exhaling, I lie on my bed.

One thing is for certain, I have to decide soon, because I'm running out of time.

Bill won't sit back for much longer.

I need to finish this.



“YOU SURE THIS IS A good idea?” Luna asks as we walk through the front gates to the clubhouse a few days later, Remy following behind, his eyes scanning the lot.

I've told him that I'm not sitting back when it comes to this, and he told me what I do wasn't his business, that he was just here to keep me safe. Of course, when Luna heard he was coming, she made it her mission to join us, even taking the shift off work for the night. It's the biker club's annual fundraiser—they donate their proceeds to children's charities—and each year, they make a big difference.

Surely, they can't tell me I'm not welcome.

It's open doors, or gates, and that means anyone can come in.

They have an open bar, food, and a big dance floor set up. People come in, they eat, they drink, they buy tickets to win a motorbike, and the club makes a crap ton of money to pass on. It's the only time the club truly allows outsiders to come in, and I'm more than certain they have made sure there is nothing to find. The main house is locked, securely, and so is Western's shed down the back. They only open up one area, and the rest is held outside.

Moving through what is already a large crowd, I notice Fury. His eyes flash when he sees me, and he quickly strides

through the crowd until he stops in front of me. “I’ll give it to you, woman, you don’t back down.”

“I thought you would have already figured that out by now,” I say, crossing my arms. “You remember Luna, and this is her friend, Remy.”

Remy extends a hand, and Fury takes it, shaking it before moving his gaze back to me. “How’s the leg?”

“It’s fine, I recovered.”

Thankfully, it wasn’t a bad injury. After a few days, I felt a lot better and was able to bear weight on it once more. All the cuts and grazes have healed over and are on their way toward healing.

“Night ain’t goin’ to be happy about you bein’ here.”

“He’ll get over it. Where is the beer?”

Fury gives me a look, but I move past him, holding my head up high. Western might not want to see me, but I’m not giving him a choice. I want to know what the club knows, I want to know if we can recover from this, and I want to bring Bill and whoever he’s working for down so I can be safe again. I can’t do that on my own. I need manpower, and Western is the only manpower I can think of that might just be enough.

Remy and Luna follow me, and we find ourselves a drink. I put some money in the collections tin, doing the right thing and all, and then my eyes scan the crowd for Western. It takes me a minute to find him, but when I do, my heart lurches in my throat. He’s sitting against the back wall, back leaning against it, legs spread as he kicks back, a woman on his lap, her mouth against his neck. His eyes ... they’re on me.

I know what he’s doing, he’s making sure that I’m clear on the fact that he will never take me back, and the more he pushes it, the more frustrated I become. If he doesn’t want me back, then there is nothing I can do about it, but playing games is for children. The very least he can do is have a conversation with me. Remy steps up beside me, and Western’s eyes flash to him, his jaw tightening. Oh, he doesn’t like that? Good.

I turn, not giving him a moment of acknowledgement, and smile at Remy. “This is probably not something you do every day?”

He chuckles. “No, it isn’t, but I don’t mind trying new things. Do you come here often?”

“Not anymore, but I have business to take care of, and, unfortunately, this is the only place I can do that.”

“I won’t dare ask what kind of business you have with a biker club.”

I give him a nervous grin. “No, I wouldn’t ask either. But, I’m sure by now you’ve figured out that I’m in some hot water, so I’ve already taken a dark dive down a rabbit hole.”

He nods, because he knows.

He wouldn’t be here if I wasn’t in trouble.

Luna comes up beside us, two drinks in her hand. “I’ll never quite feel like I belong in a place like this,” she murmurs, glancing around.

“Want to take a walk?” Remy asks her.

Cheeks flushing, she nods.

Remy looks to me, and I can’t help but smile. “I’m fine here. Nobody is going to snatch me in the middle of a biker club.”

“You sure?”

“I’m sure. Go.”

Luna mouths ‘thank you’ and the two of them disappear. I drink my beer a little too quickly, trying not to let my eyes scan over the man still sitting against the wall, the woman on his lap making the monster inside of me rise up to the surface. I hate it. I can’t stand seeing someone else on him, touching him, and the more I see it, the worse it makes me feel. More and more alcohol slides down my throat as I try to keep my emotions in check.

I hate that I want him.

Life would be so much easier if I didn't.

I push through the crowd in a desperate search for a quiet place. I need to talk to Western, but there is no way I'm approaching him right now. I'm going to need a few more drinks before I do that. Even then, I'm sure he'll see right through my bravado. I find an old, chopped down tree near Western's shed and nestle myself onto it, sliding my bottom back until my legs are dangling. In the dark silence, my head clears just a little. My breathing evens out, and my heart feels as though it isn't so heavy.

"Why are you here?"

Western's voice comes from the darkness, and my head whips around to see him appearing, alone. My voice gets stuck in my throat as I take him in. Every hard inch of him. I want nothing more than to run my hands over his body, to breathe him in, to feel his mouth against mine. My lust is borderline obsession, but I'm fooling myself if I think it isn't more than that. I already know it is. I'm falling in love with him, day by day, even when he's pushing me away.

It's killing me.

But I'm not about to let that show.

"It's an open party," I say, meeting his eyes.

"Not for you."

"I didn't see a sign on the gate saying I wasn't welcome. If you want to kick me out, *Nightmare*, then you can lift me up and toss me out yourself. Otherwise, I'm staying."

Calling him *Nightmare* feels foreign to me, but I also know it stings something inside him because I never use it. At least, the broken parts of me hopes that it does. The reality of it is that he probably doesn't care.

"What is it you want?"

"I want information. I want to speak with you. I want ..."

He steps up closer. "The truth."

His voice is gravelly.



“You know what I want,” I whisper, looking up at him, my hair tumbling down my back as my breathing becomes shallow.

“You’ll never have what you want.”

His words hurt.

They’re crushing.

He knows it.

“You can leave now,” I say, my voice strained, my heart racing.

“I’ll give you what you *need*, but never what you *want*.”

What in the ever loving hell is that supposed to mean?

“And that is?”

He reaches down, taking my knees in his hands and jerking them open, exposing me. My short dress rides up and the lacy panties I’m wearing do nothing to cover my pussy, which is already damp and ready for him. I hate that my body is so very needy when it comes to Western, but I can’t seem to make it stop. I want him almost more than I want the next gush of air to rush into my lungs. He makes me dizzy with desire and lust, and hungry for so much more.

“What makes you think I want this?” I ask, my voice raspy as he runs his finger down the middle of my damp slit, coating his finger in my arousal.

“You can say one word to end it.”

*Stop.*

I could say stop and he would, I know he would.

But I don’t want him to.

My desperation to feel him far outweighs my pride. I know I should deny him, that I should turn him away and focus only on what I came here for, but my body has been longing for him just as much as my heart. I want to put my hands on him, to inhale his musky scent, to feel his cock dragging in and out of my flesh. I need him. Even if he doesn’t need me.

“Don’t touch me,” he growls, taking my panties in his hands and ripping them off, tearing the material effortlessly. “Don’t kiss me. Don’t put a single part of your body on me. If you scream, moan, or gasp, I’m done.”

What?

What sort of sick, twisted game is he playing?

“So I’m to feel no pleasure?” I whisper, as his finger slowly slides into my exposed pussy, stretching me, rubbing over the already aching bundle of nerves there.

“You can feel whatever you want, just don’t make one fuckin’ sound. I’ll end it. Do not doubt me.”

I’ve never met a man with a mind so twisted.

So fucking damaged.

“You know what to say if you want it to stop.”

He knows I won’t say it, he knows it just as well as I do. I won’t say stop because not a single part of me doesn’t want this.

Dropping to his knees in front of me when I don’t say a word, he buries his face between my legs. The moment his tongue lashes out and glides up my pussy and over my clit, I jerk. It takes everything inside me not to cry out, moan, scream his name, grip his hair, beg for more. He licks with a precision that is dangerous, and he knows exactly what he’s doing. He wants to make me crazy. He wants to send me over the edge.

His tongue slows, and then quickens, and then slows again, bringing me to release and then settling it, then bringing me back again. Over and over he does this until my fingers are digging into the fallen tree I’m sitting on, my fingertips burning as I grate them along the flaky timber. My legs are tight around his head, my bottom lip is wedged between my teeth, and I’m panting at a rate that has my heart racing to the point I feel dizzy.

I don’t want him to stop though.

The pressure building inside me is unlike anything I've ever felt.

Having his mouth on me again feels like heaven.

I have needed him in the last few weeks more than he could ever know.

Even if I can't put my hands on him, knowing that right now, in this moment, he's with me, is enough to dull the ache in my chest.

I find my orgasm, unable to hold it back anymore.

The pressure that has built inside me, the pressure I've been hanging onto, comes exploding forth in a rush of liquid that is unlike anything I've ever felt. Pulse after pulse brings another gush and, horrified, I try to scramble back but am stopped by Western digging his fingers into my thighs so harshly I bite into my lip, quickly tasting blood.

It takes all my power not to cry out at the most incredible orgasm I've ever felt in my life, the explosion was out of this world, and as Western pushes up from between my legs, I notice him swipe my arousal from his skin, his eyes flaring as they meet mine, a look of desire in his eyes that I've never seen before. I know what happened, I've seen enough videos to know what squirting looks like, but I've never experienced it before.

I didn't think it was possible.

Reaching for his jeans, Western jerks them down, freeing his cock. He takes a step forward, taking my legs and pulling me forward, making my bottom skitter along the wood, the sharp sting of little splinters digging into my skin. It's aggressive, but I have never been more turned on in my life. Without so much as a word, Western presses his cock to my entrance and pushes inside.

I open my mouth, a silent gasp escaping my lips as pressure causes my insides to throb and ache in the most delicious way. Western doesn't hold back, he begins a slow torment on my body, dragging himself in and out, building me up to the most exquisite level before picking up the pace and

fucking me so deep and so hard the pleasure is absolutely unexplainable.

It takes me to a different place, a new world, somewhere I've never been before.

My entire body trembles as I orgasm, but I'm silent, as silent as the night.

The shudders coming from me rock the both of us, and Western's growls fill the cool night air, a sound that will forever imbed itself into my memory. The low guttural groan as he finds his release, deep inside me, relieves some of the anguish I've felt for the past two weeks. That relief is short lived, and, as always, Western snaps reality back as quickly as he takes it away.

The moment our bodies stop trembling, he pulls back. As quickly as he was there, he's gone. An empty void grips my chest, and I suddenly feel very exposed as he jerks up his jeans. I push up, every part of me wobbly, and as I let my eyes scan over him, I can't help the words that leave my lips. "You can't tell me you didn't want that just as much as I did. You can't deny that we have something."

He glances at me, any hint of emotion long gone as he rasps out in a low voice, "You didn't think you're the only woman I'll be fucking tonight, did you?"

His words crush me in a way no words have ever done before. They dive into the deepest parts of me, twisting until there is nothing left but an ugly, tangled mess.

Angry, unwanted tears burst forth. I wasn't expecting them, and, therefore, I don't have the time to fight them back. I get it, he has had a horrible start to life and because of that he's bitter, but to be able to stand in front of someone and cut them down as if you have no emotions whatsoever, is a new kind of monster.

I push to my feet, my hands trembling as I jerk down my dress, the warm cum trailing down my leg as I stand. I don't care. I don't have a single fucking care. I can't take it anymore. Can't take this damaged, broken man destroying me

little by little. How did I ever allow myself to fall in love with him? To actually believe there was good inside? There isn't. It was all a lie. The entire thing nothing but bullshit.

“You know what?” I say, taking a step forward just as he turns his back to me, going to walk away. “I'm done with you. If that's what you wanted, you successfully got it. I'll tell you something, though. You will spend the rest of your days living a very lonely fucking existence if you continually treat people the way you just treated me.”

He glances at me over his shoulder. “I don't want people.”

“Well, that's super, because you fucking have none. Go to hell, Western. God knows that's where you belong.”

I storm past him, the tears soaking my cheeks as I rush to find my way out of this place. I slam into Remy just as I make it back toward the group of people, and his hands go to my shoulders.

“Hey, whoa, is everything okay? Are you hurt? What's wrong?”

Luna steps up beside him, her eyes scanning over me. One look at me, and she knows ... she just knows.

“Come on, let's get you out of here.”

She puts her arm around my shoulder, and Remy, trusting her, leads the way. I notice Western as I'm walking out, his eyes on me, an expression on his face I can't quite make out. I look away. I can't do this anymore. I can't. I've tried, lord knows I've tried, but he refuses to let me in. He will never let me past the wall that guards his heart, and I'm no longer strong enough to keep trying to chip away at it.

He doesn't want me in his life, in his world.

That's fine.

I'll get my answers, I'll clear his name, but I'll do it because it's the right thing to do, but no longer will it be for him. It'll be for all the people who have been wronged by Bill Whart, it'll be for Daniel and Braithe, it'll be for the foster

kids who have gone missing. As for Western, I'm done playing around with him.

Tonight, he crushed that final piece of me.

Now, I'm doing it for myself.





**S**couring the shelves, I mindlessly look for something to have for dinner. I've been walking up and down these aisles now for the last twenty minutes while Remy waits patiently at the store entrance. He has been amazing; he is with me most of the time but he stays out of my way. He isn't constantly on my back, he's not overbearing, and he's so easy to talk to. He would be the best person to take care of me, and I'm glad Nathan put him on the case.

"It's a hard choice, isn't it?"

Chills run up my spine at the sound of a familiar voice, one I haven't heard since the one and only time I spoke to him. The day I made the biggest mistake of my career by telling him I would expose him. Slowly, I turn to face Bill Whart. My eyes immediately dart behind him, in desperate search for Remy, but he's nowhere to be seen.

The cold eyes of the monster I've been trying to avoid, meet mine. There is something so eerie about him, something that makes your skin crawl and your body go on full alert, like it just knows he's dangerous. Even though he's standing here, dressed in a fancy suit, his hair all neat and tidy, he radiates deception and evil.

"Your little friend is still waiting where you left him. Don't worry, this won't take long."

My heart, which was perfectly calm a moment ago, is now slamming against my chest as I try to keep calm, but I'm anything but.

"What do you want?" I ask, my voice low and shaky.

He smiles, flashing a confident grin, unbothered and not even a little anxious.

"Oh, but you know what I want."



“I didn’t release that article,” I blurt out. “I wrote it, but I didn’t release it. Someone else did.”

“I don’t care who released it,” Bill answers, casually. “I care about the heat that it has brought to me and the people I work for. You see, they’re not happy with the people sniffing around us now, detectives and investigators, it’s very bad.”

“If you didn’t do bad things,” I hiss, “then you wouldn’t have a problem.”

He keeps the smile. “I’m not here to argue, Bonnie. I’m here to give you a choice. We want information, information that you can get from that little club you’re so obsessed with. If you get it for us, we might just let you be.”

He can’t be serious.

Now he wants information from the club, too.

Everyone seems to have something they want from the club, and it makes me wonder what it is they’re hiding for so many people to be interested in them.

I’m not giving him a damned thing.

I have enough heat in my life, I don’t need anymore.

“I don’t have anything you want, and I can’t get anything you want. The article was as close as I could get to information. The club refuses to have anything to do with me after that.”

His eyes flash as he takes a step closer. “Don’t play with me, lady. I’m not in the position to mess around. You do as I ask, or you end up right where Daniel did. Is that how you want things to go for you?”

That comment sparks my interest, but I keep my face blank.

“I don’t want any part in this. I just want to move on with my life.”

He chuckles, low and deadly. “You should have thought of that before digging into places you had no business being in. I have a boss that’s very, very angry and wants you out of the

picture. If you don't cooperate with us, then you're going to be of no use, and we'll have to make sure you go away."

Chills run down my spine, because I know he means every word he says.

"Bonnie, are you okay?"

Remy's voice trickles in, and I glance over to see him approaching us, his eyes firmly fixed on Bill.

"Seems to be your lucky day," Bill murmurs. "We're not done, Bonnie. You've made a lot of people very angry. Work with us, or we'll be back for you. You have twenty-four hours to give me an answer and believe me when I say you don't want to see what happens if you try to get away from me."

With that, he turns and disappears just as Remy reaches me. Judging by the look on Remy's face, he knows exactly who Bill is and he knows what he was talking to me about, at least, what he was threatening me with.

"You should have called," Remy tells me, his voice low as he keeps his gaze on Bill who disappears out of sight.

"I didn't really get much chance."

"Are you okay? Did he hurt you?"

"Depends what you define as hurt," I mutter. "I'm okay, can we just go?"

Nodding, Remy escorts me out of the store empty handed. His eyes scan the parking lot with every step we take. He's not leaving anything to chance.

My mind is spinning as we travel back to Leo's apartment.

He wants me to get information from the club. Two different groups of people now want something I'm not willing to give, but where does that leave me? Alone, in danger, with nobody to help. I can't live like this forever, but if I betray that club, again, then I'm going to have three groups of people on my back. A deep pit of anxiety forms in my chest, and I struggle to fight through it, struggle to find a solution.

I've got a problem that I'm not quite sure I can fix.

"From now on, I'm coming into the store with you," Remy says as we get out of the truck and walk inside.

"I have a bad feeling that if Bill wants to get to me, he's going to find a way."

Remy stops, turning to look at me before we walk through the door. "Not if I have a say in it."

I admire his determination to protect me, I really do. He's kind and brave, I trust him, but I'm not sure he's a match for the people I've got coming after me.

I thank him once more for his help and then retreat to my room where I sit on the edge of the bed, dropping my head into my hands. What do I do about this situation? Do I go to the cop and get his help? Do I just give Bill what he wants until I can think of something better? Western already hates me, adding this will only make it worse.

Exhaling, I close my eyes.

I need to come up with something, and quick, or I'm going to run out of time.

Twenty-four hours.

That's all I've got.

To make a choice that could, quite literally, change my life.

I just hope I make the right one.



"I'M ALL DONE," I SAY to Luna the next night, giving her a forced smile as I finish up my shift for the night.

It has been over twenty-four hours, and I've yet to come up with a plan that's going to keep me safe. Bill is going to come for me, and I don't know how I'm going to avoid that. I don't know what I'm going to say, or do, to buy myself some more time. I've gone over scenarios in my head, but none of them seem to equal my safety.

“Is Leo here yet?” Luna asks, glancing around the crowded club.

“Not yet, I’ll go and get changed and wait with Mick at the front for him.”

She nods, stepping up close and giving me a hug. “Call me when you get home.”

“I will.”

I undo my hip apron and hang it up, before going out the back to gather my things. I then make my way toward the front door. I can’t see Leo yet, which is odd because he’s always waiting for me. I scan the crowd, wondering if maybe he saw someone he knows and got caught up, but there is no sight of him. Frowning, I turn and make my way toward the bathroom. I’ll freshen up and that’ll give him a bit more time to make it to me. I’m not going to go outside alone.

After washing my face and using the bathroom, I pull out my phone and dial Leo, but there is no answer. Feeling uneasy, I leave the room and make my way back through the crowd, heading toward the bar once more. I’ll wait with Luna until he gets here. I’m just passing through the crowd of people dancing when something firm pushes against my back. For a moment, I’m certain it’s just someone bumping into me, but when a gravelly voice fills my ears, I know it isn’t a stranger.

“Walk. If you scream, I’ll make you wish you hadn’t.”

Bill’s voice is icy and chills run down my spine.

How the hell did he get in here?

They’ve been alerted to be on the lookout for him, so how did he make it through the doors?

My eyes dart toward the bar, but Luna is nowhere to be seen and the crowd is far too big for her to notice me.

I could scream, but that might just end up causing the kind of chaos that this club can’t come back from. Not to mention I could be putting other innocent lives in danger, and I’m not about that.

*Think, Bonnie.*

*Think.*

Bill walks me to the back of the room and through a door that leads out toward the cleaners' rooms. Is that how he got in? The cleaners have an access out back they come through when the club is closed for the night. It is locked, though, so he must have bribed one of them to get hold of a key. The lengths this man will go to, to get what he wants, is alarming.

The moment we're in the large storage room, the door slams behind us, and I'm spun around to face Bill and one other man, a man I don't know. Bill has a gun aimed at me, and my heart leaps into my throat, because I know for certain he's more than willing to use it. Fear, unlike anything I've ever felt in my life, rips through my body. I can't get out, not unless I go through them. I can't scream, nobody will hear me in here.

I'm trapped.

"Your time is up," Bill says, running his finger down the barrel of the gun.

"I'm going to help you," I blurt, thinking as quickly as I can. "I'm going to see the club tonight. It wasn't easy getting them to meet me. They're not my biggest fans, as you can imagine."

Bill tips his head to the side, studying me. "And you expect me to believe you because ...?"

"The choice is yours," I say, calmly, even though inside I'm screaming. "You can either believe me or not. If you choose not to, you're giving up the possible chance of getting what you want. Are you willing to take that risk?"

A cold smile stretches across his face. "Very well, if that's the case, we'll drop you off there right now. Oh, and Bonnie, my friend here is going to give you just a small taste of what will happen if you double cross us."

Bill steps back with a sharp nod to the other man.

Stepping forward, he lashes out, catching me off guard. His fist hits my stomach so hard the wind is knocked out of me. A loud gasp escapes my throat as I tumble backward,

clutching my belly as pain shoots through my sides. Another hit follows quickly after the first, bringing me to my knees. Agony shoots through my body, and I cry out, begging him to stop.

“I get it,” I gasp. “I get it.”

“One more, just for luck,” Bill murmurs.

A booted foot hits me in the ribs, sending me tumbling backward into the closet supplies. Containers and bottles fall on my head as I roll to my side, coughing and gasping, the air refusing to enter my lungs. My head spins and tears run down my cheeks as I try to fight through the pain. The unbearable pain.

A moment later, a hand curls around my arm and hauls me up. I cry out as my body refuses to straighten the way it should.

It hurts.

God, it hurts.

“Time to go.”

Bill is cheerful as they pull me out of the closet and toward the back entrance. Each step sends sharp stabbing pains through my ribs and stomach, but they’re not allowing me to stop. My phone in my pocket begins to ring, over and over, and I know it’s Leo. He’ll be looking for me, and if he doesn’t find me, he is going to cause a scene.

“If I don’t answer him,” I grind out, “he is going to flip.”

“You tell him you’re at the club and to go home,” Bill says as his friends drag me toward a truck that is idling in the deserted back parking lot.

I shakily reach for my phone, taking a deep breath.

“If he suspects anything is wrong,” Bill warns, “I’ll make it hurt more.”

Gritting my teeth, I answer the phone when Leo’s name flashes across the screen again.

“Bonnie,” he says down the phone, the moment I click answer. “Sorry, somehow I was unable to get into the parking lot. I had to circle around the block and I didn’t hear my phone. I’m here now, are you okay?”

“I’m okay,” I say, making my voice sound as normal as I possibly can. “So sorry, I tried to call to let you know you didn’t need to wait for me. Western came to get me, he wants to talk. I’m just at the club. I’ll call you when I’m done.”

Leo pauses. “Are you sure that’s a good idea?”

“I need to talk to him, Leo.”

Exhaling, Leo grunts. “I think he deserves nothing from you, but as long as you’re safe, I’m happy. What time will you be done? I’ll come and get you.”

“I’ll message.”

I finish up the call, confident that Leo isn’t suspicious.

