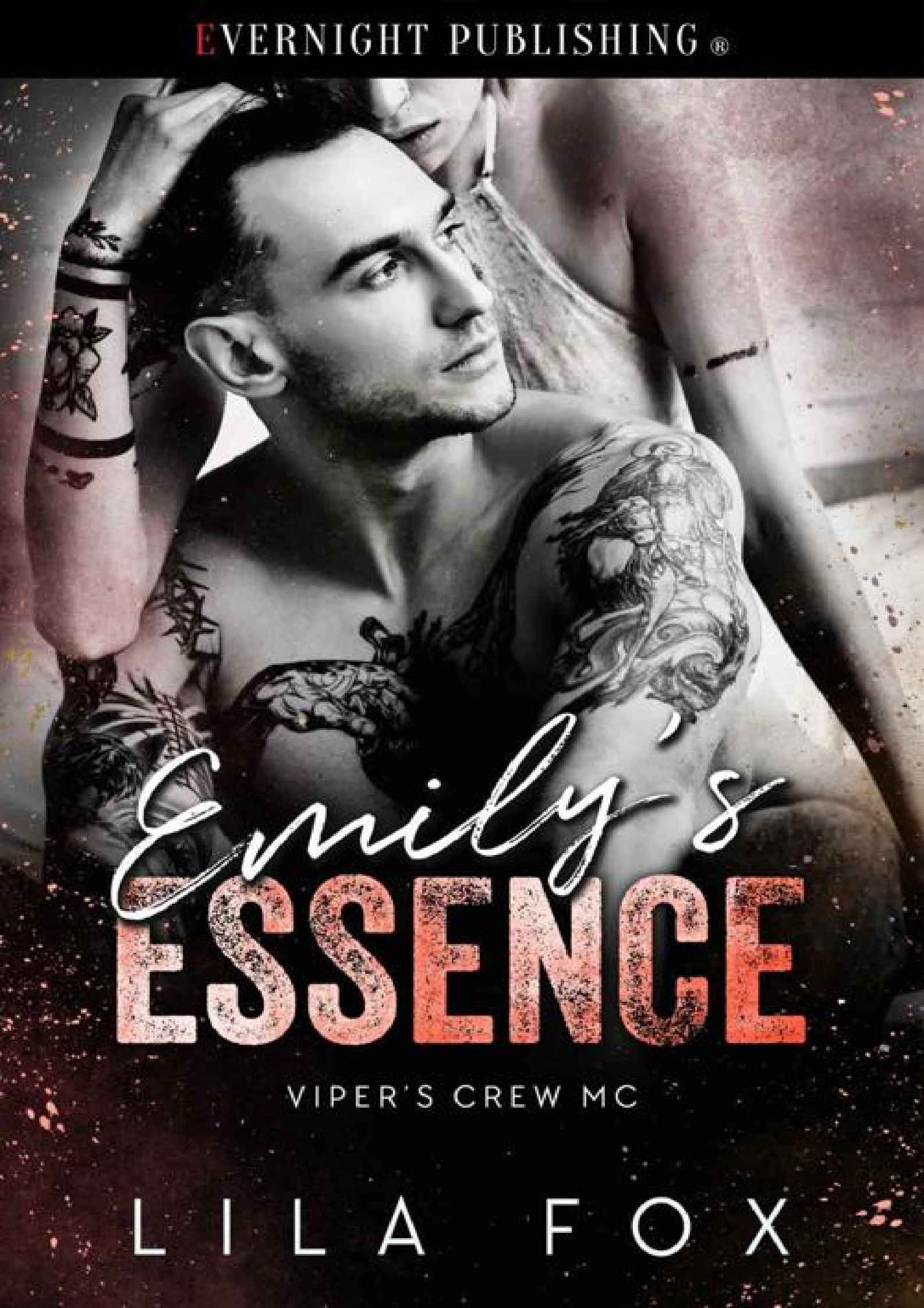


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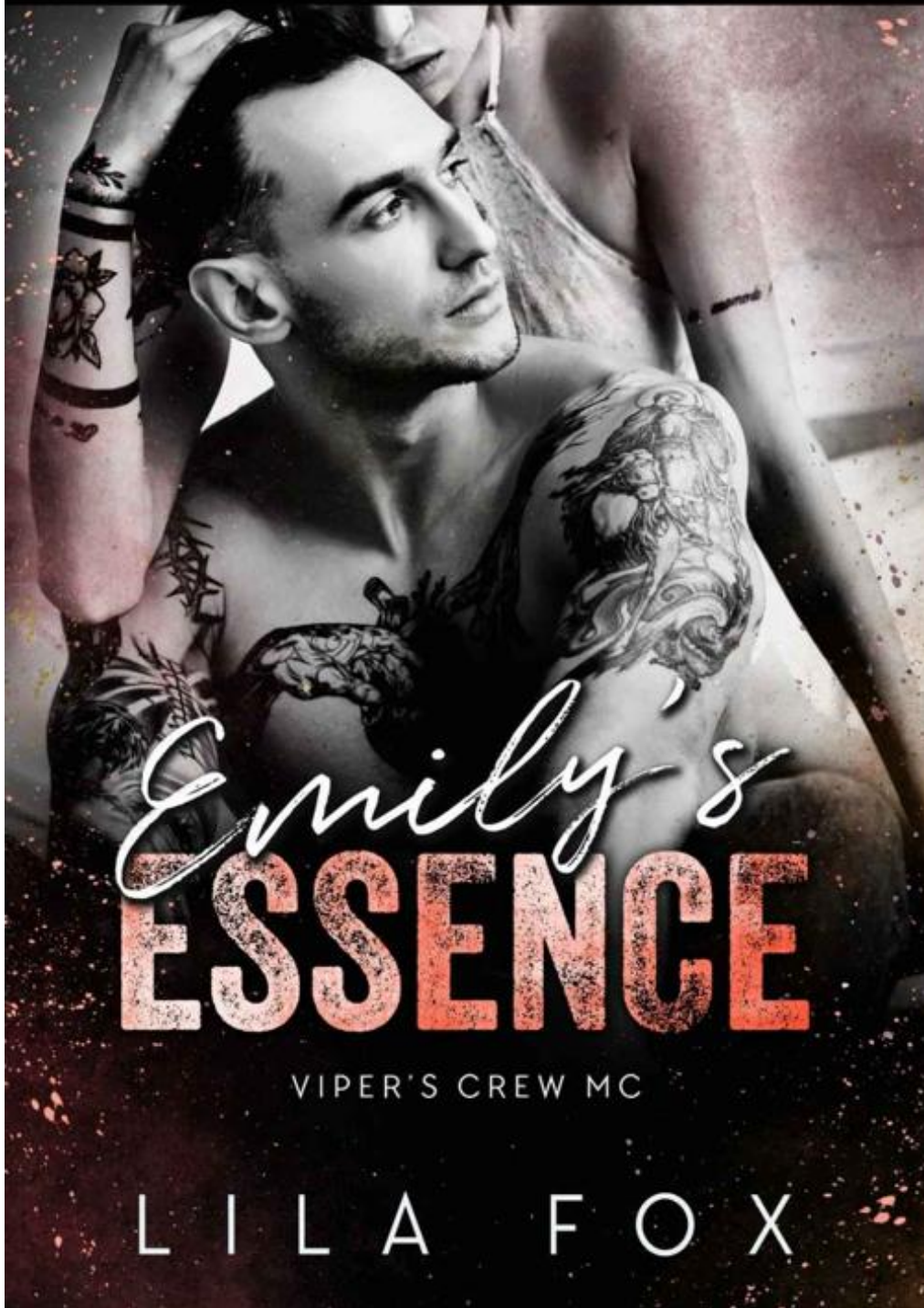


*Emily's*  
**ESSENCE**

VIPER'S CREW MC

LILA FOX

EVERNIGHT PUBLISHING®



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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this book to the editor and publisher.  
You guys are fabulous. I couldn't do this without you.

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# EMILY ' S ESSENCE

*Viper's Crew MC, 6*

Lila Fox

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## Chapter One

Hawk looked up at the commotion by the door of the bar. He and his men watched as four bikers dragged a woman in, and Hawk could tell she didn't want to be there and was terrified.

Brick nudged him. "Yo, man, look at that."

Hawk nodded. "I see it."

"Are we going to do anything to help her?" Ink asked.

Hawk nodded but kept his gaze on the men and woman. What the fuck were they thinking terrorizing someone so much smaller than them?

One of them grabbed onto her breast hard, making her scream.