I’m shoved into the truck, and the big guy gets in next to me, ensuring I can’t jump out. As we drive away, I desperately try to think of a way out of this. What am I going to say when I go into that club? How exactly am I going to get them to trust me? How will I get information when they don’t want anything to do with me?

Then, an idea hits.

Like a lightbulb moment in my mind.

Why didn’t I think of this earlier?

Through the haze and pain, a plan formulates in my mind, a plan that didn’t click until now.

By the time we arrive at the club, I know what I have to do.

Bill turns in his seat, staring at me with cold, icy eyes. “I’ll hear from you within the hour, or I’ll be back. You tell them what happened to you, and I’ll make things so much worse. I know where your friend lives.”

“I got it,” I grind out. “One hour.”

I climb out of the truck that is parked just down from the club so as not to be seen. I walk toward the entrance, and they don't leave until I'm well inside. As I approach the quiet clubhouse, I know that what I'm about to do is my only option. It's the only thing that'll work for all of us. It'll be the only way for me to stay safe, and clear Western's name. The only way to get Bill to leave for good.

Reaching the front door, I take a deep breath, fighting through the throbbing pain that is getting progressively worse with every step. I'm certain I have a broken rib, at least, a very badly bruised one. Pushing the door open, I walk inside the clubhouse. It's quiet, a few bikers kicking back, drinking and smoking. I notice Mex and Venom both standing by the bar, their eyes on me.

Exhaling, I walk over to them.

"I know, I know. I'm not allowed. But it's urgent. I need to speak to Nightmare. Is he here?"

"Night's in a meetin'," Venom growls, his voice a low, gravelly sound.

Venom is dangerous. He has had a bad past or something, because the man radiates a vibe even stronger than Western's. He doesn't want people near him, he doesn't want human contact at all. He's broken, he's deadly, and he makes sure you know it. Mex, on the other hand, is a lot easier to get along with. No quite the same as Fury, but enough that you know he isn't going to toss you out on your ass.

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't urgent," I say, to Mex this time. "Please."

Mex pushes off the bar, his eyes scanning over me. "I'll go speak to him."

I nod, stepping back and watching as every biker in the club has their eyes on me. They don't trust me, and I can't say I blame them. I wouldn't trust me either. But standing in a room with them, their hard stares hitting me from all angles, is more than a little uncomfortable.



Needing an escape, I move to the quietest corner of the room and wait.

I wait and hope Western hears me out.

Either way, I'm not leaving until he does.

Pushing back any doubt, I bring my confidence forward.

It's the only thing that'll save me now.





Standing in front of Colt, Western, and Fury, I find it hard to gather my words. I need to say this right the first time, because if I don't, I'm not going to convince them and then I'm in the kind of hot water I won't be able to escape from. Taking a breath, not too deep because it hurts, I meet Colt's eyes, unable to look into the eyes of the man who utterly tore my heart out only days ago.

"I know you don't trust me, and I understand why, but I wouldn't be here if I didn't think you needed to be part of what is going on outside of these club walls. I'm in danger, and that danger isn't going anywhere anytime soon. I want your help. I want your protection. I'm begging for you to hear me out."

"You got some nerve ..." Colt begins, but I cut him off.

"I have a police officer who wants me to get information about you in return for my protection. I also have Bill Whart, who brought me here tonight, telling me that I'm dead unless I bring him information. That's two lots of people asking me to betray your club for my life. I could have done that, believe me, part of me wanted to, but I'm not. I'm here instead, because I think we can work together to benefit all of us."

The three men glance at one another, and I know I've sparked their interest.

"What cop?" Colt growls.

"Ryan," I answer, my voice unwavering. "He offered me protection for information."

Colt's eyes flash, and he looks to Western, who looks more than a little furious.

Clearly they know exactly who I'm talking about, and they're not happy about that fact.

“Whart brought you here?” Fury asks, his eyes scanning over me, as if he’s automatically looking for injury.

“Yes. He told me if I didn’t get him information, he’d kill me. So, as you can imagine, I’m not in a great position. Which is why I’m here. I think we have the chance to take control over this situation. Both of them want information, and you now have a choice on what kind of information you give them. You can make up whatever you want, and lead them down whatever road you choose, through me. All I ask, is that you protect me until this is over. When it is, you’ll never see me again.”

Silence.

I hold my breath, scared that if they say no, I’ll have no way out. They know now that I’m being asked to betray them, which means if they don’t agree to help, there is little I can do moving forward. They’ll never let me through these gates again, because they’ll know what I’m here for. I hope I’ve made the right choice in deciding to come to them.

“You want the club’s protection after what you did?” Fury asks, his voice less harsh than the other two, but he’s still making it very clear he doesn’t trust me.

“Yes,” I say, “because regardless of what you believe, I never wanted to hurt anyone in this club. I asked for that story to be thrown out, and someone went behind my back, which is another thing I’m having to deal with. I can’t live like this. I can help you, I’ll do whatever you ask, but they need to believe I’m betraying you otherwise my life is no longer in my own hands.”

Even saying those words makes my stomach twist with fear.

I don’t want to die.

I don’t want to be hurt any further.

I just want this to go away.

The three men look at each other, and then back to me.

It's Western who makes the call which surprises me, because I thought for certain he would be the one to fight back.

"Done."

I flinch, mostly from shock.

I didn't think it would be that easy.

I thought I'd have to plead my case a whole lot harder.

Whatever Bill and Ryan want from the club is enough for them to agree to help me. It must be good, and I'm more than a little intrigued to find out just what's happening behind closed doors. I have no plans on betraying them, but I sure as hell am going to find out what is going on in this town. With the protection of the club, I can do that.

"If you betray us, even in the slightest," Colt grinds out, "the things we will do to you will be far worse than you could ever imagine. You do exactly what we say."

Jutting my chin out, I nod. "I got it."

"Best you tell your little friend that you're in," Western mutters, his eyes never once leaving me.

Pulling out my phone, I dial Bill's number. A number he made sure I had on my phone before I got out of the car tonight. He wants an answer, and he's not going to mess around in getting it. After a few rings it answers.

"Did you get what I want?"

I close my eyes for a moment, calming my voice. "They let me in, but only because I told them I have information they might want. They believe that I'm willing to betray you for my protection, now I have an in and you can feed me whatever bullshit information you like to keep them believing that. If they're to trust me, you're going to need to give me something small that will prove to them I'm on their side. Otherwise, they're going to throw me out as quickly as I came in."

Bill falls silent.

I close my eyes, praying I sound convincing enough.

“Very well, you tell them that you know where G25 shipment is coming in next week.”

Narrowing my eyes, I shake my head and glance at Colt, whose eyes flare. Okay, that triggered his interest.

“Is that all?” I ask.

“That’s all they’ll need to believe that you know what you’re talking about. Once they agree to work with you, I’ll give you just enough to keep them interested, and in the meantime, you’ll be collecting what I need.”

“And what exactly is it you need?”

“I’ll be in touch with that. Tell them the information. I’ll contact you soon. Oh, and Bonnie, don’t forget what happens if you double cross me. You might think that is just a mere threat, but I promise you, it isn’t. Tonight was just a taste.”

He hangs up the phone, and I turn slowly to face the three men, who are all looking at me with narrowed eyes.

“What did he do?” Fury asks.

I shake my head. “Nothing. It’s just a threat.”

I go to take a step away, and Western lashes out, grabbing my arm. It shocks me, and as I spin toward him automatically, pain rushes up my spine. I gasp and freeze, my entire body seizing at the sudden onset of movement. Reaching for my shirt, he jerks it up. I look down at the same time he does, and I know that what he can see is bruising already beginning to form around my ribs and on my stomach.

Releasing me, Western steps back.

Colt looks to his son, his eyes narrowing, “You want to deal with this?”

Western nods, sharply.

“No, nobody is dealing with anything,” I say quickly. “If we don’t do this the right way, it’ll end badly. Please, can we just stick with what we agreed. You’ll get your chance with Bill, but not until we have made sure he won’t ever come back from it.”

Western's jaw ticks.

I nod.

"I'm going to leave now, to go home and have one damned night where I can sleep and not feel unsafe. You decide what it is you need from me, and I'll be back tomorrow."

"This don't mean you're clear with us," Western mutters.

I look him in the eye. "Oh, believe me, I know. Don't worry, *Nightmare*, you have nothing to worry about from me anymore. Once this is done, I'm out of here."

With that, I turn and walk out, keeping my head held high.

I can only hope I've made the right choice tonight.

I guess time will tell.



"ONE OF THE BOYS HAS been returned."

Gasping, as I read the newspaper, I can't believe what I'm seeing.

One of the foster boys who went missing a few years ago, has been returned. It doesn't say much, other than he doesn't remember how he got back, or who returned him, just that he has been sent back safely and is now in protective custody until further investigation can be made.

I'm stunned.

Shocked.

I have so many questions, the first one being, how did he get back?

I continue reading and see a statement from his foster mother who he was living with at the time he went missing. She makes note of how shocked she is that he has been returned, how she had lost hope of ever seeing him again. It's not clear if he will be returned to her, however, she is making it known that her door is always open. I can't believe it; it just doesn't seem real.

This just spurs me on and lets me know I've made the right choice moving forward.

I decided after getting help from the club that I'm going to continue with my own investigation. I was just scratching the surface when that story was released, and I need to know more. I need to find out what is happening to the foster kids in this town, I need to know what it was Daniel found that got him killed, and, mostly, I need to know how the club is involved in all of this, if at all. I'll never be able to fully rest until I have those answers, so I'm going to find them.

The problem I'm going to run into now is being discreet about my questioning. People know who I am. Every time I walk down the street, I'm stopped and asked questions. They want to know what I know. They want proof. They are desperate for answers to a case that has been the talk of the town for such a long time. Now there has been a boy returned, they're going to have even more questions.

I hope I can give them the answers.

I make note to try and find time to question the mother of the returned foster boy, in hopes that she might be able to give me something to work with. Of course I already know Bill has something to do with it, but there is so much more going on behind the scenes. Bill would never return someone he stole to sell, so how did the boy return, and who was behind that?

I have so many questions, and no answers.

Picking up my things, I glance down at my watch.

I'm going into the office today, to confront Jeremiah. I want to know why the hell he published my story when he was told not to. I'm done with people making choices for me, and I'm not going to sit back and let him get away with it.

I finish up reading the article and then take my keys and head out to my car. I no longer require Remy to be around constantly, and I've been able to move back into my apartment. For now, with Bill thinking I'm working with him, I am fairly safe. He has no reason to hurt me unless I give him reason to, so, for the moment, I'm confident that I can travel



about on my own without problem. Remy still comes and checks in multiple times a day, and Leo is always calling to make sure I'm okay.

I don't feel entirely alone, and that's nice.

Driving to the office, I take a moment to enjoy the silence of being alone. You don't truly realize just how good it feels to be alone until that choice is taken from you. When I arrive, I park my car and then head up to the offices where I once worked. It's not like I don't have a job here if I want it, but for now, I have chosen to step away. It's too risky for me to work until this is over, and I'm enjoying my time at the club doing something different.

Stepping out of the elevator, I let my eyes scan the office until I settle on Jerimiah sitting at his desk. I make my way toward him, and watch as he catches sight of me and his eyes widen. He knows, he knows even before I've made it to his desk, that I'm onto him. With every step that passes, anger bubbles in my chest. This man nearly got me killed. Pete and I had agreed not to publish that story, and he went ahead and did it anyway.

How he still has a job is beyond me.

When Pete returns from his trip away, I'll be making it known exactly who went behind his back.

"Bonnie ..." Jerimiah begins, but I don't let him continue.

"Don't Bonnie me, pal. I know exactly what you did. The fact that you thought I wouldn't figure it out is laughable. I want to know why, and you best give me a good answer, otherwise I'm going to take this straight above your head and ensure you lose your job."

His eyes frantically dart to Pete's empty office, and then back to me.

"I didn't ..."

"Cut the crap," I snap. "We both know you did. Now, I'm giving you the chance to tell me why. You have one minute."

“It was meant to be my chance,” he blurts, “that job was meant to be mine. Pete promised a promotion, he promised to let me into the writing side of things, and then he went ahead and decided to let you go and keep me where I am. I begged, told him to give me a chance, and he wouldn’t. So, I released that story because ...”

“Because you knew what it would do to my career,” I grind out. “What you failed to realize, is that it also put my life in danger. Did you even stop to consider that?”

“I didn’t ... I didn’t realize until it came out that it would be so bad.”

“Really?” I mutter. “Because I’m certain you’re smart enough to know that a story like that, using the names of people involved, would cause chaos.”

He falls silent, because he knows I’m right.

“It was a mistake,” he tries, once more.

“A mistake that cost me everything,” I snap. “But you know what, Jerimiah, I’m not the same kind of trash you are. It would bring me great joy to see you lose your job, but I’m better than you. So, instead, I’m going to let you sit here knowing that you almost cost a woman her life to get what you want. Each and every step you take now, should be riddled with guilt. If you get that job, you’ll forever know it was because you’re a god damned cheat. If Pete truly wanted you, he would have offered it.”

With that, I turn and walk out, a smile on my face.

I’m not about to take the mans job, but I’m sure as hell not going to sit back and let him enjoy every second of it.

He needs to know that he didn’t get it because he’s good, or deserving, he got it because he’s a liar and a cheat.

That will niggle away at him, and he’ll forever know he wasn’t worthy of the chance.

Cruel? Probably.

But so is risking my life.

That's one less thing on my to do list.

Little by little, I'm finding my answers.

Little by little, I'm getting closer to the truth.

Gone is the weak, broken girl who was left in shambles after that article was released.

Instead, I'm bringing myself back, and all my passion and determination will help me rise to the top.

I'm going to get to the bottom of this, no matter who I have to stomp down to do so.

Starting with Bill Whart ...





“One of the boys returned,” I say, standing in front of Western a few days later.

His eyes scan over me, almost raking my body, which sparks a fire inside that I’m finding harder and harder to control. I swore to myself that what I did now would only be about the foster kids moving forward, but being around him again is making that very hard. That thought makes me feel weak, because he isn’t exactly treating me like an angel, but my stupid brain seems to be unable to comprehend that and still wants me to jump his bones any chance I can.

“I heard,” he murmurs, his eyes empty of any kind of emotion, like this news doesn’t seem to bother him at all. “What did Bill ask you to find out?”

Bill made his first request: he wants me to find out how the club is involved in the entire situation. He’s convinced they have a hand in it, and it’s causing him and his “boss” problems. I find it hard to believe the club would be involved in taking and selling children, but he is adamant they are, and he wants to know how. I’m not certain I want that answer, but, for now, I don’t have much of a choice.

“He wants to know how you’re involved in the foster kids going missing. He is convinced the club has something to do with it, and he wants to know how.”

Western’s eyes flash and his face tightens in a way that’s a little unnerving because it means that perhaps, there is the smallest possibility that Bill is right, and they do have something to do with it. Surely not, surely after everything Western went through as a young man he wouldn’t have a hand in this. He watched Braithe’s life so cruelly taken from him. There is no way he could watch other innocent kids go through the same thing.

“What information, exactly, is he asking you to return?”  
Western grinds out.

I purse my lips, a little uneasy with the situation now.  
“Anything at all that might help.”

“I’ll get something to you to keep him off your back for a week or so. I’ll have him chasin’ his fuckin’ tail until he finds himself spinnin’ in a circle he can’t get out of. Until then, you’re goin’ to need to get somethin’ for me.”

Here we go.

I’m the meat in the sandwich right now, going back and forth, not sure who is good and who is bad. Well, that’s not entirely true, I know who is bad, but now I’m beginning to ask myself if anyone is good at all in this situation or am I just working for the vilest kind of people this world has to offer.

“What?” I dare to ask.

“I need a name. Who he’s workin’ for.”

I want to roll my eyes, but that would just make him angry. If it were so easy to find this mysterious person he’s working for, then I’m certain we’d all have done it by now, but the fact of the matter is that it is not that easy. Whoever it is stays hidden for that very reason – they know they have too many people wanting blood.

“And how, dare I ask, do you think I’m going to find that out?”

My voice is laced with sarcasm, which doesn’t seem to go down well because his face hardens.

“You managed to find out plenty of information for your little fuckin’ article, I’m sure it’s not a stretch to dig further.”

I want to reach out and slap him, but I won’t give him the satisfaction of seeing me mad about that entire situation for a second longer. I have explained myself, I’m not going to keep repeating the same thing over and over just to get him to hear me. He’ll never hear me because he doesn’t want to believe that the world isn’t out to take him down.

Before I can answer, the door opens and Hazel waltzes in. She's like those days of summer rolling in after winter, lighting up a space purely because she stands out. She knows she's beautiful, I know she's beautiful, everyone know she's damned beautiful. That is, of course, until she opens her mouth and the devil comes out. Her eyes fall on me and her smile quickly dies, she then spins her angry glare on Western. "You can't be serious? I thought we made it clear where you stand with her?"

Oh, so they've discussed me.

Wonderful.

"A pleasure to see you, Hazel, as always," I grind out. "I'm here for business. Don't worry, he's all yours."

Western gives me a look that sends shivers down my spine, but I don't flinch. Hazel narrows her gaze, taking me in, as if she doesn't trust me at all. Probably a good thing.

She shouldn't.

"I'm busy," Western grinds out.

Hazel looks to me before she throws her next sentence out, and just before she does, a small smile spreads across her face. "Well, we need to talk. The doctor won't wait forever."

Doctor?

Nobody gets to answer because she jumps right back in before we can. Giving me a salty smile, she adds, "We're thinking of having a baby."

It feels as though the world around me comes crashing down. Those words, they're not ones I expected to come out of her mouth. Hell, I never thought I'd see the day that Western would take her back, let alone have a child with her. With trembling fingers, I try to keep my expression blank, but I'm failing with every passing second.

I need to get the hell out of here.

I turn on my heel, unable to open my mouth or even manage a sentence.

She knows that what she just said would crush me, and the cocky smile on her face is a dead giveaway.

I shove out the door and force my legs to move as I head down the hallway, racing toward the front door. My heart is racing, my hands are sweaty, and my stomach is twisting with a fiery hurt that I thought was beginning to fade. Who was I kidding? That man has me hook line and sinker, and now he's going to move on with the woman he married, have a child, and I'm here just being a little piece on his chess board until he's done with me.

"Hey, whoa, what's goin' on?"

Fury steps in front of me just as I reach the front door, his hand curling around my arm to stop my frantic escape. I spin on him, rage bursting forth, rage that is better suited for Western, but I can't even look at him right now.

"I should have never gotten involved with that ... that ... fucking man!" I screech, horrified by my reaction but unable to control it. "I should have listened to every person around me that told me to stay away, that told me he was dangerous and bad news, but instead I decided it would be fantastic to try and help him. What a joke. What a pathetic, fucking, joke."

Fury's eyes flash, and his grips tightens. "Come on, I'm goin' to take you somewhere."

I laugh bitterly. "So you can further remind me just how much this club hates me? No thanks."

I jerk my arm from his grip and shove past him, walking down the front steps and rushing toward the exit where my car is waiting. Waiting to take me away from this god forsaken place.

"Bonnie, hold on," Fury's voice booms from behind me, but I don't stop.

When I reach the car and open the door, it slams shut quickly as Fury's large hand holds it closed. I turn, facing him, tears racing down my cheeks. "Is this enjoyable to you, Fury? Because it isn't for me. Just let me go do what it is you need me to do and let me get the hell out of here."



“No, because I’m not lettin’ you drive like this. Come and sit down, I’ll get you a drink.”

“I don’t want to be here!” I yell, throwing my hands up.

“Well too fuckin’ bad because I’m not lettin’ you in that car.”

Frustrated, but knowing that he isn’t going to take no for an answer, I slump my shoulders in defeat.

“*Don’t* let him near me.”

Fury nods and slowly releases the car door. I follow him into the bar area of the clubhouse, where he gets us a drink each, and then we find a quiet spot outside to sit. I say nothing, not for the entire first or second drink, by the third, I’m feeling a little less angry and a lot more hurt. I can’t believe he’d take Hazel back, after everything.

“Don’t let this shit beat you,” Fury finally says, after about half an hour of silence.

“Too late,” I mutter.

“Girl I met was probably one of the most determined people I’ve ever laid eyes on. Don’t let one thing stop you from fightin’ for what you believe in.”

“Fighting for what I believe in nearly cost me my life,” I point out.

“You went about it wrong.”

I glance at him. “Maybe, but at the time, I knew it mattered, and that’s all I cared about.”

“Does it still matter?”

I think on that for a moment. Does it still matter? The reason I started doing this in the first place, was because I believed someone had wronged an innocent man. Do I still believe that?

I nod. “Yes. It does.”

“Then don’t back down.”

That’s easy for him to say.

“He wants me to get information from Bill. I don’t know how I’m going to do that without being caught.”

“The same way you have gotten all this information.” Fury shrugs. “You go in and you fuckin’ take what you need. No questions asked.”

“Bill works for dangerous people. It’s different now.”

“You’ll find a way.”

We both sit in silence, a few more drinks going down and making everything feel a little better.

As night falls, I know I’m no longer able to drive and I’ll have to get someone to come and get me. Western has come out of the house, and we’re all sitting around the fire now, continuing to drink, Hazel by his side, giving me a look that tells me she isn’t about to move away from it any time soon. Frustration bubbles once more, and I want nothing more than to throw my damned drink at her, but I have more class than that.

“Why is she still here?”

Hazel’s voice comes above the crackle of the fire, and I pin her with a glare. She has been wanting to start a fight since the moment she walked out here. I’ve ignored her, done my best to pretend she isn’t here, but with a woman like Hazel, you don’t just sit back and ignore her. She will make sure you lose it, and she’ll take great joy in it.

“Because they like me more than you,” I say, giving her a salty smile.

She snorts. “I doubt that. It’s me he’s fucking, not you.”

I grin. “Are you sure about that?”

Her eyes flare, Western looks wild with rage, and someone beside me chuckles.

Then she’s up, always looking for a fight.

“What did you say?”

“Sit the fuck down,” Western barks.

“I won’t sit down! Did you fuck her?”

“He did. Right over there on that broken tree,” I point off into the darkness. “Less than a week ago.”

Hazel darts around the fire, Western’s hand just missing her as he tries to stop her. The moment she reaches me, she lunges, her body slamming into mine. The two of us go backward, and I hit the ground with a thump that has my tender ribs screaming in pain. Clawing at my face, Hazel tries to rip my hair out, screaming and cursing. Within seconds, she’s being hauled away from me by Fury, who has an arm around her. Her legs flail as she continues her onslaught of abuse.

“You filthy slut, he’s my husband!”

“Don’t kid yourself, honey,” I mutter, pushing myself off the ground and dusting the dirt from my clothes. “If the circumstances were different, he wouldn’t even look in your direction.”

“Oh really,” she bellows. “Then why is he trying to have a baby with me?”

“Shut the fuck up,” Western roars, causing both of us to immediately simmer down. “Bonnie, get the fuck over here, *now*.”

His voice is icy, angry, and I take a shaky step in his direction. The moment I’m close enough, powerful fingers curl around my upper arm and he’s pulling me away into the darkness, Hazel’s bellowing following us. I’m in trouble, I know it, but I don’t take back what I said. If he wants to be faithful to his wife, then he shouldn’t have slept with me. I get called out for every bad choice I make, it’s his turn.

When we reach the shed, he opens the door, pulling me inside.

The second it slams behind us, he releases me and spins on me, a wild look in his eyes.

“What the fuck sort of game are you playin’ at?”

I cross my arms, my gaze not once wavering. “I’m not playing at anything; I’m simply telling her the truth.”

“You’re tryin’ to cause more drama for my club than you already have.”

I snort. “Don’t flatter yourself. I have better things to do.”

“And yet here you fuckin’ are.”

I purse my lips. “Is it true, what she said?”

He doesn’t even think on his answer. “No it isn’t fuckin’ true. I’m not doin’ shit with her.”

I don’t know why that feels so good, but I almost exhale with relief.

Time to change the subject. I don’t want to talk about Hazel and her lies any longer.

“Why am I in here, Western? We both know how you feel about me, so I’m not certain what you’re looking for right now.”

His gaze rakes my body, and I fidget, unsure how to stand or move.

“Do you know what I fuckin’ do to women who don’t listen?”

I swallow, tipping my head to the side. “Enlighten me.”

It’s the alcohol talking.

I’m so damned weak.

*Run, Bonnie. Don’t stay here.*

“I would make your ass so fuckin’ red you couldn’t sit on it for a week.”

Why does that send thrills up my spine?

The very image of his hand on my ass, slapping me until I scream his name, has my body heating. He must be able to tell, because he takes a step forward, his voice gravelly when he says, “That made your little cunt wet, didn’t it?”

*My word.*

The filth that comes out of his mouth.

It's vulgar, and, yet, I'm more turned on than I'd like to admit.

"Does it matter? You and I, we're through."

"Doesn't mean I can't take a hand to your ass."

I bite my bottom lip. "I'm not the kind of girl to kneel down and do as you tell me."

"We'll see."

He takes another step forward, lashing out and grabbing my arm once more, pulling me toward him until my body slams against his. Gasping, my fingers splay out over his rigid chest muscles as he moves backward until he hits the sofa. He pulls us both down on it, and with the strength and power that far outmatches my own, he flips me and bends me over his knee. Entirely stunned, I gasp and try to squirm, but he's far too strong.

"You know what to say," he growls, lifting my dress.

He knows I'm not going to say it.

I'm turned on, in a big way. His cock, hard beneath my stomach, is so tempting. I want to curl my lips around it, sucking up and down his shaft until he fills my mouth with that delectable milky liquid. I want to hear his groans and grunts of pleasure; I want to torment him the same way he torments me. The way he makes me suffer and desperately beg for more.

*Slap.*

A shocked scream leaves my throat as he runs a rough hand over my bottom before lifting it and bringing it down again.

*Slap.*

My scream turns into what would better resemble a garbled moan, and I close my eyes, trying to stop the aching between my legs.

*Slap.*

I'm moaning now, desperate for him to touch me.

His fingers move between my legs, and he slides one in as his hand lands on my ass once more. I gasp in pleasure, the sensations incredibly overwhelming, and I find myself enjoying them more than I'd like to admit. Curling his finger, he rubs against my g-spot as his hand smooths over my ass, and I know it won't take long until I'm tightening around him, begging for more, wanting to sit on his cock and ride until we both lose control.

In fact, that's exactly what I'm going to do.

I slide forward, his finger slipping from my pussy as I land on my hands and knees to the side of him. I get up and stand before him, my dress pushed up around my waist, my panties down around my knees. I glance down at his cock, bulging in his jeans, and I don't waste a single second reaching for it, unbuttoning him until it springs free. He doesn't stop me—instead, he watches me the entire time, his eyes hooded.

Straddling him, I take his cock in my hand and slowly guide it into my wet, aching depths.

The moment he fills me, I gasp in pleasure and close my eyes, sinking down deeper and deeper. The feeling is overwhelming, the kind I wish I could feel every single day for the rest of my life. I never want to leave this spot, on his lap, his body so close to mine, even if I'm not allowed to touch him.

“I own you.”

His words, gravelly and forceful, have my eyes popping open.

“What?” I whisper, stopping my rocking.

Something about that has my defensive walls rising a little too fast.

It's controlling and, coming from him, a little scary.

“No matter *what*, no matter *how*, you'll *always* come back.”

The response I'm certain he was hoping for isn't the one he gets. I push off him, his cock sliding from inside me and landing against his belly, firm and throbbing, coated in my arousal. His eyes flash, and he reaches for me, but I take a step back. "Is that what you think? That I'm so pathetic I can't move on? That I can't get over you? That no matter what you do or say, I'll come running back?"

He doesn't answer me, his eyes don't even move a single bit.

"Answer me!"

"You're here, aren't you?"

No.

Is he trying to push me away?

Is he trying to make me hate him?

I'm almost certain he is, because he surely wouldn't be saying the things he is if he wasn't trying to send me over the edge with the kind of hate there is no coming back from. His words are crushing, but he knows that. It's why he's saying them. Calmly, I straighten myself up, not showing a single ounce of emotion as I smooth down my dress.

He doesn't move.

As always, he stares at me with those vacant eyes.

I'm so tired of him looking at me like I mean nothing.

"If you want any more of me, then you're going to give all of yourself, otherwise, from now on, we're nothing more than business partners."

I jut my chin out at the end of my sentence and turn, walking out of the shed.

Proud of myself, even just for a moment.

As soon as I'm outside, the cool air hits my skin, and I'm determined to walk out of here with my pride intact. Western might think he has the upper hand, but I'm not going to allow it any longer. I'm getting the hell out of here, and I'm going to

try and heal my heart because damned if that biker takes any more from me.

I take two steps towards the group of people when I hear it, the distinct sound of gunfire.

It comes out of nowhere, echoing through the black night with a popping sound. The kind of sound you never think you'll hear in your life. The kind of sound that makes your skin crawl and your body go into fight or flight, turning into a statue as you try to figure out what the hell is going on.

I can't seem to move, my feet are firmly planted on the ground, even though I know I should run. Eyes darting, I try to see into the distance, and there are bikers running really fast, barking things I can't even seem to make out. A woman screams. Another shot rings out.

What the hell is going on?

"Western!" I finally manage to screech.

Without a second to process, I find myself face first on the ground, dirt covering my face as a hard form flattens me out from behind. Coughing and gasping, I struggle, terrified. Western's low, gravelly voice fills my ears as he growls, "Go in the shed. Lock the door. Do *not* fuckin' come out. Gun beside the bed. Use it if you're in danger."

Gasping in both shock and fear, I nod as he pushes off me.

Without looking back, I crawl toward the shed just as another shot rings out.

What the hell is going on?

Why is someone shooting at the club?



I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I sit there; it could be minutes; it could be hours. My back is pressed against the shed door, my knees are up near my chest, and I'm closing my eyes, trying to drown out the yelling coming from outside. The gunshots stopped, but the chaos hasn't. All I can hear are



bellows of rage, and maybe pain. Is someone hurt? Is Western hurt? It feels as though time is going so slowly, and the panic lodged in my chest is making it hard to concentrate on staying calm.

“Bonnie?”

That’s Mex’s voice.

I quickly scramble to my feet and turn, swinging the shed door open to see Mex, covered in dirt and ... is that blood? He’s looking at me, his eyes full of what would appear to be fear and concern. It’s not the look I was expecting, and I’m terrified to know what it is he’s about to say.

What the hell happened out there tonight?

“Mex?” I say, my voice shaky, my fists clenched into tiny balls. “Please tell me what’s happening?”

“Trader was shot tonight. He didn’t ... he didn’t fuckin’ make it. Night is losing it. Nobody can calm him down. You’re the only option.”

Trader.

I haven’t met him officially, but I know he’s a member of the club. I’ve seen him around, heard of him being spoken about, and know that, regardless, he is family to these guys. My heart breaks and the confusion only deepens.

“Who ... who did this?”

“That doesn’t matter. We got cops swarming, people lingerin’ waitin’ to hear the details, and we’ve got a President who is goin’ to take a match to the clubhouse if he isn’t calmed soon.”

Hesitation fills me, my thoughts swirling.

They want me to calm Western?

Me?

“He ... he won’t let me in, Mex.”

“Please.”

The pain and exhaustion in his voice has me nodding, even though I'm not entirely sure what I've gotten myself into. With shaky legs, I follow him toward the chaos. He's right, flashing blue and red lights alert me to the fact that the police have already made it here, and there are people outside of the clubhouse fence, staring in, some of them reporters. How many men were shot tonight? And by whom?

Reaching the clubhouse, Mex nods inside, and I stare into the open garage doors where Western is currently smashing every single glass on the bar. One by one he lifts them and hauls them into the wall, roaring with anguish every single time he does. I'm afraid—I won't deny it. Western isn't the kind of man to let anyone in, and I don't want him to hurt me. Taking a deep, shaky breath, I gather myself and walk in.

Another glass goes flying, shattering on the ground beside me.

Western's wild gaze pins mine, and he has his hand in the air, ready to throw another glass.

"Put it down," I order, my voice firm but kind. "Now, Western."

He launches the glass, just missing me. I don't flinch, even though my heart feels like it might just leap out of my chest.

"Stop," I say, taking a step forward.

He doesn't stop. Another glass goes flying, this time away from me.

I keep approaching until I'm around the other side of the bar in front of him.

"Stop," I order again.

His eyes dart to mine, and he's panting, a thin layer of sweat coating his skin. My heart breaks for him, it truly feels as though it's tearing in two. I reach out, my fingers trembling, and I place them on his chest. He flinches, and a low growl leaves his lips, but he doesn't push me away.

"Get out of here," he bites out. "I'll hurt you."

"No," I say, stepping up closer, "you won't."

“Get out, Bonnie!” he roars.

“No,” I yell back, firmly. “I’m not leaving. If you want to hurt me, go ahead, but I’m not leaving you here.”

I can feel his heart racing beneath my palm, and as the glass in his hand slips onto the floor and smashes at our feet, I know that he isn’t going to push me away any further. Western isn’t the type to be all affectionate and emotional, so I have to be careful how hard I push. One wrong move and he’ll react like a wounded animal, running for cover. I keep my hand on his chest, but I don’t make any other attempt to touch him.

“I’m going to get you a drink,” I say, carefully.

I remove my hand from his chest and turn, finding a glass that hasn’t been destroyed and pour him a straight whiskey. He takes it when I hand it to him and swallows it in a matter of seconds. I can see that he has a few cuts on his hand, probably from all the glass he’s been tossing around, but otherwise he’s not hurt. I don’t know how many other men were hurt tonight, but I know whatever happened, it is really bad.

“You’re coming with us, Western.”

I glance over my shoulder to see two police officers walking in, their eyes scanning the area, their gazes suspicious. The last thing Western needs right now is to be locked up, and I guarantee that if these officers push him in this state, he’ll flip and do something he regrets. That won’t be good for anyone. “We will answer questions later,” I inform them. “He just lost a friend.”

One officer steps forward, his eyes narrowing. He has a look about him, the kind of look you don’t trust. His eyes are a piercing gray and far too close together. He’s tall, overly skinny, and gives off creeper vibes. I don’t like him, not even a little.

“He’s coming with us, and he’s going to answer them now,” the officer grinds out.

Oh hell no.

Not today, buddy.

I push my shoulders back and walk around the front of the bar, stopping in front of the officer. His name tag informs me his name is Colin. Well, Colin. We're not playing with you today. "He'll come and answer any questions you have later when he's not in shock. If you'd like to push, I'm sure I can find a rule somewhere that states you have no right to bring someone in who is in shock. You either leave, or I'll make a scene that is going to be plastered all over the news by morning. Which do you want?"

Scowling, Colin glares at me. "I know you. You've got quite the name for yourself in this town. You have a lot of enemies, are you sure you'd like some more?"

His little threats don't scare me.

"A few more can't hurt," I say, crossing my arms. "The choice is yours, Colin."

A slow smile spreads across his face. "I've heard you're good at making up stories but you're not so good at keeping yourself safe."

"I don't make them up, I tell the truth. We both know there is plenty for you all to hide. As for my safety, that's not your concern."

The officer steps forward, and Western's voice booms out, echoing through the room. "You fuckin' take one more step in her direction ..."

Their eyes meet, and I hold my breath.

"We're not done here, Western. You *will* speak to us. This isn't over."

The way he says that has my blood running hot. It almost sounds like a threat. I don't trust the officers in this town, and the fact that they got here so quickly is already questionable, let alone the fact that they're so cocky. Whatever they're up to, they're trying to bring the club down with them. I have no proof of that, but my gut is screaming at me that I'm right.

Colin is sketchy, and he most certainly had something to do with the shooting tonight, or at the very least, knows who did.

Turning, Colin nods to the other officer, and they leave. At the door stands Fury, Mex, Viper, and three other bikers, their arms crossed, their eyes on the officers. It might be a crime scene, but they're not about to let them start trampling around the clubhouse.

"You've got a job to do," Fury grinds out, "I suggest you do it. You will not enter the clubhouse again without a warrant."

"Someone was murdered here tonight; you don't think we're just going to let that go, do you?" Colin smirks.

"I fuckin' hope not, because someone out there killed my brother tonight, and I can assure you, there *will* be blood," Fury growls.

Colin tips his head to the side. "Is that a threat?"

Fury steps forward. "It's a fuckin' promise."

Colin keeps moving past the bikers before turning and glancing over his shoulder at Western, a slow grin spreading across his face. Oh, he's bad news alright.

He goes back to the scene, where they're taking away the body of Trader in a black bag. My heart drops, and I swallow down the emotion rushing to the surface. Who would do this, and why? I turn and glance back at Western, who is watching me with an expression I haven't seen from him in weeks. One of admiration and, maybe, just maybe, affection.

Then, he turns and walks out.

I follow him, not wanting to leave his side.

Quietly, we make our way back down to the shed, past the swarms of people and police officers. Fury can handle the situation out there. Right now, Western needs to process what just happened. A shooting death would be a trigger for him, I have no doubt about that, and he needs someone right now. Even if he thinks he doesn't.

He walks straight into the living area and strips off his bloodied clothes. He tosses them to the ground and glances over his shoulder at me, his eyes so broken, before turning and

walking to the shower. I don't know if that was an invitation, but I'm going to take the risk and assume it was. With trembling fingers, I reach for my clothes and begin stripping down until I'm fully naked. Then, I follow him into the shower.

I hope I'm making the right choice.





**H**ot water runs over our bodies, warming even the coldest parts of us.

Western is facing the wall, his hands above his head, his forehead pressed to the tile in the shower. Water trickles down his back, over the bulges of muscle and intricate tattoos. I stand behind him, not entirely sure how to proceed. He doesn't like being touched, but, right now, all I want to do is touch him. With shaky hands, I reach out and place my fingertips on his back. He flinches and turns, his cock already rock hard.

"No," he growls.

I drop my hand.

Everything inside me so desperately wants to put my hands on him, but I can't push him right now.

"Hands by your sides," he grinds out.

I do as he asks, dropping my hands to my sides.

He reaches for me, his fingers tangling in my wet hair and curling until he forms a fist. I gasp as he pulls me closer, his lips only millimeters from mine, his breath hot and heavy against my mouth. Parting my lips slightly, I look up to meet his eyes. I want his mouth on mine, more than I want anything else in the world right now. Chest rising and falling, I hold his gaze, unsure what he's going to do next.

His heavy pants blow air against my lips, and it feels as though the world stops when he finally brings his down over mine. The kiss is hard and fueled by the kind of emotion I couldn't possibly understand. It's hungry, it's desperate, and it's him screaming for comfort in the only way he knows how. I moan against his mouth as he parts my lips with his tongue, deepening the kiss until my body aches for him.



I want so much more, but, tonight, I'm letting him take the lead.

I'm just here for the ride.

Western kisses me until my lips burn, the kind of kiss he's never given me before. It's deep, and it's meaningful. It's full of the kind of emotions he's too scared to show, so he's giving it to me in a different way. I'll take it, no matter what way he gives it. I'm in love with this man, and this moment, right here, only solidifies that.

After minutes of the most intense make-out session I've had in my life, Western pulls away, his forehead pressing to mine. I open my eyes, staring at his wounded face as water pours down around us. He has his eyes closed, but even then, I can see how much he's hurting. These men, they're the only family he has. They're his entire life. Losing one, for him, would be like losing a little piece of himself. Scanning his face, my heart aches, and my fingers itch to comfort him.

I watch as a lone tear slides down his cheek.

If you blink, you'd miss it.

But it's not water. No. The water isn't running down his face.

It's a tear.

He's crying.

I make a pained noise, unable to stop it.

The moment it leaves my lips, I close my eyes, knowing he'll open his. If he knows I saw that, he'll push me away harder than I've ever been pushed before.

Pulling back from me, his body leaves mine, and I'm left desperately wanting to cling to him and bring him back. I open my eyes and watch as he turns the water off and gets out. I follow him, silently, and he hands me a towel. We dry off and walk back out into the main living area, where he drops that towel and begins getting dressed.

He's leaving again.

Of course he is ... This is his club.

“Got to go,” he murmurs, pulling on a pair of jeans. “Don’t leave.”

I hesitate, not entirely sure what “don’t leave” means.

“Okay,” I say, softly.

He glances at me. “Sleep. I’ll be back.”

He wants me to stay?

With him?

Here?

My heart swells, but I give him a simple nod.

He walks to the door once he’s pulled his shirt on and has slid his jacket back over his shoulders. When he reaches it, he turns and looks at me. “What you did tonight ... It won’t be forgotten.”

With that, he’s gone.

Did we just turn a corner?

I stand, entirely naked, for a few moments just processing what happened tonight. Not only did Western lose someone he cares about, but the police have more to do with it than people think. I dress myself and go into the kitchen to make a cup of tea. My phone rings just as I’ve finished boiling the water. I walk over, glancing down at the number, and I know exactly who it is.

Bill.

Exhaling, and knowing I have to keep this act going, I answer it.

“Yes?”

“I heard there was a death at the club tonight. Shame.”

I have no doubt in my mind that they’re all working for the same person. Bill knew this was coming. His little act doesn’t fool anyone.

“Did you have a hand in this?”

“Would it matter if I did? You work for me, remember?”

I grind my teeth.

“Did you call to gloat or do you need something?”

“I need something. The club is busy right now, which means everything is yours for the taking. I know you’re still there. Go into that main office, I want information. I want to know what the club knows. Now is your chance to find that without being caught. I expect an answer within the hour.”

He hangs up, not giving me a chance to say anything more.

Closing my eyes, a long exhale leaves my lips.

So much for staying here and waiting for my wounded warrior to return.

I drink my tea, run my fingers through my damp hair, and then make my way out of the shed and down to the clubhouse. Everyone is standing in a circle in the middle of the open garage, discussing something. I can’t help but notice they’ve got guns shoved in the backs of their jeans. They’re going out, and they’re going hunting. Hunting for the person who took Trader’s life. It’s Colt who notices me first, and his eyes flare.

“I’m not here to listen in,” I say, and everyone turns to stare at me, a line of empty bikers’ eyes pinning me to the spot, “but Bill is demanding I sneak in and get information while you’re all busy. I know it’s not the time, and I’m sorry, but he’s given me an hour.”

Western looks like he wants to go and hunt Bill down right now and crush him with his bare hands, but, instead, he answers me in a gruff voice. “Tell him you found some papers givin’ a location, and on that paper, was a name. He’ll go on the hunt, might even give him a lead, but it won’t be enough to ever fuckin’ get near this club.”

Swallowing, I nod, pulling out my phone to write it down.

“Hit me.”

Western rattles off a location, a name and some other information about a safety deposit box. I write it all down, and then nod. “I’m sorry to have interrupted.”

“Heard you defended my boy tonight,” Colt calls as I turn to walk away.

I pause, looking back at him.

“Those police officers are just as much in on this as Bill. I have no doubt they are behind this attack. I wasn’t going to let them take him anywhere.”

Colt’s face softens, just a touch. That’s hard going, considering he always looks terrifying.

“Appreciate it.”

Warmth floods me, but I simply nod and turn, walking off into the darkness to give Bill his false information.

I can’t help but wonder, though ...

Where does this information lead?

How is the club involved?

And am I willing to find out?



*THE TIGHTENING AROUND my throat has the air from my lungs unable to escape. Fighting, I attempt to push away the heavy hands around my neck, stopping the life from being drawn into my body. Desperately clawing, darkness threatens to take over as I croakily scream out, wanting him to stop, to let me go. My screams break off into garbled gasps as little by little, the word disappears from me.*

I’m screaming.

I don’t realize it until I come to and reality slowly trickles back in. What I thought was a nightmare, isn’t. I’m lying in bed, a bed I came back to and fell asleep on last night, and there are hands around my throat, squeezing so hard that my vision blurs and patches of dark and light dance before me.

He’s strangling me.

“Western!” I scream, my voice garbled and broken.

I kick and squirm, clawing at his hands, trying to pull them off me, but he's too strong, too big.

"Western!" I wail again gasping as the air begins to rapidly run out.

I'm going to die if he doesn't stop.

Second by second, my life is fading from me. Soon, I'll black out and I might not wake up. Desperate and frantic, I do the only thing I can think of. I bring my knee up and slam him in the groin. He jerks, bellows, and then suddenly the pressure from around my neck releases and he topples off me. I turn, scrambling off the bed, tears rolling down my cheeks as my feet hit the floor. My vision blurs and, before I know it, I'm on the ground, my head spinning. The air isn't coming back into my body fast enough.

Gasping, I bring my hands to my neck and sob as the situation sinks in.

He nearly killed me.

The light flicks on, and my eyes meet his. He's kneeling on the bed, the look on his face something I could never explain even if I tried. It's a mix of pure horror, fear, and shock. He wasn't awake. It's only in this moment that I realize that. He was strangling me, but he wasn't awake.

Moving like lightning, he launches off the bed toward me.

Automatically, I scramble backward, my eyes flaring with fear.

My neck throbs, my lungs burn, and my heart is pounding against my chest.

Pausing, he stands before me, not daring to take another step.

"Bonnie," he grinds out.

I bring a hand to my mouth to stop the agonized sob, but it's no use, it comes out anyway, echoing through the room. He looks like he's been punched, like the world is just crumbling down around him.

“I didn’t ...”

I know he didn’t mean it. I know that.

But the pain inside me is irrational—I can’t make sense of it.

I’m afraid, even though I know I shouldn’t be.

He takes another step, and I put my hands up, my fingers trembling. “Please no.”

“I won’t hurt you.”

His voice is so broken, so horribly pained, that it breaks my heart into a thousand tiny pieces, but I just need to breathe. I need air. I need to go, right now.

“I know,” I say quickly. “I know. I know. I just ... I’m sorry.”

I rush toward my purse and lift it, rushing out the door as I reach in to pull out my keys. Western yells my name, but I don’t stop. I pick up into a run as I reach the front gates, and the two men standing guard by them for the night narrow their eyes as I get closer. One of those men is Fury, and I know that they’re waiting for the shooter to return or for more chaos to unfold. What they’re not expecting is to see a woman running toward them, tears rolling down her face, harsh sobs being torn from her throat.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Fury says, stepping in front of me, putting his hands up in front of him. “Slow down. What’s goin’ ...”

His eyes drop to my neck. Even in the light that they’re standing under, he can see the marks that are already forming. Western nearly killed me in there tonight, his grip was stronger than anything I’ve ever experienced in my life. It’s going to leave a mark that will be nearly impossible to hide. Fury’s eyes flash and his head whips up toward Western who is approaching, still barking my name.