Hawk slammed back the rest of his beer, and headed toward them. He stood with his hands on his hips, knowing his men were behind him. Not that he needed them because these guys were his, and they knew not to get involved unless he asked.

"What the fuck do you want?" one of them said.

"I wanted to know why you're such a pussy. Does it make you feel like men hurting a small person?"

One of them got in his face making him smile. "Stand down, men," he said to his guys, hearing a few of them groan.

"He never lets us have any fun," Brick said.

Hawk rolled his eyes. They sounded like preschoolers.

He concentrated his attention on the fuckwad in front of him. "How about this? If you let her go now, I won't hurt you too badly. If you don't ... well, you won't be seeing another sunrise."

The man snorted and looked over his shoulder at his friends. "Did you hear that? This fucker is going to hurt us."

Hawk smiled at the fake whiny tone of the man. “I guess that means you want it the hard way.”

“What the fuck does that mean?”

Hawk slammed his head into the man’s nose. When the guy cried out, he rammed his knee into his groin, making him fall to the ground and wither. One of them rushed toward him only to land on his back unconscious from the blow. The guy holding the woman in front of him as a shield was next.

“Fucker, back off, or I’m breaking her neck.”

“No, you’re not.” Hawk moved fast, whipping his knife from his belt and throwing it at the man catching his throat.

The man released the girl to grip the hole in his neck. Hawk guessed he had a minute to live before he bled out. He turned and concentrated on the last one.

Just as he expected, the man roared and came at him. Hawk sidestepped at the last moment bringing his hand down on the back of his neck. The man fell to his face and groaned. Hawk kicked him hard in the side, making him grunt. He stood off to the side, looking disgusted. “That was pitiful. You should have listened to me, fuckers.”

“Can we have them now, Boss?” Razor said.

Hawk looked toward the woman who stood shaking against the wall. “Yeah, take them out back first. I don’t think the owner of the place wants more blood on the floor.”

His men whooped and dragged the men off the floor and outside.

He walked closer to the woman. Fuck, he could tell she was trying hard to hold it together and even raised her chin.

“I ... I’ll fight you. I’d rather be dead than gang-raped.”

Hawk rolled his eyes. “Babe, that’s what I just saved you from.”

Her eyes flickered around the room. “But you guys...”



“Won’t do a damn thing but get you where you need to go.”

He could tell she didn’t trust him, but he didn’t blame her.

“What’s your name?”

“E ... Emily.”

“I’m Hawk.”

She looked a little confused.

“What?” he asked.

“It ... it’s an unusual name.”

He snorted. “Where are you headed?” He was impressed because she held herself together where other women would have fallen apart. She held the shirt they ripped together and tried to wipe the blood that came from her split lip. Her eyes were swollen, and she had bruises everywhere. She was a tough little shit. He respected that.

“I don’t know.”

“Where did they get you?”

“Coming out of a convenience store.”

“Can we take you home?”

She shook her head. “No, that’s what I was running from. If you can just give me the backpack they took from me, I’ll be on my way.”

Jesus, he had so many questions and would damn well get his answers before he let her go.

“Let’s go find it, and then we’ll take care of you.”

Hawk grabbed her upper arm, careful to be gentle. They walked outside to see his men come around the side of the building, grinning.

“They took her bag, guys. Let’s find it and then head out.”

The men walked to the bastards’ bikes.

“I’ve got it,” Brick, his vice prez, called out. He held it up.

“There’s a motel several miles down the road. Let’s stop there for the night. I want Doc to look her over.”

“Wait,” she said and tried to tug her arm away from him. “If you just give me my bag, I’ll go my way.”

Hawk shook his head. “No, you won’t. You’ll let us take care of you.”

She started to struggle.

He cupped the back of her head and held her steady. “Settle down. We’re not going to hurt you.”

She sniffed. “All men say that, but you’re all liars.”

Fuck. “Listen, I’m not sure what’s going on with you, but you’re not in any shape to go anywhere by yourself. You’re hurt and in shock. Let us take care of you. I would swear we’d never hurt you, but I don’t think you’d take my word for it.”

## Chapter Two

Emily felt shakier and knew she would collapse in the next minute or so. She knew she was probably being an idiot, but he wasn't going to let her go, so she didn't have a choice. There was no more fight left in her. Her whole body ached, and her brain was muddled, making it nearly impossible to think straight.