“What the fuck did you do?” Fury roars, lunging toward him.

“No,” I cry out. “No, Fury, he was asleep.”

He comes to a stop, panting with rage, and the two men stand, face to face. “Back down,” Western snarls. “Now.”

Fury does as he’s asked, and he turns to look at me once more.

“I’m sorry, I have to go,” I manage, before shoving through the gates and rushing toward my car.

I don’t look back, even as they both call out my name.

I get in my car, and I get the hell out of there.

I cry the entire way home, big heaving sobs. Memories continue to swirl in my mind, and even though I know he didn’t mean it, I also know I need a minute to process the way I’m feeling right now. I don’t have a reason to be scared, and yet I am. I’m scared of his strength, his pain, but mostly, I’m scared of his demons. He could have killed me tonight. That’s the cold hard reality of it.

I can’t stop that thought from repeating over and over in my head.

By the time I arrive home, I’m an absolute mess.

I was warned, so many times, not to get involved with Western.

I was so confident, so sure of myself, that I never once considered the situation I was putting myself—and my heart—into.

Making my way into my house, I go to the bathroom and flick on the light. Before me stands a woman I don’t recognize. My eyes are red and glassy, my skin is blotchy and red, and my face is swollen. It’s my neck, though, that brings a new wave of emotion to the surface. The dark, angry red marks in the perfect shape of his fingers. Reaching up to run my hand over it, I clench my eyes shut, horror washing over me.

What am I doing?

What the hell am I doing?

I could just leave, pack it all up and go like the other reporter did. Change my name, make a new life for myself, and move on. There is nothing keeping me here, not really, and yet even as I have that thought, I know I won't do it. I won't leave him. Am I broken? Am I so attached that I'm refusing to see what's right in front of me? Backing out of the bathroom, I turn off the light and ignore my phone ringing over and over as I go to my room, flicking the covers back.

I crawl into bed, pulling them over my head.

Here, for just a moment, I don't feel like the world is crashing down around me.

Just for a moment.







I'm avoiding him.

I know I shouldn't be; I know I have to talk to him, but right now I need to occupy my mind with something else, anything else.

So, I did a whole lot of digging, and begging Nathan, and managed to find out where the last reporter, Georgina Thomas, moved. She never released her findings—the moment Bill got word that she was looking into him, he basically threatened her to leave town otherwise she would pay. She did as he asked, dropping the story and moving away. She's smart, probably smarter than me.

Still, she might know something I don't.

She might have something that can help.

I found out she works two towns over as an editor for a magazine. I called her, and, surprisingly, she agreed to meet with me.

So, I got in my car and drove three hours to meet up with her at a local café.

From the moment she walks in, I can see she's not pulling punches. She walks with confidence, the kind of confidence you don't mess with. Nathan told me she is a shark, and now I'm looking at her, I can see that. Her blond hair is pulled back into a bun, and she's wearing a pantsuit that makes her look that much more powerful. Her face is free of lines and blemishes, and she has the prettiest green eyes. She's beautiful, but she's also a raging bitch.

I haven't met her yet, but I could almost bet you wouldn't want to get on her bad side.

"You must be the girl everyone is talking about," she says, when she approaches the table.

“That would be me,” I say, standing and extending my hand. “I’m Bonnie.”

“Georgina, but you already know that. I’ll give it to you, Bonnie, you’ve got balls.”

I don’t know if I should laugh or cry at that comment.

“Yes, well, it has gotten me into a great deal of trouble. Please, sit.”

She sits down across from me, and we both order a coffee. She briefly tells me about her new job, and then we get to the nitty gritty of it all. I want the information she has, if any. I’m running out of options fast, and nobody wants to talk to me. Everyone is afraid I’ll share it with the world. When I walk down the street now, I know people are talking. They stop me, asking questions, sometimes they even get angry. It’s not always fun.

“I’m going to make a guess that you called me here because you want to know what I found out that had Bill and his team of merry men running me out of town?”

She speaks as though she’s merely talking about a recipe she baked last night, not something that could have very nearly cost her her life.

“If you’re willing to share.”

“I’ll share, but I have to conditions. One, you never mention my name to anyone, and two, you do not report this in any sort of paper or magazine.”

“Trust me, I won’t be reporting on this story any further, but I do want to get to the bottom of it. It’s safe to say Bill has me right where he wants me, and if I don’t find a way out, I’ll be his slave for the rest of my life.”

“Fuck Bill, he’s an evil son-of-a-bitch. I’d love nothing more than to see him dragged down, which is basically the only reason I’m here.”

“I get that,” I mutter.

“Judging by the article I read of yours, you found out most of what I did, except for two things. The first, Daniel figured

out what Bill was doing. He had been working for him, and he attempted to have him caught. He was killed for it. The second is that the little club you're so obsessed with, is in on it, too."

The last part shocks me. I reel back and shake my head, confused. "No, the two of them can't stand each other."

"Bill doesn't know the club is in on it, he only has suspicions. I never said they were working together, but there is a lot of money to be made, doing what they're doing, and the club is taking their business, getting in before them, selling the boys before Bill can get his hands on them. It's frustrating the shit out of them, because they don't know what's going wrong, but they have their suspicions. Let me guess, Bill wants you to find out just how much the club knows?"

I nod, staring at her, entirely stunned.

There must be something we're missing here, because there is no way Western would be selling children for profit, not after what happened to him. I refuse to believe it's true.

"I can tell by your face you don't believe me. Which is why I brought proof."

She reaches into her purse and pulls out a folded-up piece of paper. She hands it to me, and for a moment, I hesitate. Do I truly want to see what's on this paper? Because I know that it could change everything, and I've been through so much lately. Yet, at the same time, I'm committed to getting the truth and if this is the only way I can do that ...

I take the paper.

I unfold it and stare down at a black and white picture from what looks like a security camera. In the picture, I can see Western with his hand on a young boy's shoulder, the boy is maybe thirteen or fourteen, it's hard to see his face, but I can tell he has blonde hair. Western has a phone to his ear and seems to be alone. That could be anyone, he could be related to that boy for all I know.

"That could be anyone," I say.

She nods. "It would be so much easier to believe that, wouldn't it?"

She pulls out another picture from her purse. This one is in color and is of a blond-haired boy, around the same age, very similar looking. It's a missing poster, and my heart sinks as my eyes dart from one picture to the other, begging it not to be real.

“That’s Riley Green. He went missing about two years ago. That is the boy in the security footage. Western was the last person to be seen with him. If you can explain that away, then I’m all ears, but I’m certain you can’t. That wasn’t the only thing I found out about the club. They’ve been linked to multiple situations involving kids, and they’ve also been seen with their families. I heard a rumor that the families were being paid a lot of money to hand the boys over without fuss and to keep their mouths shut. I could be wrong, but it does seem no one in this town is pushing for their safe return. Ever wonder why that is?”

My mind is spinning.

This is too much to process. I don’t know how I’m supposed to make sense of any of this. If what she’s showing me is correct, then the club are as evil as the men I’m trying to run from. I could be helping the enemy.

“Bill?” I manage to grind out. “He’s doing this, too?”

“Bill is working for someone who works on a much bigger scale. If you begin investigating, you’ll see this isn’t the only town with foster kids going missing. Bill is the person in charge of this town, but he’s working for someone. My guess is the club got wind of the amount of money they were making and wanted in. Now there’s somewhat of a war.”

It makes sense, that’s the part that scares me the most.

*It. Makes. Sense.*

Bill is desperate for me to find out what the club is doing, and the club is using me to keep Bill off their backs. Why would they need me to do that if they weren’t hiding something? Is the man I’ve fallen in love with a true, cold monster? Are the things I’ve been seeing actually the real

person inside, and I've just been denying it this whole time? Am I the naïve one here, being used by people to win a war?

My heart is racing, and a cold sheen of sweat coats my forehead as I try to gather my thoughts.

“Look, I didn't mean to ruin your day, but you wanted the truth ...”

I look up at Georgina, nodding weakly. “I know, I just ...”

“Didn't expect that there was so much evil in this world? I thought the same, turns out there is. If you're smart, you'll let this one go, and get the hell out of here. The moment they're finished with you, they're going to make sure you don't talk. It's not worth your life.”

“Daniel was killed because he found out,” I whisper, “or because they wanted to sell Braithe.”

“Both,” Georgina explains. “They offered him money to sell Braithe, and he went along with it purely to get information to bring them down. They got wind of it and killed him. He was trying to save these kids; he was trying to stop them.”

I want to scream, because all of this has been right in front of me the entire time, and I haven't been able to see it. This has been going on for so long, and the number of lives impacted has got to be so damned many. If this isn't the only town, then these people are making millions doing what they're doing. They're taking kids who have a hard go at life already and using it to their advantage. They're the coldest of the cold, the most heartless monsters there are.

“Nobody else has tried to stop this since?”

Georgina nods. “Oh, I'm sure they have, but they've disappeared without a trace. The only reason Western's name is so big is because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and so they took the opportunity to use him. If he wasn't there, Daniel and Braithe would have just been another case of ‘missing people’.”

This is too much.

I feel physically sick.

“Look, I have to go,” Georgina says, giving me a slightly sympathetic look. “Listen to my advice, stay away from this. Judging by the fact that you’re wearing a scarf on a horribly hot day tells me you’ve already come into some bad luck. Don’t let that bad luck turn into a grave.”

With that, she leaves me sitting in shock.

I can’t move, my mind is spinning.

*What the hell am I supposed to do now?*



I’M TRYING TO BE SUBTLE as I follow the teenage boy down the street.

Everyone has seen his face all over the news – Corbin. The boy who returned after going missing. He is the talk of the town, but it doesn’t seem to bother him as he strolls the main street, his eyes scanning the crowd. He is seventeen now, but I’m not one hundred percent sure what age he was taken. He has been questioned and has chosen to live on his own and not with a foster family. I can’t say I blame him. His face has been plastered all over the news, but he is holding his head high.

When he rounds a corner into a quiet street, I pick up the pace and call out his name, just praying he’ll talk to me.

I’m certain he is approached multiple times a day, so I’m not certain he’s going to even hear me out, but I’m going to do my best.

“Corbin?” I call.

He pauses, his shoulders seeming to slump just a little. He glances over his shoulder at me, and his eyes widen a touch.

Oh, so he knows who I am.

“I don’t want a story written about me.”

His voice is scratchy, and he has scars on his face, scars that I know have come from a very bad place. Beneath his cloudy green eyes, his cheeks lay sunken. He looks like he’s

hard a really hard time, and the exhaustion is the kind that will never leave. I feel for him, I can't even imagine what he has endured.

"I'm not here to write a story; I honestly just want to ask one question. I know you have heard of me, so you know how invested in this case I am. Can I have one minute?"

He studies me, then turns a little more. "One minute. I can't promise I'll answer you."

"That's okay," I say, rushing closer and stopping in front of him. "I know what's going on with the kids in this town, and I have a strong suspicion of who is doing it. I just want to know if you remember who sent you away?"

He shakes his head. "No. Like I told the police, one minute I'm walking to school, the next I'm waking up as someone's fucking slave."

My heart breaks.

So they're being drugged and kept drugged until they're in a different state? Country? Either way, whoever is doing it is making sure they're not seen or heard.

"I understand. I'm so sorry to be asking. Do you happen to know how you were returned?"

His eyes dart to the left before he answers, and I know he's about to lie to me.

"I don't know. Same thing happened. Woke up here, back where I was taken."

He's not telling me the truth.

"Look, I get it okay, you're not wanting anymore involvement in this than you already have. I understand that. But I need to know the truth. Please. Can you just give me something?"

His eyes narrow and he glances around. "All I'll say is that I was saved and returned. I have been given protection, provided I don't say a word. I'm never going to speak, because my life means more to me. Tomorrow, I'm leaving this town, and I'm never looking back."



“Someone saved you?”

“I’m done talking.”

He turns and begins walking away again.

“Corbin, wait,” I say, rushing behind him. “Why you?”

He pauses and glances over his shoulder at me. “My foster parents weren’t paid off, that’s why. They weren’t going to stop.”

Then, he disappears around the corner.

I’m so damned confused, and yet, at the same time, things seem to be coming together. From what I can gather, some of the families are being paid off – given money to not say a thing when their kids go missing. Of course, they report it, they’re legally required to, but they don’t search. I spent hours last night reading the cases, and there are a few where the families have remained quiet after the initial report. I wrote all the names down. I could only find a few cases of families who really went above and beyond to find their kid – Corbin’s family was one of them.

But who would go searching for Corbin and have him returned, and why?

Was the family getting too close to the truth, so they returned him to shut them up and had him stay quiet for his own safety? After what he has endured, it wouldn’t surprise me that he would be willing to say just about anything not to go back. He is easily manipulated, and he is going to do as he’s told. I make a note to talk to his family, if they’ll listen. I am curious to know just how close they got to figuring all this out.

Turning, I walk out of the alley and make my way down the main street.

I’m just about to stop at a regular café I go to when I notice a newspaper stand. Frowning, I see a familiar face on the cover, and I rush over, lifting it up. Bill’s face is on the front page with the words ‘*Bill Whart speaks out after allegations of murder.*’

No.

Frantically, I flip to the story and begin to read.

Bill goes on about how he was framed by the club, and that he would never take the life of a man, let alone a young boy. He tells of his good deeds around town, and how he has done nothing but help the local people. He is innocent of the crime, and police have evidence and proof that Western killed Daniel and Braithe, and that the club is behind any missing persons cases in or around the area.

Bill is declaring war with his words, and he knows it.

He is making people second guess; he is bringing Western back into the spotlight to a town that already hates him. He knows his tactic will work, if he comes out looking even better, then the club will just become more of a problem for town folk.

I put the newspaper down and turn, deciding against stopping at the café.

I have to work tonight, and, before then, I need to clear my head.

I've been overloaded with information, and the fact that I'm completely avoiding Western and the club won't fly too much longer. He's going to get frustrated soon, and they'll track me down. I don't know how I'm going to face him after what happened. That was bad enough, but adding in the fact that I'm being given more and more proof that the club is involved in this horrible crime, makes it that much worse.

Leo has been trying to contact me constantly, and I know I'm being a bad friend. I told him I'm just busy but okay, and that, too, won't fly for much longer.

For now, I just need to focus on getting through tonight.

Then I can worry about what comes next.

Even if that upends everything I've finally pieced back together again.





“Can you run out the back and grab a few more bottles of alcohol?” Luna asks me later that night as the club is pumping.

It’s going to be a busy night, and we’re already powering through alcohol quickly. Nodding, I do as she asks, and rush out back. I get a few bottles that have run out, and make my way back out, stacking them on the shelves behind the bar. I serve a few customers and begin washing a few glasses when I catch a familiar face in the corner of my eye, one that wasn’t there a few minutes ago.

As if I’m being taken back to months ago, to the place I first saw him, I focus on the man sitting at the end of the bar, a glass of whiskey in front of him. Instead of looking down at that glass, he’s looking right at me. I haven’t seen Western in here since my article came out, and I sure wasn’t expecting him. He looks just like he did the first time I saw him, and I can’t stop my heart from automatically fluttering as I lay eyes on him.

I can’t help it.

There is something about him that sparks a desire deep within me, and even though I can fight it, it doesn’t mean it won’t linger there, probably for the rest of my life.

Western has a hold on me, but I have to stop it before I am unable to escape.

Luna comes up beside me and leans in close. “He just came in. Sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” I say, dragging my gaze away from Western’s and getting back to work.

He can sit there all night, but that doesn’t mean I have to go over there. Instead, I keep myself busy, serving and

cleaning, for hours. I let Luna serve him, and she does so without question. When the night quiets down, I know I can't avoid him any longer. He will sit there until this place closes then follow me to my car; of that, I'm sure. I am exhausted. I want to go home and sleep, so I guess it's best to face this now. Throwing my towel down after wiping the bar, I walk over to where he sits, stopping in front of him.

His eyes slowly lift until they're locked with mine.

There was a time I couldn't get him to look at me, to talk to me, and now he's here ... waiting for me to be the one to talk.

How the tables have turned.

"If you're here to demand something of me, I'm going to turn around and leave," I say to him. "I'm tired, and I don't want to get into anything tonight."

"I'm not leavin' until you speak to me."

"Can we not do this now?" I grind out. "I'm keeping my distance for a reason, Western."

"I'm not," he drags out, "*leavin'* ... until you speak to me."

I let out a low growl and then exhale loudly. "Say what you want to say so I can go home."

"Didn't mean to hurt you, Bonnie."

Those words send a little jolt through me, and I have no doubt he notices as I jerk slightly in front of him. Every single time I close my eyes, I relive that moment. I don't blame him for that—after all, he wasn't even awake—but it made me see something in him that I was avoiding for so long. He's damaged, the kind of broken there might not be a fix for. I don't know if I want to spend the rest of my life attempting to repair him.

"I know you didn't mean to," I say, my eyes avoiding his, "but *you did*."

His eyes flash. "Lost a brother, it was a hard night. Never had somethin' like that happen before, and it won't happen

again.”

“You can’t be sure of that,” I point out. “You can’t promise that when you fall asleep, your demons won’t raise their ugly heads. I could have died, Western. Do you understand that?”

“Bonnie ...”

“Look, you and I both know that you don’t want anything from me, so what does it matter if I step away from this? You have made it clear how you feel. You’ve been making it clear since that stupid article came out. You don’t want me in your life, so why are you here?”

He doesn’t answer me, his intense gaze just remains firmly fixed on my face.

Western doesn’t have to speak for you to be able to read his thoughts. He has that gift. He knows that I know what he’s thinking. He’s thinking that he isn’t going to back away from this any time soon, and that he’s not going to just let me walk away. There is a determination in his eyes that tells me I’m not going anywhere. I can’t have that. Not when he’s very likely the person causing so much chaos in this town.

I could confront him about it, but then all my chances of digging deeper would cave.

I need to keep what I know to myself ... for now.

“I’m here to get information for you,” I finally say, when his silence lingers. “If I didn’t offer my services up, you wouldn’t be sitting here right now. Let’s stop playing games and accept reality. We’re done here. You and I both know it.”

“No,” he says, pushing back his stool and standing, “we’re not done. We’ll be done when I say we’re fuckin’ done.”

With that, he turns and walks through the crowd, disappearing.

God damn him.

I want to scream in frustration. The nerve of him, to think he can just choose how my life goes. Why does he always get to have the last say? Why does he get to make the choices? I’m the one he didn’t want a single thing to do with only

weeks ago, and now that I'm changing my mind, he has decided that he wants to what? Try it again? There is no way we can make this work, even if deep down in my heart that thought hurts.

I have to think about the kids in the town that he could be involved in making go missing.

I have to consider that the man I thought I knew was exactly who he said he was all along. He warned me, he told me he wasn't a good person, and I refused to believe it. Can I truly blame him for something he was always scarily honest about? Or do I blame my own determination for chasing him down even when he didn't want it.

This is exactly what I was warned would happen.

Angrily, I finish up my shift and head home.

I want to sleep.

I want all of this to go away.

Maybe Georgina was right, maybe I should just step away from all of this while I still can. Bill has his little article out now; the town will believe him and things will go back to normal. They don't need me to fight their little war, what they need is for me to disappear so I'm no longer tangled amongst this mess.

Yet, even thinking that, I feel everything inside me pushing against the idea.

Leaving means never getting answers for those boys.

Leaving means that whatever sick illegal business that has been running through this town for decades will continue.

Leaving means I'm taking the easy way out.

I've never been one to take the easy way.

I'm not about to start now.



“YOU OKAY?” LEO ASKS, narrowing his eyes as I make my coffee a week later.

I’m about to go into the club after being called in by Colt. I’ve managed to successfully avoid it since the last time I saw Western, but that has come to an end. I can’t give up now, I’m going to find out what’s going on here, but I needed time and space to get myself past what was going down between the two of us.

“Yeah, why is that?”

“You look ... unwell.”

I have been feeling sick the last few days, but that’s no surprise considering the stress I’ve been under. Things have been hard, to say the least, and I’m not getting any sleep. Luna was away sick last night at the club, so I’m probably catching what she had. I’m sure it’ll pass soon, but it’s the last thing I need right now.

“Just a bug, I think. I’ll be okay. I have to go to the club now, but can we catch up later? I enjoyed you being here last night.”

Leo came by last night and we watched a movie, had pizza, and he allowed me to have the first comfortable sleep I’ve had in weeks. I kind of don’t want him to leave because he brought me a comfort I was so desperately seeking. He has a life, though, and I’ve already caused more than enough stress for him in the last few months.

“I can’t tonight, I’ve got a date.”

I raise my brows. “A date? Like, an actual date?”

He grins. “Yeah, an actual date. I like this one.”

“Why are you just telling me this now?”

“You’ve had a lot going on.”

I punch his arm, and he groans. “Ow!”

“You tell me when you’ve got things going on,” I instruct, crossing my arms. “Now tell me about this date. What



happened to the last girl who was claiming she was pregnant? Don't tell me I was right about that."

He chuckles. "You were right, so right. Anyway, this one ... I actually like. I mean, I haven't once tried to get in her pants. We've been hanging out, and I'm liking the time with her. Like, really liking it."

"Aw, Leo is falling in love," I tease.

He flips me the bird. "I don't think so, but it is nice having someone that I actually want to spend time with."

"I'm happy for you. I'd like to meet the girl who has the potential to take your heart, considering I kind of like to think I own some of it."

He steps forward, grinning, and pulls me in for a hug. "You've got a good 2% of it."

I giggle and shove him back. "You're a bully."

He leans in, kissing my forehead. "You're my best girl. I've got to run. I'll call you later."

Leaving the kitchen, I watch him go with a smile on my face.

I get myself ready and make my way over to the club. I spend the entire drive attempting to build up my confidence, in hopes that I don't come across as the broken wreck I actually feel like inside. Parking my car, I climb out and walk through the front gates, greeting the two bikers standing by it. They've upped the security since the shooting, and still, I don't know what it was about. The club doesn't share anything that's going on, but there is always something.

I enter the main house and greet a few people as I move down the hall and toward the office where Colt asked me to meet them. I knock on the door, and, a few seconds later, Fury answers. He gives me a small smile, and his eyes move to my neck. The marks have faded, but I know he's thinking about it. Aren't we all?

"Hey, Fury," I say, giving him a weak grin.

"How are you, Bon?"

“I’m alive,” I answer him. It’s sarcastic ... kind of.

He pushes the door open and lets me inside. I walk into the office where Western and Colt are both waiting. I avoid Western’s gaze, and instead stare at his dad. Colt zeroes in on me and gives me a small nod. His expression is far less angry that it has been, which I’m guessing means he got news of Western’s little strangling event.

“What can I help you with?” I ask, crossing my arms, not in a defensive way, just in a way that makes me feel safe.

“You know about Bill’s little article, by now the whole town does, but what you don’t know is the problems it is causin’ the club. We have heat on us now, the kind of heat we don’t need. Need you to get proof, so we can take this fucker down once and for all.”

They want me to get proof to take him down, when they’re doing the very same thing? Is it so the heat will leave them and they can then have the business all to themselves?

“What exactly do you need?” I ask anyway, not letting on that I know far more than they think.

“We need you to follow him to his next sale and get the proof we need to bring him down.”

I shake my head. “You can’t be serious?”

“I’m dead fuckin’ serious,” Colt answers, his face blank.

“First of all, how the hell do you think I’ll get that information? And second, how the hell do you think I can pull off following him?”

“We’ll get you the information. We got a guy.”

I shake my head. “Then, if you have a guy, why the hell don’t you follow him?”

“He’s got fuckin’ eyes on us, Bon,” Fury answers before Colt can. “He’ll know if we’re followin’ him.”

“Oh, and he won’t notice me?”

“He won’t be expectin’ you, so in that case, he won’t be lookin’,” Colt answers, as if it is that simple.

“Oh okay, well if that’s all ...” I mutter.

“You either want our protection or you don’t,” Colt growls.

“Some protection that’s turning out to be.”

Western’s eyes flash. He still hasn’t spoken this entire time.

“You’re not gettin’ hunted down by Bill Whart because we agreed to help you. Things could be a lot fuckin’ worse for you. Now, are you goin’ to do as we ask, or are you goin’ back out there on your own? Either way is fuckin’ fine with me.”

Colt’s words are harsh.

In situations like these, Colt doesn’t pull any punches. He gets shit done, and he really doesn’t care who he puts in the way of that. I mean nothing to him; as far as he’s concerned, he’s willing to throw me under the bus to get his club back on track.

It hurts, more than I’m willing to admit.

“What proof, exactly, do you need from me?”

“Simple, you go to the meeting point where he’ll hand over the boy, and you take photos. The moment that boy is reported missing, we release those photos. Ain’t no comin’ back from that.”

“This boy ... Is someone going to make sure he doesn’t actually go missing?” I ask, scanning the three faces in the room.

“That’s not your concern,” Western finally speaks.

My eyes whip to him. “Actually, it is. I’m not going to watch an innocent life forever damaged. If you want my help, I want you to promise that boy won’t be hurt.”

Western glares at me, his gaze intense. “Fine. You have my word.”

Even as he says those words, I don’t feel the kind of comfort I’d like.

“I’m sure you know by now that Bill is working for people far higher up, including police officers. Do you really think they won’t just make this go away?” I question, my eyes moving back to Colt.

“He isn’t the only one with police on his side. You don’t need to worry about that, what you need to worry about is gettin’ what we’re askin’. You get it, you’re free.”

Those words have something in my heart tugging, creating the kind of pain inside me that I wish would go away. I know what’s going on here, I know how this will end, and yet the idea of never seeing Western again still hurts. The idea of this being the last thing we do together, still hurts. I hate that more than working for Bill, because it’s a feeling I can’t control. I want it to go away. I don’t want to love him. But I do.

I can only pray that time will make that stop.

“Tell me where and when, and I’ll get your proof,” I say, my voice tired.

“We’ll be in touch. Have you heard anything more from Bill?”

“No,” I say. “I gave him the information you sent, and he’s obviously looking into it because he hasn’t contacted me.”

“Good, keep him chasin’ his fuckin’ tail a little longer. Works better for us.”

“Can I leave now?” I ask.

“No,” Western says. “We’re goin’ to talk.”

Wonderful.

I can’t fucking wait.





“**W**hat is it you want to talk about? Because I’m busy,” I mumble, standing at the shed door, refusing to enter any farther in fear of the danger I might encounter.

That danger being me falling on Western because I’m weak.

The way he’s standing there, those jeans hugging that thick cock, that shirt stretched across his broad chest, his arms bulging, his jaw ....

I need to snap out of it.

He is a bad man.

My obsession with him has to end.

I have to remind myself of all the things he’s capable of.

Why is he walking toward me?

Why are his eyes hooded like he’s about to pounce?

*Oh. God.*

“I’m on my period,” I blurt.

What a pathetic lie. I haven’t got my period. Actually, come to think of it, I should be getting it any day. I make a mental note to check, because it’s usually always on time. It’s possible I’ve got my days mixed up.

“You’re a bad liar.”

Western’s voice comes out gravelly and dangerous.

“Seriously, Western, I can’t ...”

He stops in front of me, his big body pressing against mine, forcing me back into the wall. I breathe him in, and my

heart begins to race. I can't do this. I can't. So why the hell am I not pushing him away?

Because he feels so good.

Like a twisted comfort.

His body pressing against mine makes me feel almost safe, and I know that isn't reality.

He's dangerous, so why the hell am I craving him so much?

*Come on, Bonnie. You're stronger than this.*

"Can't what?" he murmurs, his voice low and husky. "You know what you have to say to make me stop."

I must look so weak.

*Just say the one word, Bonnie. Say stop and he'll back off.*

Just say it.

One tiny word.

God, he's running his finger down my cleavage. I close my eyes, my breathing rapidly rising and falling.

*Come on. Bonnie. Come on.*

"I'm done bein' ignored."

"If you're going to punish me, don't," I say, my voice low as I open my eyes and look up at him. "This time, you're in the wrong."

"No punishment, not today. Today, I'm goin' to remind you who I am."

I'm not entirely sure if I should be scared or excited.

One thing is for certain, I should be walking out that door.

Maybe just one more time. Just one more moment. Just one more memory.

Who am I kidding?

I'm losing it.

This is unhealthy.

This isn't how it should be.

“Please don't,” I say, swallowing as his finger trails up and over my bottom lip. “I can't tell you to stop, but I need you to.”

“If you need me to, you would ask,” he growls, gripping my chin and tipping my head back.

Him being this close, it's doing things to me. Things I shouldn't be wanting yet I am. His mouth is only an inch away from mine, and the desperation I feel right now is almost out of control. I want him to kiss me. I need him to. I just want everything to disappear for one minute, just one damned minute.

“Kiss me,” I say, locking eyes with him. “I need you to kiss me.”

He doesn't release my chin; instead, he slowly leans forward, bringing his mouth to mine. Never once has Western kissed me after I've demanded it, and the sensation it brings to me makes my body come to life. His lips are my heaven, and the way they move over mine, his tongue occasionally dancing with mine, has me weak at the knees. I need him more than I'm willing to admit—or accept.

His kiss deepens, and my fingers grow a mind of their own, reaching for him, curling around his arm. He doesn't like being touched, but I'm surprised to see him allow this. His muscle jumps beneath my palm, and I squeeze, kissing him harder, until my mouth burns from the scratch of his beard. A throaty sound escapes his lips, a sound of pleasure that I rarely hear from him, and it only spurs me on.

His hand slides down the side of my body, gripping my thigh.

He squeezes, making me wince as he pulls it up and around his waist.

I'm wearing jeans, but that doesn't stop the thrilling sensation of his cock rubbing right against my pussy, a tease of what's to come.



“Do you want me to fuck you?” he murmurs against my lips.

“Do you want to fuck me?” I throw back, daring to slide my hand from his arm. I move it up slowly, until it is curled around the back of his neck.

His eyes flare, but he doesn't stop me.

“You have no fuckin' idea.”

He reaches down and hauls me up until both legs are around his waist. He walks me to the sofa and places me down, before stepping back. “Strip.”

I stare at him, knowing this is the moment I should be walking away, but, instead, my fingers go to my jeans and slowly I begin unbuttoning them. Little by little, I let them slide down my thighs. Then, I reach for my top, pulling it over my head, my braless breasts jutting out and bouncing as I do. Western enjoys this, his growl is low and pleased as I stand before him, naked.

“Bend over that chair,” he orders, pointing to the sofa. “Put your hands behind your back.”

I comply, moving toward the sofa. I kneel down on it, and then slide my body over so my bottom is exposed to him. When I'm comfortable, I bring my hands around behind my back. Western shuffles about, and then I feel a soft rope securing my hands. My eyes widen, but I don't stop him— my curiosity far outweighs any panic I feel. He hasn't tied me tight enough that I'm worried, but just enough to keep me where I am.

Running his finger down my spine, he stops at my bottom. I hold my breath, not entirely sure where he is about to go with whatever it is he's going to do. Moving his finger away, I twist my neck to see what he's doing. He stands just at the foot of the sofa, stripping down his clothes until he's butt naked. Gosh, I want to see more of him. So much more. His cock, already throbbing and hard, juts out as he approaches.

He sits himself down on the sofa beside me, and then with one quick movement, he reaches out and grabs hold of me,

pulling me so my pussy is directly over his face. He shifts us until my legs go over his shoulders. Pinning me down with his arms over my thighs and his hands on my lower back, he holds me there, basically sitting on his head. His tongue lashes out, sliding up my already wet pussy, and I gasp. God, that feels incredible. Using my hips, I gently pulsate against his face, getting the perfect rhythm. I've never had a man go down on me quite like this, it's thrilling and, at the same time, incredibly confronting.

I have to trust him to hold me up entirely, because my arms are still bound behind my back. His hands are the only things stopping me from toppling off him and falling on my back. He's hanging onto me just enough to ensure that doesn't happen. His tongue, doing wicked dances between my legs, is bringing me closer and closer to the orgasm I've been so desperately needing. I grind my hips as best I can, shoving myself into him, so his tongue goes deeper, harder.

I'm moaning, the sound echoing through the room as my release builds higher and higher.

I find it with a scream of his name, shuddering against him, my thighs tightening as my body jerks.

Before I know it, he is flipping me off him, a low growl in his throat as he hauls my body up and over the back of the sofa once more, as if I weigh nothing. He's behind me in seconds, his hands curling around my restraints and jerking my arms back just enough to send a slither of pain up my spine. Then, he buries his cock into me. I gasp, lurching forward, but he keeps me in position by holding my bound hands.

Then he fucks me.

He fucks me with a roll of his hips that is precise and perfect.

He fucks me slow, then hard, until my body is trembling, and my knees threaten to give way.

He fucks me in a way I've never been fucked before.

His hands jerks on my restraints as he picks up the pace, and, before I know it, I'm screaming out his name with

another orgasm.

“Fuck. I love your little cunt,” he growls as he buries his cock deeper, as deep as he can possibly get it.

Then, he finds his release with a bellow that has my skin prickling. His body shudders behind me and the sensation that gives me is thrilling to say the least.

As he slowly comes to a stop, his body relaxing, I take a minute to process what we’ve just done.

*Again.*

When he pulls away from me, leaving that desperate, empty feeling inside me, the guilt finds its way to my brain once more.

Guilt that I’m doing this when there are kids out there I could be helping.

The guilt quickly turns into shame.

I’m sleeping with a man who could very well be a monster, and instead of being out there, fixing it, I’m in here ... doing this.

“Untie me,” I say, my voice suddenly panicked.

Nothing like the sudden drop of pleasure and emotion to bring out the inner demons.

Western does as I ask, untying me quickly. The moment my hands are free, I scramble off the sofa and frantically search for my clothes. The shame that is building in my body, minute by minute, is nearly enough to bring me to my knees. What the fuck am I doing? What sort of game am I playing? Am I truly so weak that I can’t stay away from Western for a single god damned moment? He hasn’t treated me well, yet here I am, pathetically searching for his comfort.

I’m ashamed of myself.

I jerk on my clothes, the warm cum trickling out as I pull on my jeans. That only makes me feel worse, horrified, even. Not only am I sleeping with him, but I’m doing it unprotected. Angry tears burn under my eyelids as I pull on my top and

then turn, looking right at Western who is watching me, his jeans on but nothing else.

“I have to go,” I say quickly.

“You goin’ to run out every time we fuck?”

God. Fuck.

That’s all this is.

It isn’t ever going to be what I need it to be. It’s always just going to be fun.

I’m so stupid.

So incredibly stupid.

“I can’t do this anymore,” I say, a lone tear rolling down my cheek. “I’m sorry, but this ... whatever it is, it’s over.”

He doesn’t say anything, he just studies me, his head slightly tipped to the side.

“I wanted to believe that this could be something,” I manage, my voice breaking, “but the truth is, I don’t know you. I don’t know the man you truly are. I’ve been fighting against myself, because a big part of me just wants to run into your arms and never leave, but there is that other part, the part that tells me over and over again that I’ll never be enough to beat your demons. You’re broken, Western, and I need someone that is whole. I need someone who can actually love me. I ... That isn’t you.”

I walk toward the door and he calls out my name, I turn, trying not to cry any more than I already have.

“You’re wrong about me.”

That gives me pause, but not enough for me to stay.

I shouldn’t have come here tonight.

I just ... I shouldn’t have.

I have to let him go, once and for all.

Even if it breaks me.



PLEASE NO.

Please. No.

I close my eyes, begging for the higher power above, over and over, to let this be a nightmare. I'm wrong about it, I have to be. I'm just overreacting, probably getting way ahead of myself. Stress will do all kinds of things to a person, and I've been through a lot of it lately. I'm just panicking about nothing. When I flip this test over, it'll say negative. It will because that wouldn't happen to me.

It couldn't.

It has been four minutes.

Should I check now?

Maybe I should?

The packet says five minutes.

Does it really matter?

God, this can't be happening. I'm late for my period, and I'm never late, but I'm also never quite this stressed.

Heart racing, I watch the timer count down.

*5, 4, 3, 2, 1.*

It has been five minutes.

Taking a deep, shaky breath, I turn the test over.

A loud cry rips from my throat as I stare at the + symbol. There is no missing it, it's clear as day, right there on the tiny little screen.

Tears burst forth and roll down my cheeks.

I'm pregnant.

I'm pregnant with Western's baby.

My tears turn into hysterical sobs as I stare at the test, praying it'll just disappear but it doesn't. It stays right there,

taunting me, reminding me that no matter what I do now, he's always going to be in my life.

The past few days have been hell on earth. I've been hurting so badly about the choice I made to not see him anymore. To end whatever pathetic attempt at a relationship we had. I chose to let myself hurt and let myself move on. I've cried more than I'd like to admit, but I've been strong. I've avoided calls, texts, I even managed to sit by the door as he pounded on it, demanding I let him in.

I've been strong until now.

Crying hard, I reach for my phone. I need someone to talk to. I need someone here. This is too much for me to process right now.

I dial Luna.

She answers on the second ring, and the moment she hears my hysterical sobs, she immediately tells me she'll be right there. I don't even need to say a single word and she knows I need her, that's the kind of friend she has become. Forcing myself to leave the bathroom, test in hand, I go out and wait for Luna to arrive.

She does, only ten minutes later.

She bursts through the front door, her eyes wide, ready to take down whatever has hurt me. Her eyes scan my face and then settle on the test in my hand, and she knows, she knows even without me saying one single thing. Her shoulders drop and she rushes over, throwing her arms around me. "It's going to be okay. I promise."

"This can't be happening to me," I cry. "Not with everything. Not with ... him."

"I know, I know. Shhh."

She hangs onto me until my sobbing turns into soft hiccups, and then she leads me over to the sofa and sits me down, facing me, her hands curling around mine. "Does he know?"

I shake my head. "No."

“That’s okay. That choice is yours to make. Right now, all you need to do is process. After that, you need to go to a doctor and have them confirm this. Then, you decide what you’re going to do. One step at a time, and however long it takes you to get through each step is entirely up to you. Nobody can force this.”

“I can’t have a baby with him, Luna. I can’t. I ... I’m so damned hurt. He has broken me. He’s ... not a good man.”

If only she knew what I knew.

“That is also your choice to make, but you don’t have to make it now. Right now, you’re going to have a shower, and I’m going to make you some tea. Then, we’re going to just get through tonight.”

What did I do to deserve her?

I lean forward, hugging her tightly.

She ushers me to the shower, and I stand under it for a long time, trying to calm my racing heart. It helps, and after a while with the hot water running over me, I manage to keep it together long enough to get changed and meet Luna downstairs. She has set up the sofa with tea, chocolate, and popcorn, and is putting a movie on. I am thankful to whoever brought her to me, because she has become such an important part of my life.

“I didn’t know which chocolate was your favorite, so I got it all.” Luna gives me a gentle smile as she lifts a blanket, nodding for me to sit beneath it. I hop down onto the sofa, and she puts the blanket over my lap, then she joins me, playing a movie and handing me some chocolate.

I take it, zoning out as the movie plays.

Over and over, all I can think about is the child growing inside of me. The child that belongs to a man I’m so in love with but have recognized is not safe or healthy for me. How am I supposed to bring a child into my world, when the father isn’t going to be the man I need him to be? At the same time, how can I make any other choice, knowing that I would never forgive myself.

What am I going to do?

How do I fix this?

Do I just run away and never tell Western?

That feels wrong, even just thinking about it.

I know I could never actually do it.

So what options does that give me?

Not many that I can see working in the long run.

I feel trapped, backed into a corner.

I place my hand against my stomach, and the tears burn under my eyelids once more. A baby. I have a baby inside me. I don't know how I'm going to cope moving forward, but the overwhelming feeling inside, the desperate need to try and love this baby, is almost crippling. Like an automatic instinct, beyond even the fear.

What the hell am I going to do now?







I'm going to tell him.

Days I've processed, and no matter how much I've tried, I can't seem to find a valid reason not to tell him. Perhaps he will have an option I haven't thought of, or maybe he'll outright refuse to be part of it, giving me no choice but to go out and do it on my own. One thing is for sure, I'm keeping this baby. I can't live with myself if I don't. That doesn't mean I think it's wrong to take the other road, of course I don't, but for me, I just know how it'll impact my life.

That means Western needs to know.

I'm walking down the street, just having picked up some muffins and a few coffees. I don't even know if Western drinks coffee, I certainly can't see him doing it, but I need something to present to him before I break this news. He isn't going to take it well, of that I'm sure, so I need to be very careful about how I approach this. I don't want to scare him off before I even have the chance to tell him my thoughts.

Even though I'm telling him, the nagging feeling still lingers. The one that screams to me that he's a bad guy. Would he sell our child? Even though I've seen the proof, something inside me just doesn't want to believe he's actually involved in all of this. If he is ... That will change what I do moving forward. I have to tell him, though, and when I do, I'm going to confront him with the knowledge I've learned. I'm going to ask him if he's involved.

If he is, I'm packing my things and disappearing into the night.

If he isn't, then I guess I have to trust he's telling the truth and stay, having a baby with a man who I love so fucking much and at the same time, terrifies me to no end.

“Bonnie.”

The familiar voice has me pausing and holding my breath as I turn to see a dark SUV at the curb, the window rolled down with Bill staring out, his eyes angry.

This isn't good.

Everything inside me immediately goes into defense mode, and I want to run, but I know if I do, he'll kill me.

“You get into this car without a fight, or I'll shoot you and drive off. Nobody will ever know it was me.”

He points a gun in my direction.

My heart skips a beat.

Should I run?

My eyes dart, and there is no one in sight. I'm on a straight sidewalk, with very little buildings around. If I run, I don't really have anywhere to go. He'll catch me, and he'll kill me. I have no doubt he's telling the truth. That means I have only one option: play it cool, get in that car, and pray I can get out of whatever it is he's about to do.

“Okay,” I say, taking a step toward the car.

“Put that shit down.”

I stare at the muffins and coffee in my hands, and I lean down, placing it on the sidewalk.

“The handbag, too. Empty your pockets and put everything inside.”

The handbag contains my phone.

I press it to my chest, but when his eyes flash, I know that he isn't messing around. I lean down and pull my phone from my pocket, using my finger to unlock it as I bring it toward my handbag to place it in. I act as though I'm emptying the rest of my pockets, and lean forward, bringing the phone as close to my lips as I can. I say “Call Western” and then I place the phone in my purse, praying it worked.

I get to my feet, holding my hands out. “Anything else?”

I'm acting confident, but inside, I'm terrified.

"No. Get in the car."

"If you're going to kill me, then just do it now. I don't feel like being tortured," I mutter.

"I'm not going to kill you because I'm not done with you, but you are goin' to answer some questions, and if you lie to me, Bonnie, I will start removing your fingers until you tell the truth."

My stomach twists.

The back door opens, and inside, I can see a man sitting there, his dark eyes pinning me in place.

"Get in."

I get in the car, praying that the phone rang and Western answered, praying that he heard some of that. If Bill decides to do something, at least Western might know where to look.

I pull on my seatbelt and close the door, and before I can say or do anything else, the car speeds off down the road. I sit, staring at my lap, trying to keep calm as we drive. Bill doesn't say another word to me, but there are three men in this car and only one of me. I know I'm out of options if he decides to attempt something. I close my eyes, praying for some sort of miracle, trying to figure out what the hell he has taken me for.

We arrive at an old house about twenty minutes later, and the man sitting next to me gets out, coming around to my door and hauling me out. He isn't gentle, and I'm immediately concerned over what might happen here if they get too rough. I'll never tell them I'm pregnant, I'll never give them that advantage, but it doesn't mean I'm not worried. I just need to stay calm. It's the absolute best I can do right now.

Gripping my upper arm, the man follows Bill, dragging me beside him until we enter the house. I make note of everything we pass, because it doesn't look like anyone lives here. In fact, it looks like the perfect location to hide teenagers before you sell them. It's secluded, and from the outside, it looks abandoned. If they drive me out of here, I make note to try and remember the way. This could be important.

Walking me into the middle of a starkly empty living room, Bill shoves me down on a chair. It's rickety and old, and I try not to pay attention to the dark stains on the concrete floor around it. That's blood, of that I'm sure. I take a deep breath and meet the eyes of the man now standing before me, looking like he's more than a little angry. Before I can even ask what it is I'm doing here, he lashes out. His fist connects with my face and sends me tumbling backward on the chair, slamming the back of my head onto the ground as I land.

A cry leaves my throat as pain bursts through my skull. My vision blurs, and I don't even get a moment to think before I'm being hauled up, a fist slamming into my stomach over and over again. No. No. They have to stop. They can't do this. "Stop," I beg. "Please stop. I've done everything you've asked!"

The hitting stops, and Bill steps forward, speaking in a low voice. "Do you think I'm stupid?"

I shake my head, tears rolling down my cheeks. "No, I don't."

"The information you gave me lead me nowhere, it sent me on a fucking chase to nothing. You set me up!"

"I didn't," I say, my voice scratchy, the pain in my stomach making my heart break little by little. "That's what they told me. I swear to you, that's the information they gave me."

Bill studies me, his face wild with anger.

"You expect me to believe that they're not in on this?"

"If they were in on this, do you really think you would have the chance to abduct me off a damned street corner?" I yell. "They have no idea what's going on, they think I'm on their side, I've gotten every bit of information you've asked for and that's the truth."

I hold my breath, praying it works, because if it doesn't, he's going to kill me.

"Then they're covering something," Bill mutters. "They must suspect something, because that information led to

nothing, which means they must have known you were looking for it.”

“They don’t know I’m looking, but that’s not to say that they aren’t worried someone is looking. I found that information– it was left out. I can’t promise you that they didn’t leave it out as a trap.”

Bill considers this. “This is bad for me, Bonnie. Very bad.”

“Then fix it,” I mutter. “I’m only doing as you ask.”

“Very well, I will fix it. If you are telling the truth, you’re going to tell the club you’ve found some information that is going to give them exactly what they want. You’re going to lead them to a location, and I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Meaning what?” I ask, the pain in my stomach intensifying. I need to get out of here, and I need to do it soon.

“That’s not for you to worry about. If you do this, you’ll be free.”

That’s two lots of people who have said those same words to me in the last few weeks. The club wants me to get proof from Bill and now Bill wants me to lie and lead them to a location where he will, potentially, kill them.

Either way, I’ll say whatever I need to to get out of this mess.

“I’ll do whatever you want. I just want this to be over.”

“Tell me again exactly what the club knows.”

I exhale. “They think I’m working for them getting information from you. They have no idea that I’m actually working for you to get information from them. I’m giving them exactly what you’ve been telling me. The information I gave you from the club was legit. I didn’t know they had set it up.”

Bill studies me. “I’m sure you’re aware of exactly what will happen if you’re lying.”

“You’ve made that clear,” I growl. “Now tell me what you want so I can go home.”

Bill grins. "Very well, let's get started, shall we?"

I hope he is quick.

I have a bad feeling that I'm a little more hurt than I realize.

My baby could be in danger. I need to get out of here.

Now.



I'M THERE FOR HOURS, going over exactly what Bill wants from me. He has given me all this information that he knows the club wants, and he wants me to hand it to them knowing they'll go to the location and he can take them down. Which means I've run out of time. I will tell Western of course, and he'll know that it's a set up, but that means he has to do something about it once and for all otherwise Bill will know for certain I'm using him and he'll kill me.

There isn't a way around this anymore, it needs to end.

The pain radiating through my stomach when I arrive at the club alerts me that something very bad is going on. Not only does my head feel as though it's going to explode, but I've got cramping low enough to know that I'm injured and it's not going to end well. The heartbreak already filling my body by the time I walk through the front gates is almost enough to cripple me. I just need to see Western; I need to talk to him, I need to make this all go away. I can't take much more.

Mex and another biker stand at the front gates, and when they see me, their eyes widen. "Fuck, are you okay? Everyone is out lookin' for you."

I am doubled over, the pain slowly intensifying. "I'm not. Is Western here?"

"He isn't, he's out searchin'. I'll call him. Bonnie, do you need medical care?"

I shake my head. “No, I just ... I’m going to lie down. I’ll be in his shed.”

I don’t let him answer. The tears slowly begin trickling down my cheeks as I walk into Western’s shed. I make it to the bathroom and slowly sit on the toilet, my body aching. I wipe, and I know what I’m going to see, small spots of blood. I close my eyes and cry; I cry because I know how this is going to end. Does it mean it wasn’t going to end like this from the start? I don’t know, but I do know that Bill doing what he did gave me no chance.

He has taken everything from me, and now he has taken my baby.

Tears flow forth, and I pull up my pants and then lower myself onto the floor, curling my knees up to my chest. The pain is slowly getting worse, it has been hours now, and I know there is nothing I can do. Hell, I’m only days late for my period, this was probably going to happen anyway, but it doesn’t take away the fact that it hurts. It really hurts. And on top of everything else I’m dealing with, I just don’t know how to cope right now.

I begin sobbing, soft, strangled sounds being ripped from my throat as my body trembles there on Western’s bathroom floor.

I don’t hear him come in.

I don’t even hear the door open.

It’s only when I feel a hand swipe my now tear-soaked hair from my face that my eyes open and I see Western staring down at me, a look on his face I can’t even begin to decipher right now. I don’t think, I just start talking, my words flowing out in between sobs.

“I’m pregnant,” I croak, and then gasp as the pain of that reality hits me. “But I think it’s over. I was coming to tell you. I was ... Bill hurt me and now I think I’m losing the baby. Everyone hurts me. I never meant for any of this to happen. I never meant to hurt you or your club. I just want them to leave



me alone. I want my life back. I can't breathe anymore, Western. I just want it to stop. That was my baby ..."

Silence.

Then, without a single word, he reaches down and scoops me into his arms. He lifts me off the bathroom floor, in all my wailing cries, and carries me out and to the bed. He pulls back the covers and lays me down, placing my head on the pillow, and then he shrugs out of his jacket and climbs in beside me. He pulls me into his arms, something he has never done before, and I welcome it. I roll into him, my face pressing against his chest, and there he holds me through every agonized sob that leaves my throat.

He doesn't let me go; he just hangs on to me.

He holds me in a way I could have only dreamed of before this point.

His fingers glide through my hair, his lips press against my forehead, and even though he doesn't say a single word, he is bringing me the kind of comfort I so desperately need.

I don't want to lose my baby.

I didn't realize it until this moment, but I want it more than I could have ever known.

The sound of booted feet has Western shifting, and I don't bother to look up and see who is there. Instead, I hear Western's low voice murmur, "Bring a truck around."

Whoever came in leaves without another word.

Western moves in the bed, slowly shifting us so he can slide out. I open my eyes, my vision blurry, and I look up at him. He reaches down, lifting my shirt and his fingers run over my skin. A rage flashes across his face that I know means when he gets his hands on Bill, he won't ever come back from it. He lowers my shirt and then reaches down, lifting me into his arms. He still hasn't said a single word to me, but he's being there in a way no words could ever replace.

He carries me outside to the truck that is now waiting out front.

He places me in the back seat, laying me down, and then he closes the door.

I close my eyes, the tears all dried up, and pray that maybe by some miracle, my baby will make it through this.

I know the chances of that are basically none, but that doesn't mean I won't hold out hope.

I'll do anything, anything, just to make this better.

Western gets in the truck and begins to drive.

I know where he's taking me. He didn't have to say a single word for me to know exactly where we are going. I'm injured, and not only that, I just told him I am pregnant and probably losing the baby. He's not going to mess around with that. He's not going to wait. I wouldn't expect him to.

He's taking me to the hospital.

He's taking me to face the agonizing truth.

I'm just not sure I'm ready for it.

But I know I have no other choice.

I have to face what's coming, and when I have ... Well then I'll face what caused it to happen in the first place.

I want Bill dead.

I don't care at what cost.

Today is the day I am done with Bill Whart.





“Sometimes it happens this early. It doesn’t mean you can’t go on having more children. Many women go through this without even knowing and thinking it’s their period. It isn’t anything you did, nor is it anything you could have prevented.”

I zone out as the doctor speaks, his voice kind but straight forward.

I’ve been here for a night and in that time, the bleeding turned into what would seem like a normal period, but I know it isn’t, and that only makes it worse. The doctors did blood work, and told me that my HCG levels dropped, which means that I am no longer pregnant. It was so early, they told me it mightn’t have even attached properly, but with everything else going on, it just crushes me. It feels as though my soul is slowly, little by little, shrinking into a shriveled up mess I can’t escape from.

The only reason I got to spend the night at the hospital is because of my other injuries. I told the doctors that I fell down some stairs and that’s why I came in here, worried about my pregnancy. They seemed to accept that story, though they spent a lot of time side eyeing Western. I know that they know who he is, but that doesn’t stop him staying by my bedside. He hasn’t left. He hasn’t once allowed me to be alone.

The doctor leaves after telling me that he’ll go and get the discharge papers, and it’s best if I just go home and rest.

Rest.

How can I rest when my heart is broken?

The moment he walks out, a nurse comes in and begins doing a few more tests. I roll to my side, the tears that seemingly never want to end, flowing out once more. I knew

what the outcome would be, but hearing it confirmed only makes it that much worse.

The bed dips and the nurses voice rings out, “You can’t get in...”

Whatever Western does, has her sentence being cut off mid speech. She doesn’t say another word to him as his big body settles in behind me and he pulls me into his arms. I’ve loved every moment of comfort he has given me through this. He has stepped up in a way that I never would have thought he could, or even would. He hasn’t said much, at all, but he has been here for me in a way he never has before.

It only makes it so much harder not to love him.

Once the doctor comes in and I’m discharged, Western brings me back to the club. He isn’t going to leave me alone after what Bill did, and I can’t say I blame him. I don’t want to be alone. I don’t want him to get near me again. What I want, is for this to be over. I’m willing to do whatever it takes for that man to leave me alone. I can deal with Western and the things he’s involved in later. For now, I just need to feel safe again.

I rest for a few hours, and when I wake, I’m feeling a little better.

Western isn’t in the shed when I rise, but he has left out some water and painkillers, as well as a bakery bag filled with some pastries. Next to it, is my phone and purse. He must have gotten my call before Bill took me, and he managed to locate my phone. I don’t care how he did that, I’m just glad that he got to my things before someone else did.

Pulling out my phone, I see a few missed calls from Leo and Luna. I message them both and tell them I’ve come down with something, and I send an extra one to Luna telling her that I’ll update her later, but that I’m not pregnant anymore. I don’t go into detail, I can’t even think of it without feeling the heavy pit form in my stomach. I know it was only early, but I truly didn’t think it would bother me so much for it to end how it did.

I know I'm full of a lot of emotions right now, which doesn't help.

I try to focus on moving forward.

It's all I can do.

The door opens just as I sit down with a coffee and pastry, and Western comes in. He's got his phone in his hand, and he's talking to someone. When he notices me awake, he ends the call and walks over, stopping in front of me. His eyes scan my face, and I have so many things I want to say to him, to let him know just how much his support meant to me, but nothing comes out. All I can do is stare up at him and give him a small smile.

"You're lookin' better."

I nod. "I feel a little better."

He pulls a chair out, dragging it in front of me where he sits down. He leans forward, elbows on his knees, his eyes locked onto mine. "How long did you know?"

I swallow the painful lump in my throat. "I had only just found out. I was coming to tell you when Bill got hold of me..."

He processes this.

"Did you want it?"

My bottom lip trembles, and I look down at the pastry in my hand.

"Bonnie, look at me," Western orders, lifting my chin. "Did you want it?"

"Yes," I croak.

His fingers release my chin and slide up the side of my face. "Then one day soon, you'll have it. But not until you're safe."

What does that mean?

What does any of this mean?

I can't process it right now.

“I want to thank you for what you did. For being there for me.”

He nods.

“Do you know what we’re going to do about Bill?” I ask, desperately needing to change the subject.

“We’re changin’ plans. I don’t want him goin’ to prison, I want him six feet under.”

Oh.

“You’re going to kill him?”

“No, the man he works for is goin’ to kill him. Bill is goin’ to fuck up in a big way, and when he does, he’ll be removed.”

I don’t understand.

“How can Bill possibly do that?”

“We have a plan, you don’t need to worry about it. All I can say is, Bill will be caught out and the whole thing will blow wide fuckin’ open.”

“He already suspects that you are onto him, if I suddenly disappear he’ll know that he has been exposed and he won’t make any mistakes.”

“Bonnie,” Western orders, leaning forward. “You gotta trust me.”

I close my eyes, taking a deep breath.

The problem is...I don’t know if I do.

He might crack this wide open and have Bill removed, but all that’ll do is open things up for him and the club.

I have to ask.

I have to.

I can’t keep in inside any longer.

I open my eyes and look him dead in his. “I’m going to ask you something, and I’m begging you to be honest with me. If this,” I point between the two of us, “means anything to you at all, then you’ll tell me the truth.”

His eyes darken, a guard automatically coming up, but he nods for me to proceed.

“I got information that you’re involved with the foster kids going missing, that you’re in on it and Bill is trying to bring you down because it’s too big of a risk. I saw a photo...a photo of you with one of the boys. So, I’m going to ask you once, Western, are you selling those kids?”

His eyes don’t show a single hint of emotion. Not shock, not anger, not guilt...nothing. That’s the problem with Western, it’s incredibly hard to read him because he’s as stony faced as they come. I hold my breath, waiting for his answer.

“No.”

His response is simple, straight forward, and yet leaves me with so many follow up questions.

“Then why was there a photo of you with one of the boys?”

“Wrong place. Wrong time.”

Do I trust him?

Do I give him the benefit of the doubt?

I don’t know how to tell if he’s lying or if he’s telling the truth.

“You’re not lying to me, are you?”

“No.”

His voice stays the same tone, his eyes never once leave mine.

I have two choices right now – the first is that I don’t believe him and I keep digging, risking my life, and the second is that I do believe him, let this go and let him finish this for us once and for all.

The second choice makes my heart feel a whole lot fuller. It means I can move on with him, create a life with him, and finally be safe again. But can I truly let the lingering thoughts in the back of my head go...the ones that are always wondering if he’s telling me the truth. I guess I have to decide



if I trust him, or if I don't. After the way he was with me the last day, I am finding it hard not to feel those floods of emotions when it comes to him once more.

He was there for me.

So, I guess that means I have to give him the chance he deserves.

“Okay,” I say. “I trust you.”

Something flashes in his gaze, and he reaches forward, taking my chin in his thumb and forefinger and bringing me forward until our lips brush. He kisses me softly for long moments, until my heart flutters and my warmth fills my body. Pulling back, he looks me in the eye and murmurs, “I'm here. I want you. Tired of pushin' it away.”

I've wanted to hear those words for so long.

To know I mean something.

To know this matters.

“Are you saying what I think you're saying?”

He kisses me again.

“Got enough fight in my life, you're the one thing I need to just be by my side. Can you give that to me? Can we leave the past where it belongs?”

Can we?

Can I?

“We can certainly try,” I murmur in response.

Another kiss to my lips.

One to my forehead.

Then he's off again.

Only this time he's leaving me feeling a little safer, a little freer, and a little more confident about what's to come.

Maybe we're finally at the end of this nightmare.



WESTERN'S BODY MOVES over mine, the perfect roll of his hips as he drags his cock in and out. It has been just over a week and I've needed him every minute of that. He let me heal, he let me stay, he kept me fed and warm, and he began showing me a side to him that I could have only dreamed of. He has made everything inside me feel safe and he helped me through some of my lowest moments during that time. He is everything. *Fucking everything.*

"Western," I moan, my back arching as my fingers glide through the skin on his back. "More."

His growls of pleasure fill my ears as his cock fills me, pushing into my soft, damp flesh as we both near a release that is already firing up to be one of the best. It's one of the best because Western has never made love to me like this before. It has always been sex, just raw, unfiltered sex, but this isn't that. His hands have roamed every inch of my body, his mouth devoured my lips, my pussy and my breasts. His fucking is a gentle caress as his body hovers over mine, allowing my hands to run over the rigid muscles beneath his hot, beautiful skin.

Oh.

Western is giving me something I'll never forget.

I find my orgasm with a whimpered cry, burying my face into his shoulder, tasting the fine sheen of sweat that coats his skin. I latch on, biting into his flesh lightly as I shake beneath him, and this earns me a pleased growl that radiates through my body. Then, he's pulsing deep inside me, his body shaking, his pants of pleasure filling my ears. I close my eyes and relish the moment, feeling every hard inch of him pressing against me.

I want to stay here forever.

Finishing up, Western slowly pulls out, discarding the condom and then rolling back in beside me, handing me a soft towel and placing it gently between my legs to soak up every last drop of him. I study his face, his gorgeous face, and I

know that I would have never been able to fight off the feelings I have for this man. He's slowly becoming my entire world, and even though that scares me, I can't imagine being anywhere else.

"Are you in pain?" he murmurs, pushing a damp piece of hair from my forehead.

I shake my head.

We decided to go back to using protection until such time as I can get on birth control. It was a decision made by the both of us. It's not that we couldn't have handled the situation, but it's more that right now, it isn't the right time. Maybe one day it will be, but right now it is not. I'm okay with that, and each day the pain gets a little less. I'm feeling far more like myself lately, and I haven't had that in some time.

A loud banging on the door has Western's eyes moving to it.

"I know you're in there, you cocksucker!"

Oh.

Hazel.

She, on the other hand, is a problem.

They're still legally married, and she isn't going to just go away it would seem.

Western growls a curse and gets out of bed, pulling on his jeans. He walks over to the door, and I stand, bringing the sheet up and around me, and make my way to the sofa to sit down. I'm no longer worried about what Hazel wants or thinks. I watch him open the door, the fine display of muscled flesh an incredible sight. I could stare at him all day.

Until the door opens, and Hazel's eyes immediately dart to me.

"Seriously, Western? Are you fucking serious?"

He doesn't answer her, he just demands to know why she's here in a gravelly, displeased tone.

"Because I'm your wife!"

Her eyes flare in rage as she throws her hands up.

“Not for much longer,” he mutters.

“I won’t sign any papers. I won’t!”

“You don’t get a fuckin’ choice,” he rasps, low. “You sign them, or you know where you’ll end up.”

Now my eyes widen.

I don’t really want to know exactly what that threat means.

“I could bring you down. I could bring all of you down with what I know.”

Her threats have Western’s entire body tensing as he leans in closer, his voice an angry whip when he snarls, “You dare threaten me? You should know by now what happens to those who threaten me or my club. You are no exception.”

Hazel’s face goes red, and she wiggles a finger in his face. “This isn’t over. Do you hear me?”

Then her eyes move to me. “For you, either. You have no idea who he is. No idea. If I were you, I’d run.”

It takes a lot for me not to say anything, but I don’t. I just give her a look that doesn’t waver, not even once.

“Get the fuck out,” Western orders, his voice tapering on the edge of rage.

“You’ll be hearing from me.”

With that, Hazel turns and disappears.

Western’s booming voice echoes down to the front gate when he calls to whoever is there. “Do not let her in my fucking club again. Do you fucking hear me?”

“Fuck you, Western!” Hazel yells.

Then there is dead silence.

Western turns, slamming the door. I bite my bottom lip, trying very hard not to over think the words she just said to me. I don’t know what it is, but I’m struggling to keep the doubts at bay. We’ve had the best week, we’re growing closer, I’m so in love with him, and yet I can’t make sense as to why

these niggling feelings keep rising up. I trust him, I do, so why doesn't something feel like it's sitting quite right inside me?

Western walks with angry strides in to get his shirt and jacket, and then he charges back out, fully dressed.

"Got business," he barks, opening the door and then slamming it loudly.

Well then.

I said we were getting better, I never said he wasn't the same moody, temperamental biker that he's always been.

I exhale and get up, dress myself and then get my car keys. I need to go and see Leo and Luna, and I'm going back to work tonight. I need to go get some things from my house. Of course, I'm not allowed to go alone, but I'm sure one of these guys will happily come with me.

I walk out of the shed and over to the main house.

Most of the bikes are gone, with everyone having gone on a ride, but I know a few of them are still here because Western told me he needed to have a discussion with Colt.

"Oh, hey."

I turn at the sound of a female voice and see a young woman walking towards me. The biker standing at the gate is watching her and is on the phone to someone. I'm guessing by the look on her face, that someone would be Western because she's probably barged her way in here without permission.

I stop as she approaches me, and I can't help but notice how beautiful she is.

Raven black hair flowing down her back, thick and curly. Her eyes are as blue as the sky and laced with little green specks. She is tall yet curvy, with a tiny waist and perfect hips, a body that most women would kill for. She's quite stunning and I have to wonder what it is she's doing here. I offer her a smile as she gets closer, mostly because my curiosity has the better of me.

"Hi," I respond. "Can I help you with something?"

She grins and it looks mischievous and confident. She's trouble, but I like that about her already, and I don't even know her name.

"I'm Myla," she tips her head to the side, studying me. "I'm looking for Colt."

Colt?

She's here for Colt?

My curiosity peaks and my brows go up. "You've got my attention. I'm Bonnie, by the way. What did you need Colt for?"

Myla's face drops a little as she tells me the next part of her story.

"My aunt died a few months ago, and she had no children of her own. She left everything to me – we were close."

"I'm so sorry," I offer, feeling bad for her.

Myla gives me a small smile. "It's fine. Anyway, I found out a few days ago that she left me that shitty house next door, her and Colt lived in once or something like that. I'm here to do something with it... anything really, it's a crap heap. If I had my way, I'd burn it to the ground, but she made me promise I wouldn't."

Wait.

Let me get this straight.

Colt was with Myla's aunt and the two of them had a house next door? I've never seen a house next door. It's mostly bushland, so if there is one, it must be well hidden because it sure as hell isn't on display.

"There's a house next door? Colt was with your aunt?"

She nods. "Yep. They were together for like ten years or something. I don't know what happened, but something went down. She owned the house, and she just upped and left it and him. It's right there, in the middle of that," she points her fingers to the thick bushland. "I don't want it, but I have to fix it up before I can sell it. I'm sure Colt will be thrilled to know

she gave it to me and that I'm going to be hanging around for a while."

"Were you two not close?"

Myla snorts. "I don't know him all that well. I met him a few times when I'd come and stay. I do recall him being as fine as a good wine," she winks, "my friends and I had no problem hanging around just to look at him."

I laugh. "I get that."

"Myla..."

Colt's voice comes from behind me, and I glance over my shoulder to see him walking down the stairs, Western following close behind. Colt is watching Myla with a look that tells me he is *not* pleased that she's here. Whatever went down with him and her aunt obviously wasn't good because he looks pissed.

"Uncle," Myla drawls. "It has been a long time."

"Not your fuckin' uncle."

Oh boy.

Myla looks to be in her thirties, but she's holding it incredibly well, so it's hilarious to watch her calling Colt uncle. He's obviously in no way related to her, but the fact that she's already hitting him with it makes for some great entertainment. She seems to have that kind of nature, just from the short conversation I've had with her. She clearly has some distaste when it comes to Colt, and it only makes me wonder what went down with him and her aunt even more.

"Wonderful to see you, too," Myla flashes a smile.

"What are you doin' here?" Colt demands, crossing his arms over his chest.

Myla's face does drop when she delivers the next part of her news. "Aunt Chloe passed away a few months ago."

Colt's face flashes with a range of emotions, from shock, to rage, to indifference. Whatever he and Chloe had together, or didn't have, it messed up some part deep inside him. I've

never quite seen that kind of expression on someone's face before.

“What happened?” Colt grinds out.

“Cancer,” Myla answers. “She left me her house, and I'm here to clean it up and sell it.”

Colt's face tightens.

He isn't happy with this news.

Hell, he looks like he's about to bust a top.

I don't know exactly when Colt was with Myla's aunt. I know Western's mother is no longer in the picture, after everything that went down, and so I suppose Colt could have been with her any time after that. I'm interested to know what happened, and why it ended. Judging by the look on Colt's face, it's a good story. Well, for those listening at least. Certainly not for him.

“You're not doin' shit to that house,” Colt snaps.

Myla raises her brows. “Oh, but I am. It's my house. I'm going to fix it and sell it.”

“It's my fuckin' house. She left it when she upped and fuckin' left me. I'm the only reason it's still standin'.”

“And for that, I thank you,” Myla grins, “but now it's mine and I'm going to be over there, finishing it up. You can join in, if you like. I hope it doesn't bring back too many bad memories.”

Oh boy, she's really poking him.

“Back down,” Colt's voice is a low whip. “You won't like what I'll do.”

Myla waves a hand. “Yes, yes, big scary biker. I'm sure I'll regret it. Anyway, I just wanted to let you know why I'm here.”

I have to swallow over and over to stop myself from laughing.

I like her, mostly because she's not afraid of Colt at all.



“Do not enter my fuckin’ club again.”

Myla raises a brow. “I might need, like, power tools or something. If you see me around, don’t panic. I’ll return it all, I swear.”

Colt steps forward. “Do. Not. Enter. My. Club. Again.”

Gosh, anyone else would be terrified of him, but Myla doesn’t even flinch. “A hammer at least?” She goes on. “Nails? Perhaps a wrench?”

I bite my bottom lip, it’s truly hard not to laugh.

“Get out,” Colt demands. “Now.”

Myla shrugs. “Fine, I’ll get those things myself. Well, it was nice meeting you, Bonnie. Come by soon and say hello,” her eyes move to Western, “and you, finally. I’m off. I’ll see you soon, uncle.”

With that, she turns and saunters out.

Colt looks like he’s ready to take a gun to her, and I’m really trying hard not to lose it laughing. I look to Western, who shoots me a warning glare. I look away, pressing a hand to my mouth.

Time for me to go, I think.

Before I make this situation any worse by giggling.

I can’t wait to see how this unfolds.





Heading towards Western's office, I pause when I hear his voice coming from inside. I've just curled my hand around the doorknob, ready to open it, but pause at the angry tone he's using to talk to whoever it is he's talking to. Is someone in there with him? After a few seconds, I realize that I can't hear another voice, so he must be on the phone.

It's what he's talking about that has me listening in, instead of entering his office.

I know I shouldn't be listening in, but something about his conversation gives me pause.

I press my ear to the door, feeling guilty, but unable to stop myself.

"I fuckin' heard you, and I'm tellin' you, this is what we're doin'. I don't care if Bill is suspicious. You're goin' to go in as usual, buy that boy, and bring him to me. You know how this works, Wesley."

My heart skips a beat.

I must be hearing him wrong.

"Bill don't fuckin' know it's me buying them off him. He has no fuckin' idea. Just do the trade like you always do. I'll deal with the rest."

No.

No.

*No, I can't be hearing this right.*

Because if I am, what I'm hearing is that Western has a guy who is getting the boys off Bill. Then what happens, does he sell them for more? Double the price? And all along his club is safe because there is no link to them? I must be getting it wrong, because there is no way Western is that evil. *No way.*

“Tell him he will get what he’s fuckin’ always got and not a cent more. He pays the parents to get the boys, he sells them to me for double, he’s gettin’ his cut. He don’t need to know anythin’ fuckin’ more than that. We’re a buyer, that’s the end of it. If he asks more questions, you tell him you’ll take your business elsewhere. Stick to the plan. I’ll meet you tonight for the handover. You know where. Eight. Don’t be late.”

Shock runs through my body as I scramble away from the door, frantically rushing down the hall before Western comes out and notices me listening in. I dart out the front door and rush out, heading towards the shed. Fury just brought me back to the club after he took me to get a few things from in town, and if I go running back out now, he’ll know something is wrong.

I just got the information I’ve been wanting for for so long, and yet it’s the last thing I ever wanted to hear.

Western lied to me.

He has been involved all along.

After everything he has been through, he is the monster behind the plan.

He looked me right in the eyes and told me he wasn’t involved.

Reaching the shed, I rush inside, slamming the door. Hand pressing to my heart, I close my eyes and try to remain calm. It doesn’t matter what I tell myself now, the truth is right in front of me. I’m afraid, though, that if I tell Western I know that this might end badly. He could deny it, for a start, make up a story and have me believe I’ve gotten it all wrong. Which is why I’m going to follow him when he goes tonight.

I’m going to follow him, confront him, then I’m leaving this town.

I can’t be here anymore.

The heartbreak is too much to carry.

Already there is a pain in the pit of my stomach because I know how much this is going to hurt. I know that leaving

Western is going to be so incredibly difficult for me. I love him, and for the first time in forever, I had hope for us. I thought we were going to finish this together, and then create a life. A life where the two of us would love each other until the day we die. Now, that is being ripped from beneath me once more.

I fight back my tears, tired of crying.

I'm tired of hurting.

I'm tired of being lied to.

I take a deep breath, push my chin out, and make a plan.

The first step in that plan is making sure Western doesn't know that I know.

I want to follow him, undetected. I want to make sure I catch him in the act.

Then he can't talk his way out of it.

Then, I'm going to call Nathan and tell him what I know.

I don't want to see the man I love go down, but I can't watch another teenager be snatched from their lives and sold.

The shed door opens, and Western steps inside.

It'll be the biggest act of my life, not letting him know that something is wrong. Even looking at him now, I am fighting the urge to scream and cry at the same time. I want to hurl abuse at him, but I also want to demand he tell me why I wasn't enough for him to be honest with. Most of all, though, I want to ask him how he could do something like this after what he went through. Did being locked away for so long really just turn him into a monster?

"What's wrong?"

He's smart, too smart.

Luckily for me, I have a valid excuse for being up and down with my emotions.

I offer him a small smile, which is so incredibly difficult I don't know how I pull it off. "Just having a bit of a moment,

I'm okay."

He walks over to me, tucking my hair behind my ear. "It'll get better."

How can he stand in front of me right now, looking down at me the way he is, touching me the way he is, when he knows it's all a big lie? Does any of this mean anything to him, or is it an act, too? An act to make sure I stop digging, to make sure I don't reveal the truth, to make sure he and the club are safe. He did switch from not wanting me, to wanting me very quickly. Was this the plan all along?

Did I just not see what was right in front of me?

"Can I go home tonight?" I ask him, knowing he won't like it, but I also know I need to gather myself. I need to be able to sneak out to follow him, and I can do none of that here. "I wouldn't mind seeing Luna, just to have someone to talk to."

He studies me, his eyes narrowing. "Is that all that's goin' on? Has Bill made contact?"

I shake my head. "No. He hasn't. I am just a bit restless and I really would like to chat to someone. You can come stay over, if you like?"

It's the perfect cover, because I know damn well he won't come because he has other plans,

More sinister ones.

"Got business tonight, but I'll send Mex to stand guard outside your place. I'll come by when I'm done."

I nod. "That sounds good."

It's killing me to stay this calm.

"Pack up. I'll get him to drive you."

He leans down, brushing his lips across mine, and for the first time since I've known him - it doesn't feel right. I kiss him back, all the same, because right now my only focus is getting out of here so that I can figure this out once and for all.

“I’ll call you later,” I tell him, when he gathers a few things and makes his way to the door.

He glances back at me over his shoulder. “Later, beautiful.”

My mouth drops open as he steps out and closes the door behind him.

Did he just call me beautiful?

My throat tightens with emotion, and it kills me to know that we’re finally close and it’s all about to end. It hurts. God, even though I don’t want it to, it does. It fucking hurts so much. I press a hand to my chest, taking a few deep breaths, trying to compose myself. My eyes burn with unshed tears, but I fight them back. It is taking every ounce of strength inside not to crumble, not to scream in frustration.

Why is he doing this?

Have I ever meant a single thing to him?

I numbly gather a few things and then go out to meet Mex at the gate. He gives me a nod, and we both get into his truck and he drives me back to my place. The entire time, all I can think about is the fact that those last words might be the final thing that Western ever says to me that means something. When I catch him out, I know he isn’t going to take it well. His wall will go roaring back up and he’ll shut me off entirely, maybe even worse.

I close my eyes and take a deep breath.

I can do this.

I *have* to do this.

For the boys.

Mex tells me he’ll be outside if I need him, and I hate that I’m making him sit in his car all night. He maintains it doesn’t bother him, but I don’t know how he doesn’t go completely bonkers. I make a plan to invite him in for some pizza later, so that I can have the chance to sneak out. I’m going to get Luna in on my plan and get her to distract him. I’ll act like I have a headache and go to bed.

It's not a great plan, but I'm short on time.

As soon as I'm inside my apartment, I call Luna and tell her that I need her to cover for me tonight. I don't tell her why, but I do explain that it's urgent and if I don't go, someone could get hurt. She is hesitant, but after some more pleading, she agrees and tells me she'll be over soon. I'm going to borrow her car to follow Western, I'll park just over from the club and wait for him to leave. I can only pray he doesn't see me and figure it all out.

It's the only option I have, I don't have time to find out enough information to know where he's going.

I'm running out of time.

Luna arrives about an hour later, and I thank her profusely for coming to help me.

"Are you going to at least give me a hint on what it is you're going to do?" she asks, crossing her arms.

"I'm following Western. I think he's going to do something stupid, and I want to make sure he doesn't."

Luna frowns. "You're not risking your life, are you?"

I shake my head, putting my hands up. "No, gosh no. I promise."

She squints, as if she's trying to see if I'm telling the truth or not.

"I promise, Luna," I say again, reaching for her and squeezing her arm.

"Okay, I trust you. So, you want me to entertain gorgeous out there so you can sneak out? You know I'm kind of seeing Remy now, so you're making it hard on me."

I laugh. "Just for like ten minutes, we'll invite him in for some pizza and I'll make up some story that I have a headache. I'll sneak out the back and borrow your car. Then you can let him go back out to his. Remy will never know, I swear."



“Is that why you wanted me to park down the road, so it would look like I walked here, and he wouldn’t notice my car missing?”

I give her a sheepish smile.

She grins. “You’re a genius, I’ll give you that.”

“And you’re amazing, I owe you one for this.”

“Just promise me you’re not doing something stupid?”

I give her the best smile I can muster up. “I promise.”

I hate lying.

I truly do.

But today, it’s absolutely necessary to.

I hope she’ll forgive me.



GETTING OUT OF THE house was easier than I had anticipated. Mex came in without too much convincing because he was hungry. I sat with them for about half an hour, having pizza, and then I told Luna that I was going to have an early one because I really wasn’t feeling well. She went along with the plan perfectly, chatting to Mex so he couldn’t even question it.

The moment I disappear down the hall to my room, I get changed, get all my things, and sneak out the back door.

Mex has no idea.

Once I make it to Luna’s car, the escape is quick from there.

The issue I run into is when I get closer to the clubhouse, because I don’t know which area to park. I don’t want to be at the wrong end when Western takes off. If he goes in the opposite direction, I might not be able to catch him. Instead, I find an old driveway which I think goes to the house Myla was telling me about, and I reverse in. I can see the clubhouse, but only just. I wind down my window and then I wait and listen.

I wait for what could potentially be hours, and long past the time Western said, because I find myself being startled awake by the sound of a motorcycle revving. I jerk forward, shocked that I allowed myself to doze off. Rubbing my eyes, I frantically turn the car on and then inch forward just enough to see Western's bike leaving the clubhouse along with one of the guys trucks. They turn in the opposite direction towards town, and luckily for me, I manage to pull out and get close enough to them to be able to see where they're going.

With my heart racing, I follow them through town and then out to the other side.

I'm praying they don't notice me following them. I hang back far enough that I'm certain they can't see my face.

We drive for about half an hour, and it's hard to see exactly where we're going because it's dark out. I haven't spent a great deal of time driving out of this side of town, so I'm not certain of the route they're taking. I keep following until they turn down an old dirt road. I know if I follow them down, they're going to get suspicious. Heart racing, I must make a choice. I can only pray that whatever is at the end of that road is their destination, or I'll risk losing them. As they turn, I keep driving.

I don't go far, just down enough to eliminate suspicion.

As soon as they disappear, I turn the car around and then slowly creep down the dirt road. With every passing minute, my stomach twists. I don't know what I'm going to run into, I don't even know if I'm about to lose them, but I do know that I am not looking forward to this confrontation. I don't want to do it, everything inside me is screaming to turn around because the pain is going to take a long time to get over, but I know I can't do that.

I have to find out the truth.

Lights ahead have me slowing down and flicking mine off.

I can't see what exactly it is I'm driving into, but it looks like a building.

Making a quick decision, I pull off the road as much as I can and then get out.

I'll have to walk the rest of the way.

Tucking my phone into my pants, I begin walking in the darkness. My palms are sweating and my stomach is sick with nerves. Focusing on the lights ahead, I follow them until I reach the building. I breathe a sigh of relief when I see the truck and Western's bike parked outside of the building, along with a black SUV. I find a spot behind some thick trees, and try and see as best I can, but I'm still too far away.

I can't see anyone.

Taking a deep breath, I take the risk and rush closer to the building, moving around the back out of sight. I stick to the outside wall as I sneak up closer to a window and dare to peer in. There is only one light on inside the building, and all I can see at first is the mass amounts of boxes and what seems like some kind of stock. Then, I notice him. *Western*. He's standing with Fury, talking to a man I don't recognize. The conversation looks heated, and Western's fists are clenched by his side as he growls something to the man.

They talk back and forth for about ten minutes, and then the man disappears.

A moment later he returns, and my heart sinks.

It just drops right out of my chest.

He is leading a blindfolded boy. It's hard to tell how old he is because his face is covered, but I would guess judging by the size of his body that he's maybe fourteen or fifteen. His hands are bound behind his back and his slow steps tell me he's quite likely drugged. Tears spring forward and my entire body begins to tremble as the reality finally sinks in. I didn't want to believe it, all this time I wanted to see the good in the man I love, but now I see that he's nothing but a monster.

A cold, dead monster.

I can't stop the tear that rolls down my cheek as I watch Fury hand over a suitcase to the man as Western reaches out, pulling the teenager closer to him. The man opens the suitcase,

and then nods, turning and disappearing - as if it's that simple. My heart breaks into a thousand pieces as I stare at the boy. I can't see his face, but I know he's scared. Gosh, he must be terrified. So god damned broken. He doesn't know what he did to deserve this. He is wondering why the people he trusted to take care of him could so easily sell him.

It's sick.

Every single one of these monsters taking money for these kids, should be lined up and shot.

I'm not even sorry for that thought.

Western mutters something to the boy, and then he speaks to Fury for a moment before turning and walking towards the entrance to the building. I have to think fast, because I don't know exactly how I'm going to handle this situation. I was so confident that I would be able to confront him, but now I'm not so sure. What if the man I love is capable of making me disappear, too? Do I have it in me to take that risk?

Then I think of that poor boy and I know that I'm not going to just be able to sit back and do nothing.

I step away from the window and move around the side of the building and watch as Fury, who is now leading the teenager, opens the truck door and has him get inside. Then, he speaks to Western again before getting into the truck and driving away. He's probably going to notice my car parked on the road, and come back, so I guess I'm left without a choice now. I'm going to have to confront Western.

As the truck disappears, I step out from behind the building and walk towards the man I was so willing to give my heart to.

He hears my feet crunching on the leaves and spins, pulling a gun out of his jeans and aiming it right at me. The moment he notices it's me, his eyes flare and the gun lowers. By now, tears are rolling down my cheeks, but they're not broken tears, they're angry ones. I'm so angry my hands are trembling and I'm panting with the kind of hurt and rage I've never felt before.

“You lied to me.”

My voice comes out like a whip, a tone I’ve never heard escape my mouth.

“How the fuck did you find me?” Western growls, tucking the gun into his jeans once more.

“You fucking lied to me!” I scream, the sound making him jerk.

“Now is not the…”

“You’re the monster. All along it was you. All along I’ve been fighting for your name to be cleared, for the world to see what an incredible man you are, and all along it has been you. You are the fucking devil in disguise, ruining lives and sitting back, acting like you haven’t done anything. I fell in love with you. My god, I actually *believed* you.”

He’s staring at me, his face blank, but his eyes are flashing with all kinds of emotions.

“Do you hear me?” I bellow. “I fucking fell in love with you. I thought you were it. The man I could truly give my soul to. All along, you were nothing but a filthy, lying, coward!”

“You don’t know what you’re seein’,” he rasps, his voice full of the kind of emotion I’ve never heard from him.

“Oh, let me guess, what I just saw was entirely wrong. You didn’t hand over cash for a fucking innocent boy!”

Truck lights flash as Fury comes speeding back in.

He saw my car.

He knows Western isn’t alone.

The truck comes to a stop, the lights stay on, and the door opens. Fury gets out, and I spin on him, directing my rage and him, too.

“And you,” I bellow, “you’re as disgusting as he is. How could you?”

Fury’s eyes move to Western.

“Don’t look at him,” I yell, my voice scratchy as it breaks off into broken rasps. “Do not look at him. Look at me.”

The sound of the truck door swinging open has us all turning in that direction. The boy tumbles out and begins running. Fury barks a curse, Western roars something at him, and then the two of them start running. Chasing him down like he is some sort of animal. For a minute, I can’t move. My legs are entirely numb as I stand, sobbing, horrified.

I’m going to Nathan.

Right now.

I’m going to have them all stopped.

I turn and somehow manage to get my body to break out into a jog, panting and gasping, back to my car. I get in, shaky fingers turning the key. I have to get out of here before they stop me, because if they manage to get hold of me then I’m never going to get the chance to stop this. They’ll make sure of it.

Western bellows my name in the distance, but I don’t stop.

I have just turned the car on, ready to turn it around, when a voice echoes from behind me, coming from the darkness within the confined space of my car. A monster on the backseat.

“Hello, Bonnie.”

Cold steel presses to the back of my head, and I freeze.

Bill Whart is in my car.

He’s in my car.

“Drive.”

My body won’t move.

I can’t get my fingers to stop trembling enough to do anything.

“I will shoot you. Drive.”

No.

This can’t be happening.

This *isn't* happening.

I can't go with Bill. If I do, then he'll end me. He'll end me, and I'll never get the chance to share with the world the truth of what these monsters are doing. He isn't going to let me go this time. I can hear it in his voice, I can feel it just by the energy in this car. This is the end of the road for me. He's going to make sure of it.

"You fucking drive or I'll blow your brains all over this windscreen."

I manage to move the car as I desperately come up with a plan.

Driving down the road slowly, my heart slams against my ribcage. I've fucked up. I don't know how, but I have.

"I figured it out," Bill goes on, his voice a singsong tone. "It was actually hilariously obvious once I put the pieces together."

I'm panting now, fingers gripping the wheel as I drive.

"He's smart, I'll give him that."

He's baiting me, wanting me to react, to answer, to say something that'll sink all of this. I'm not going to do that. No, when I take them down, they'll *all* go down, Western included.

"All along I knew he was involved, I knew he was trying to bring me down, little did I know that fucker was outsmarting me."

I grit my teeth.

Yes, Western was paying for the boys Bill was selling, and then selling them for more. I got that loud and clear when I just discovered what I did. My mind is racing to come up with a plan. Something that will get me out of this alive. All I need is to free myself and run, then I can find a way to put them all away, right where they belong. In prison. Rotting.

"I don't know how he was doing it for so long, buying those boys off me and acting like an outside buyer, and then sending them off to start a new life with a new identity. I didn't follow up, why would I? I got my money, got my sale,

and the boys stayed gone...until they didn't. When one returned, I knew something was going wrong. A little bit of digging lead me right to your biker."

Wait.

What?

What is he saying?

That's not...

That's not what I thought.

No.

This can't be happening.

This can't be true.

If he's saying what I think he's saying, then Western has been saving them all along.

I've made a mistake. A big mistake.

How could I have gotten this so very wrong?







**B**ill makes me drive past the town and out the other side. My phone rings the entire time, vibrating in my pants. I'm desperate to grab it, to answer it, to tell Western how sorry I am. I can't believe I thought he was the bad guy in all of this. I can't believe I didn't trust him. Of course he has been saving the boys, it all suddenly makes so much sense to me now. He is the hero and I branded him a monster.

My heart screams in pain.

Bill continues to talk as if we're on a casual date.

He brags about how clever he is, about how Western is going down, about how he has enough proof to bring the entire club down for life. Then, he'll just move to another town and keep his little ring of terror going. Only this time, he'll be earning more because now he knows that he has been earning far less 'selling' the boys to what he thought was a buyer taking them overseas, when all along it was Western setting it up to come back to him.

Now he can make double the amount.

He thinks he has won.

I have to outsmart him.

I have to get out of this car, get to the club and warn Western.

This has to end, and it has to end now.

"It won't matter," I say, trying to throw him off. "If the club goes down, people will become far more aware of what's happening and you won't get away with it. Your little plan will be out in the open and you'll fail."

Bill chuckles. "There are towns far enough away that I can take my business to where it'll be like chopping fresh meat,

untouched.”

He makes me sick.

“Western was in prison for twenty years. He was being accused of having something to do with it back then. How can it have possibly gone on for so long. If they had ‘evidence’ back then, they would have charged Western and the club.”

“We threw that in for good measure, a bit of town gossip. There had been talk of the missing kids, but there was no proof. Why not throw it out there for people to wonder about when it comes to Western? After the shooting, people were more concerned about the monster in town than they were about the few missing teenagers that the police had already announced were runaways. I was more careful after that, scattering my sales between five or six different states. Can’t put all your eggs in one basket.”

This is what power gets you.

Bill and whoever he’s working for own the police in this town, and no doubt many others. That means, they can spin a story whatever way they want. They couldn’t pin the foster kids going missing on the club, but they could make sure the town thought it was them. They could make sure Western’s name was ruined, and in doing that, they would be covering their own tracks to keep their own little plan going.

It’s genius.

Bill continues talking when I don’t answer.

“The only thing that club did that was smart, was to become a buyer for the boys. They started saving them, like they’re some sort of fucking heroes. They couldn’t have honestly thought I wouldn’t find out. I find out everything. That’s why Daniel is lying in a grave right now, his son beside him, because he dared question me when it was his child on the line.”

Is that why Bill killed Daniel, because he threatened to bring what he was doing to light?

“I don’t understand how you can take boys so easily, and nobody notices.”

Bill grins, all proud of himself. I know he'll brag because he thinks he has won. He is certain this is the end of the line for me. I want him to brag because I want as much information as I can get.

"Money talks, Bonnie. You would be surprised what people would do for cash. Those foster families are doing it half the time for extra money that they get for those kids. We roll in, find the worst ones, and we offer them a hefty sum to report their kids as a runaway and allow us to take them. I've rarely had one disagree. The ones that do, don't get a chance to speak out."

I swallow the lump in my throat.

What does that mean? He kills them.

"Everyone has secrets, Bonnie. We find out all their secrets before we go to them. Then, if they don't agree to sell the kids, we give them a glimpse of what their futures might look like if they don't give us what we want. Daniel was the only one to fight us, to dig deeper, to try and play the system and he was ended for it. After that, we were smarter about it. We made sure we were picking the families who we knew were struggling."

To know if a family is struggling, he'd have to have access to financial records.

Whoever he's working for, has their finger in a lot of pies.

"You're disgusting," I grind out. "Those kids have had it hard enough. They deserve better."

"Well, thanks to your little biker, they got better...*until now*. That club is going to be removed from the picture, so I can continue without them in my way."

I knew that Bill was suspicious of the club, hell, I was too. I thought they were involved, I knew they were into more than they were letting on, but I could have never guessed they were actually helping those kids. I made a mess of all this. If I had just trusted Western, I might not be here right now. Bill wouldn't have the upper hand. The club wouldn't be in danger of losing everything.

I screwed up.

So damned bad.

This all goes so much deeper than I could have ever imagined.

Did Bill know that all along? Was he playing me purely just to get the club on edge, to have the chance to dig deeper, to have them make a mistake? With him, it's hard to know. He's smart, there is no denying that. He couldn't have gotten away with what he has, if he wasn't clever. There has to be a way to bring him down, to make the world see what kind of man he is.

Colt said once, you have to take down the King. What if we were to just cut the King off at the knees, put a chink in the chain, wound him so he's forced to come out of hiding?

Would that be enough?

Maybe taking Bill out, will bring forward the man behind all of this.

Right now, though, I have to get out of this car.

Bill has always made it clear he's not letting me go.

He's going to make sure I don't see the light of day again.

That's not going to happen.

We drive, and as we do, I come up with a plan.

It's not a good plan, but it might just work.

Bill is sitting behind me, but he's to my right so he can sit comfortably with the gun pointed at me. He's on the backseat. If I crash the car just right, I can probably wound him enough for me to be able to get out. At least, put him in a daze long enough for me to escape. The only problem with my plan is...I might just end up hurting myself just as bad if I'm not careful.

I'm willing to take the risk, because if I don't, I'm going to die regardless and I'm not going down without a fight.

I begin scanning the road for the perfect tree, the perfect ledge, anything that will get me out of this car and away from

this man. The further we go out of town, the thicker the trees on the side of the road become and I know now is my chance to finish this. I take a deep breath and glance at Bill in the rearview mirror. He has the gun sitting in his lap, but his hand is covering it, ensuring I know he can point and aim at any moment.

He looks down at his phone and I know it's my only chance.

Taking a deep breath and sending a prayer up above, I swerve off the road. Bill yells out, startled, but his voice only lasts seconds as the car slams into a tree. I brace on the steering wheel with my hands tightly wound around it as my body jerks forward. The crunching sounds of the car impacting the tree are louder than I would have ever anticipated.

My fingers slip off the steering wheel as the car does a dramatic spin, and my head slams down over it. The car then comes to a stop, a sizzling sound can be heard from the back. It takes me a moment to gather my bearings, but I know I have to move quickly. The hit on the tree is not as good as I'd like, and mostly the front is impacted, but I don't take long to stop and think about it. I unbuckle my seatbelt, throw the door open, and run.

I don't once look back to see how Bill fared.

I don't care.

I run up to the side of the road, and frantically wave down a car. The distinct taste of copper fills my mouth and I know I'm bleeding. Someone must have been behind me and witnessed my crash, because a car is already coming to a stop and a man rushes out. "Ma'am, are you okay?"

I nod, my heart racing as I hear a car door slam down below.

Bill is alive.

The man in front of me doesn't seem to notice, and I know I've only got seconds to convince him to help me.

"My car just slipped. I don't know what happened. Can you take me into the hospital?"

The man nods. “Should we call the police? Are you alone?”

“Yes, I’m alone,” I say, a little too quickly but he doesn’t seem to notice. “I would rather just get to the hospital as soon as possible.”

“Come on.”

We go back to his car and get in, and he drives off, handing me a towel from the back seat to press over my head. I push it against the wound and as we pass, I glance in the mirror to see Bill appearing on the side of the road. He has blood on his head, too, and he’s looking at the car disappearing with a threat of death in his eyes. He’s going to come down hard after this, so I only have a little bit of time left to get to the club.

This man thinks he’s taking me to the hospital, but if we arrive there and he insists on taking me in, then I’ll have a problem. An approaching gas station has an idea coming to mind and I turn to him, my voice croaky as I say, “I’m not feeling okay. Can you stop so I might use the restroom?”

Pulling to a stop, the man turns to me. “You could have a concussion. You need to get to a hospital.”

I nod. “I just...I feel like I’m going to be sick. I’ll be one minute.”

He seems hesitant, but I suppose he knows he can’t hold me in his car so he tells me he’ll go and get me some water. We both get out and I make my way towards the restroom outside. The moment he enters the gas station, I turn and run down the road. We’re nearly back in town, and it’ll only take me a few minutes to get to the club from here being that it is on the way out. I keep to the side of the road, using the trees as cover, moving as fast as my body will take me to get to the clubhouse.

When I finally make it, I’m panting, my head is pounding and there is far more blood than I’d like running down my face and soaking my shirt. I’m a sight, I know it, but I wasn’t going to stop until I made it and I finally have. Rushing up to the

front gates, two of the bikers waiting notice me and their eyes widen. One of them barks out for someone to get Night. I stop just inside the gates, pressing my hands to my knees, the scent and taste of blood overwhelming my senses.

“Bonnie?”

Western’s gravelly voice fills my ears and I lift my head.

The moment I see him, everything comes flooding forward.

I have so much I want to say, and yet my mind can’t seem to form the words.

Instead, I do the only thing I can think of. I pick up the pace as I rush towards him, bloody tears rolling down my cheeks. The moment I reach him, my voice comes out in a rasp. “I’m so sorry. I was so wrong.” Then, I throw myself at him. He catches me without hesitation, his big arms going around me, his face burying into my neck, blood and all.

“Never be sorry,” he murmurs. “Never.”

I cling to him as if my life depends on it, never wanting to let go. We stand there in the dust, our bodies intertwined, the truth finally revealed.

“I love you,” I say, pulling back. “I love you, Western.”

He swipes some blood off my lips with his thumb. “Love you, too.”

Those words. Oh. Those are the words I’ve dreamed of every second since the day I gave my heart over to him. I grip his face and pull him closer, smashing my lips against his as the world seems to come to a stop around us. He kisses me back, fingers tangled in my hair, his body pressing against mine.

It has finally happened.

After so long.

Western is mine.

He’s finally mine.





“WE’RE GOIN’ INTO LOCKDOWN,” Western announces, standing in front of the large group of bikers before him. “Bill is goin’ to retaliate, and until we have a plan, we aren’t riskin’ lives.”

“Are Luna and Leo safe?” I ask him, sitting beside him in fresh clothes and a patched-up head.

“I’ll ensure they are.”

I give him a grateful smile.

“What’s the plan, Pres?” Mex asks, crossing his arms, his eyes ready for a fight.

“I’m not sure yet. We’ve got to be careful. If we play this wrong, we’re all goin’ down. Bill is a smart fucker, and he’s not goin’ to let this one slide.”

“I say we fuckin’ take him out,” Fury growls. “End that fucker once and for all.”

“If it were that easy, boy,” Colt throws in. “We’d have done it.”

He’s right.

They would have.

“He give you any hint about who he’s workin’ for?” Fury asks me.

I shake my head. “No. He never lets that slip. He just spent the entire time bragging about how clever he has been this whole time. He’s confident, he’s certain he has the upper hand. He is planning on bringing the club down, and I think you all need to get there before he can.”

“That’s what I’m plannin’ on doin’,” Western growls. “Fury, Mex, you two check the ammo, load up, make sure we’re covered if some fucker drops another attack on the club.”

The two of them nod.

“Why do you think the club was attacked to begin with?” I ask Western. “Bill didn’t know then what you were doing.”

“No, but he wanted to rattle us. He was makin’ it known that he has the world on his side, and he would find out the truth.”

Right.

Which means he could do it again.

“Are we safe here?”

Western looks to me. “With me, you’re always safe.”

That warms my heart in a way he’ll never understand.

If only he knew just how much a sentence could alter my soul.

Sounds coming from outside the club have Western whipping his head towards the front door, his eyes narrowing as he glances out, not a single inch of flesh on his body moving as he processes what he’s hearing. He’s like a wild animal, his instincts so in tune with what’s happening around him.

“What is that fuckin’ sound?” Western barks.

Colt’s eyes narrow and he mutters a curse. “Myla.”

I listen now, curious.

The faint sound of music blaring can be heard in the distance. The distinct smell of smoke fills the clubhouse, what smells like a fire burning rather close by. Colt leaves the group, his hands bunched into fists by his side as he charges out the door. Western follows, and my curiosity gets the better of me and I rush out, too.

As soon as our feet hit the dusty ground, we can see smoke rising up into the horizon, coming from the direction of the old house Myla inherited. Over the top of the blaring music I can hear Myla’s voice, singing along to a song at the top of her lungs. I can’t help the smile that automatically appears on my face. She’s so carefree. She knows the club is right here and she knows Colt will be wild with her, but it doesn’t stop her.

I'm suspecting not much does stop Myla.

Colt charges past the front gates, past Western's shed, and to an old gate that sits at the top right of the clubhouse compound. I didn't know it was there, probably because I've never been past Western's shed. It's an old gate, rickety and rusted, but Colt pushes it as though it's sleek and modern, slamming it open and sending it flying off its hinges. Western glances at me over his shoulder as he follows his dad, and I pick up the pace to keep up with them.

I'm not missing this.

*Absolutely not.*

We rush down an old, worn path, that was probably once kept in a well contained state. It looks like it might even have pavers on the ground that have been eaten up by grass and earth. An image forms in my head, one I can't help but create. Colt and Myla's aunt, meeting each other on this path, walking side by side, a love story that is now covered by earth and rust. I could be wrong, of course, but there is something about the way Colt is holding himself, that tells me this one might have done more damage than he's willing to admit.

We come out on the other side of the path and an old house comes into view. It certainly is run down, there is no missing that, but I can see that once, it was incredible. A beautiful old home, with a wraparound porch. Overgrown gardens surround the front, but I'm certain once they blossomed. The front steps leading up to the one story home are rotten and broken, and the porch has holes and rot all through it. Time has destroyed the outside of the home, but the bones still stand, just waiting for someone to love them.

"Myla!" Colt roars, his voice making me flinch.

God, he's scary.

I thought Western could be stone cold and terrifying, but Colt has had many more years to master his rage and let me tell you, he has chipped it down to a fine art.

A huge fire blares off to the left of the house, full of what appears to be old furniture and bits of timber. It's roaring, the

heat radiating out. Beside that large fire, is Myla. She's standing in a pair of tiny shorts, a bikini top, her hair bound up at the top of her head, a beer in her hand, and music pounding out of a speaker that is on a chair beside the fire. She's wiggling around, her arms flying into the air as she bellows with pure joy.

She's crazy.

I love it.

She has a free spirit, wild and untamed.

That is something you don't find in many people.

Colt charges over, lifts the speaker into his hand and hauls it into the fire. My mouth drops open and a shocked laugh comes out as the black, expensive-looking device just flies into the raging fire. Myla's arms drop to her side and she turns, mouth agape as she looks to Colt who is glaring at her in a way that would bring most people to their knees.

It suddenly falls silent as the fire consumes the speaker and sends it into oblivion.

"What sort of seizure did you just have, because that was expensive!" Myla shouts at Colt, her eyes flaring with rage.

"I don't fuckin' care what deal you made with your fuckin' aunt to get this place, but I will tell you that you will be here and when you are, you will be fuckin' *silent*."

Myla straightens and puts a hand to her forehead. "Yes sir, boss sir."

I wheeze, trying to contain my laughter. Western gives me a look of warning, but I can't help it. This is too much entertainment and heaven knows I've needed something to make me laugh after what I've endured in the past few days.

Colt takes a step closer to her, his face a mere inches from hers. "Do not mouth off to me, little girl."

"I suppose in comparison to your dinosaur age, I could be classed as little, but don't ever call me a girl again, *uncle*."

I wonder what the age gap between the two of them is? I know Colt had Western very young, he and Western's mom were only fifteen when she fell pregnant with him. It's a whole other story. My guess is that there would be around a twenty-year age gap, but with Colt looking as fine as he does, that is certainly not noticeable. Any woman with eyes and a vagina is going to notice him and wonder what it would be like to be consumed by him. He's fire and age only makes him so much better.

"Call me that again," Colt grinds out, "and I'll lift you up and throw you into that fuckin' fire."

The self-control it is taking not to burst out laughing is tough, really tough.

"Whatever you say, uncle," Myla mutters, turning back towards the fire.

"I'm not your fuckin' uncle," Colt barks and then steps towards her, slamming his shoulder into her tiny waist and hauling her up over his shoulder.

Her screeches can be heard as he charges towards the house.

Western turns to me. "That's our queue."

"Is she safe?" I tease.

Western shrugs. "She pokes the bear, she gets eaten."

Oh boy.

We walk away from the fire and towards the path, heading back to the club. I wonder how things are going to unfold with the two of them. I make a note to go over and chat to Myla when things settle down, I'd love to hear more about it. Not to mention, I want to go into that old house and see what it's like inside. The quick glance I saw of it, almost seems like it was left abandoned, not a single thing being moved as whatever happened unfolded.

Whatever it was, it must have been bad.

Colt has never come over here and he has never maintained this place. That alone tells me it must have done

some kind of damage for him to cut it off this way.

What a twisted story it must be.

“Did you meet Chloe?” I ask Western as we get back to the club and he attempts to put the fence back in place.

“No, but I heard about her,” Western tells me. “Mom left and dad spent all his time fightin’ for me while I was in prison. He met Chloe durin’ that time, and they were together for a good while. Not sure what went down, but I know it was bad.”

“He never talked about it?”

Western shakes his head.

“How long did she own that house?”

“When we were kids it was abandoned. Then an old couple bought it but they passed, leavin’ it abandoned once more. Nobody wanted to live next to a club. Chloe owned it after that, as far as I know.”

“Colt must have been hurt to never go over there and fix it up,” I murmur, glancing back in the direction of the smoke rising above the trees.

“Whatever went down, it destroyed my dad.”

That really sucks.

I hope one day I get answers to that.

“Got to get back to business,” Western murmurs, “runnin’ out of time and don’t have patience for Colt and his dramas. You can wait in the shed, I have to call a meetin’.”

Meaning just the guys. I get it.

All afternoon, I’ve been thinking of something that might work to get Bill out of the picture. Of course, nothing I come up with is going to take down whoever he’s working for, but it sure as hell might be enough to end him and right now, that’s better than nothing. That buys the club time to be able to get to the bottom of this, and it’ll expose Bill for the monster he truly is. He’ll go away for a long time and he’ll never taste freedom again.

“I might have a plan, but I was wondering if I could ask you a question?”

Western pauses and turns, staring down at me. “Ask.”

“Do you know where all the boys are, the ones that you saved? Did you keep record of their names and where you sent them to begin their new lives?”

Narrowing his eyes, Western nods.

I smile. “I think I have a way to finish Bill Whart.”

Taking a step towards me, Western murmurs, “I’m listenin’....”







Staring down between us, I watch as Western's cock drags out of my pussy, coated in a sleek layer of arousal. The thick, rigid length stretches me wide as he slowly sinks it back in, and I hungrily lap it up, loving every second of the way he fills me. The veins on his shaft bulge as he rocks those incredible hips, sinking in and out, his release nearing. I want to see it, when he finds his ending. I want to watch as he cums all over my flesh.

"Cum on me," I whimper, my legs over his shoulders as he slams me on the kitchen table.

With a feral hiss, he pulls his cock out, curling his hand around the near purplish flesh. He jerks it up and down and the sight alone is enough to make my pussy clench with need. He has already given me three orgasms and still, I want more. Watching him pleasure himself, watching the way his jaw tightens and his muscles strain as his face fills with ecstasy, is something I'll never grow tired of.

A low groan leaves his lips and he releases, spurting cum all over me. It lands on my stomach and then shoots up... hitting me right in the eye.

I gasp, shocked, and then begin rubbing frantically as my vision blurs. Western makes a guttural sound, and then reaches for me, pulling me up so I'm sitting. His cum rolls down my belly, but I'm focusing more on wiping him from my eye. I reach for an item of clothing beside us, and manage to curl my fingers around my panties. I bring them to my eye and wipe, before focusing on Western.

His mouth is turned up into what I could only imagine is his best version of a smile.

The world seems to stop around me as I stare at him, wanting to cry with happiness. I've never seen him come close

to a smile, and now I'm looking at it, my heart is swelling with the kind of happiness I could have never imagined. The fact that it's because he just came in my eye, isn't lost on me.

“Western Aiken, are you smiling because you just blew in my eye?”

His mouth tips up a little more.

My heart swells.

“All this time, all my amazing jokes, and *this* is what gets you to smile for the first time?”

“Fuckin' funniest thing I've seen in a long time.”

“You would think that. Are you going to clean me up?”

He leans forward, putting his hands around behind me and gripping my backside as he pulls me onto his hips, my legs going around him. Then, with that gorgeous grin, he walks us both into the shower.

It's the best moment we've had together.

I laugh the entire way there.

As soon as we're done, we get dressed to make our way down to the clubhouse where I'm going to tell them all my plan. Western thinks I'm onto something, and that brings me so much joy. He trusts me and he is hearing me out, and I know that what I've come up with, should change things enough to get Bill what he deserves.

As for the man he's working for, that's a problem for another day.

Bill is going to get what has been coming to him for a very long time.

Western is going to get his revenge.

We make our way to the clubhouse, and I have a pair of sunglasses covering my eyes. Turns out that having a man ejaculate into your eye will cause a lot of redness and swelling. I can't let the guys see that, they'll never let me live it down. It might be a cold, rainy day, but I'm rocking these sunglasses like my life depends on it.

Stepping inside, we approach the group of bikers, waiting for us.

“You’re inside, Bonnie. Don’t need sunglasses,” Fury says, immediately bringing attention to me.

I purse my lips. “It’s sunny.”

Colt snorts. “Ain’t fuckin’ sunny.”

“It’s a little bit sunny,” I mumble.

“Night, did you jerk off in her eye?” Mex says, and everyone chuckles.

“Exactly that,” Western says, his voice low.

Everyone falls silent, and then Fury bursts out laughing.

Before I know it, they’re all laughing, the sound filling the room.

I take my sunglasses off and toss them to the ground, rolling my eyes. “Okay, you bunch of animals, laugh it up. I’ve got a swollen eye. We get it. His aim is incredibly poor.”

This only brings out more laughter.

I glance at Western, and he’s got that slight upturn on his lips again.

Dammit.

I can’t wait for the day he laughs. Really laughs.

It’ll complete me.

“Let’s get to business now,” Western finally orders, but his voice is a lot lighter than it was before. “Bonnie has an idea, and it’s a fuckin’ good one.”

“We’re listenin’,” Colt says, crossing his arms, a smirk still on his face.

“Bonnie,” Western says, extending a hand to indicate I can speak.

“Well, as you all know I’m a reporter. A touchy subject around here, but something that could help us. I have someone who owes me a big favor, and I’m going to use that. I’m going

to write a story, but that story is going to expose Bill Whart for the monster he is. Then, he's going to prison until the day his boss has him killed in there."

"You've got my attention," Venom mutters, crossing his arms.

"Mine, too," Fury nods. "Go on."

"Well, Western has been making calls and he has managed to get enough of the boys you've saved to come forward and tell the truth. I'm going to get each and every one of their stories, and we're going to blast it all over the media. I have a cop friend, don't worry, he's a good one. He's going to interview each and every one of them before we release the story, and then he's going to arrest Bill Whart. When Bill's boss finds out he has been caught, he's going to make sure he can't talk and Bill will be no longer..."

It's a good plan.

I know it.

They know it.

I'm a damned genius.

"That's not a bad plan," Colt nods, impressed.

"Oh, I know," I grin.

"You've got the boys on board?" Colt asks Western.

"Enough of them."

"Then what the fuck are we waitin' for? Let's bring this asshole down!" Mex says, grinning.

Western looks to me. "You ready for this?"

"I have been ready since the day I first heard the name Bill Whart. Let's do this."

"Mex will take you into town so you can organize the story to be released. We'll get your cop friend set up with the boys. Let's finish this."

God yes.

Let's finish it.

Finally.

Bill is never going to know what has hit him.

It's the end of the line for him.



HOLDING MY BREATH, I wait in desperation for the television to come on.

For the news to break.

Jerimiah had no choice but to agree to share my story with as many media outlets as he could find. He has enough contacts to get it exactly where I need it to be and I made sure that he got it sent out far and wide. He agreed and told me he wouldn't just get it in the paper, he would make sure the biggest news stations on the television would be reporting on it.

Nathan took the statements from the boys, each and every one of them. They all told the same story. Bill Whart sold them. He took them from their homes, paid off their families and sold them. Then Western went and got them, saved them and gave them a new life. There were a few that didn't want to speak, and that was understandable, but there were enough willing to help Western after what he did for them.

Nathan can't be the one to arrest Bill, it's not his area, but he has people he trusts who can and so he is working with them to bring the story to light and the moment it is, Bill will be arrested and thrown into prison where he belongs. The world is about to find out what kind of monster they're living with, and Western is going to finally have his name cleared. He'll finally be able to move away from the name that has tarnished him for so long – monster.

I spent an entire night writing a story that I hope does this case justice.

Now, the rest is up to Jeremiah.

We're all waiting with baited breath, and when the morning news breaks, Bill Whart's face stretches across the

screen. Leo and Luna are both at the clubhouse with us. When I told them about my plan, they weren't going to miss the moment it broke. Everyone is here, and we've all been waiting for the live news to come on the screen. Seeing Bill on the screen as police officers swarm him in the street, arresting him, the headlines blast across the screen with the faces of all the missing boys.

A reporter comes on, a young lady who tells the world what we have discovered.

“Bill Whart has been arrested this morning after evidence was brought forward proving that he has been involved in the buying and selling of multiple teenage boys in town for close to twenty-five years. Western Aiken, who has been under the spotlight for so many years now, has been cleared of all charges when proof was given that Bill murdered Daniel and Braith Gregory. Over five boys have come forward and given statements claiming that Bill paid out their families, and that local biker, Western Aiken, was the one to take them, give them a new identity and provide them with a new, safer life. It would seem the town's monster, is actually the town's hero. More to come.”

Luna shouts loudly, whooping as she throws her hands into the air.

I can't help it, I throw my hands up too and bellow with joy as I watch police officers loading Bill Whart into a car.

He might have the police on his side, but Nathan ensured that the big guns came in from out of state for this. Men that aren't working for Bill Whart and his boss, and those men aren't going to let him run free. They're going to make sure he goes to prison, where he belongs. After that, what his boss does to him is no longer our problem.

Turning to Western, I smile as I get up and walk over, wrapping my arms around his waist. He looks down at me, a light in his eyes I've never seen before. He is relieved, something inside him is finally free. After so many years of being dubbed the criminal, his name has been cleared. He is no

longer the person who took innocent lives, instead he's the person who saved them.

"You fuckin' saved me," Western murmurs, looking down at me with the kind of appreciation in his eyes I never thought I'd see.

"You deserve to be saved. You've lived long enough like this. Now, it's your turn to be free."

His thumb strokes over my cheek as his big hand cups my face. "Love you."

Those words will never get old. Not ever. "I love you, too."

Colt walks over, placing a hand on my shoulder. I turn and face him, my eyes bright as I offer him my warmest smile.

"Can't thank you enough for what you've done for my boy."

He might not say much but those words mean everything.

They mean the absolute world.

"You're welcome."

"You know," Fury pipes up. "We took down one monster, but we also started a war."

Western nods. "Yeah, we did, and I can't fuckin' wait to finish it."

Fury is right, this isn't over.

We did start a war.

We took Bill down, but whoever he is working for is going to want their revenge. They're going to come after the club, after me, after all of us. We'll be ready, though. We knew it was a risk, doing what we did. We knew that exposing Bill would open a can of worms, but we also knew that it would cause damage. It might not bring down the King, but the King is injured now.

An injured King can only do so much damage.

Most of all, though, Western has been freed. His name has been cleared. The demons he carries have been released from his soul. He no longer has to walk down the street, with people judging him, whispering, calling him names. Instead, he can now walk down with his head held high, with his chest puffed out, knowing that he is no longer the bad guy.

It's all worth it, just to give him that.

Even if we have a long road ahead.

At least we're in it together.

The club has a lot more to go through now, but at the very least, Western and I can finally start our lives together.

"Well," Myla's voice comes from behind us, and I glance over my shoulder to see her standing at the door, "I'll be."

Colt growls something, but she completely ignores him.

"I had my doubts about you," she tells Western, "I guess I was wrong."

"What did I say about enterin' my club," Colt barks at her.

She rolls her eyes. "Take a chill pill, grandpa, I'm just congratulating my cousin here on his freedom."

I can't help it this time, I burst out laughing.

Colt glares at me, but I can't stop the rolling giggles that escape my throat.

Western holds onto me tighter, but I know he's fighting back his own smile.

I cannot wait to see how this unfolds for Colt.

Myla isn't going to go easy on him.

Oh, what a story that will be.





# THE END



**T**hank you so much for giving Bonnie and Western a chance! If you loved their story, I would appreciate it if you could leave a review! Your support means so much to me! You'll never understand. Thank you!

You'll be pleased to know that Colt and Myla's story is coming very soon, and you're not going to want to miss it. It's a twisted tale that will take you on the wildest ride yet, so strap in and get ready! Until then, you can follow me on all my socials here...

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