"I'll go with you, but I have to do something first."

She tugged her arm away and walked over to the bastards' bikes. She kicked as hard as she could, making them all crash to the ground.

She looked at him. "You wouldn't happen to have a hammer on you, would you?"

"Why?" Hawk asked.

"I want to destroy their bikes."

"Lady, they're not going to need them any longer, so it's a waste of time."

It took her a moment to understand. "They're dead?"

The guy nodded.

She thought she should feel some remorse, but she couldn't. The world was a better place without them.

"Good. Thank you."

She knew she had surprised them.

"Let's go, tiger," Hawk said, pulling her toward another bike. He got on and then held out a hand. "Come on."

She exhaled and took his hand. She got settled behind him.

"Hold onto me."

She'd be unable to hold her ripped shirt together and him at the same time.

"Emily," Hawk said impatiently.

She let go of her shirt and wrapped her arms around his waist. Hell, the man was solid like a rock, had no fat on him, and smelled like the wind and pine trees. Way nicer than the other men smelled. She gagged a few times at the sweaty, sour smell that came off all four of them.

The motorcycle started, making her jump. A squeak fell from her mouth when he took off, and she had to tighten her arms around him.

Within minutes they were pulling up to a fairly decent motel. The men all parked.

“How many rooms, Boss?”

“Get four with doubles if they have them.”

“You got it.”

Hawk reached back. “Take my hand and let me help you off.”

She did and would have fallen if he hadn't caught her. She hated how weak she was. She struggled to stay on her feet and simultaneously hold her shirt together.

“Easy. I've got you.”

He kept a hand on her while one of his men got them rooms.

“Hey, man, there's a hamburger place down the road. How about I go get us some food?” one of the men said.

“Sounds good. Get some sugary, caffeinated pop for her.”

The man got back on his bike. “You got it. I'll be right back.”

Hawk tightened his grip on her when she swayed. If she didn't sit down in the next few minutes, she was going to face-plant.

“Hey, Boss. I got three doubles and one with a king. That's all they had left.”

Hawk nodded. “Do any of them have a pullout?”

“Yeah, they all do.”

“Then it will work. Let’s head up,” Hawk said.

His hold on her tightened as they took the stairs, and she was thankful for it.

“Yo, Blade, give me the one with the king.”

They got to one of the rooms, and Hawk unlocked it. When it swung open, she finally realized how this would play out. “Is this mine?”

“Yes, and me and my vice, Brick, will be in here, too.”

“Can’t I have my own room?” she asked.

He shook his head. “No, we can’t protect you that way. Babe, nothing is going to happen.”

“But those men are dead,” she said. “I shouldn’t be in any danger now.”

Hawk’s brows rose. “And you think they’re the only bad ones around here?”

He set her on the mattress. “One of the guys will bring your bag up, and then we’ll get you in the shower.”

She tensed again.

He held up his hands. “I’ll be out here unless you need me.”

Emily exhaled. One of the other men she hadn’t met handed her the bag.

“Go on in. Call out if you need me,” Hawk said.

“Okay.”

She gingerly got up off the mattress and went into the bathroom. She was finally able to relax when the door was closed and locked. Her whole body ached so bad she felt like an old lady because she couldn’t straighten up, and her strides were slow and short.

A gasp tore from her mouth when she first looked at herself. She had blood smeared all over her face and neck. Her torn shirt was blood-soaked, mostly from the guy with his

neck torn open, and she had bruises and scrapes all over. Her hair, which she dyed black, made her look even paler. Her eyes were swollen mostly from crying, she guessed, and her lip was split on the bottom.

She runs from her hometown to escape her abusive father and ends up getting into a worse situation. How pathetic was that?

She jumped when there was a knock at the door.

“Babe, get in the shower. The food will be here soon.”

“Okay.” She stripped and threw her ruined clothes in a pile. Even her socks had blood and dirt on them. She’d have to make a trip to a store because she only had two more outfits.

Emily got out her small bag of feminine products and started the shower. She hissed when the hot water hit the scrapes on her body. She scrubbed herself a few times before turning off the water. Grabbing a towel, she twisted her hair up in it and then used another to dry herself off.

The next time she looked in the mirror, she thought she still looked bad but didn’t have the blood on her skin anymore. She got dressed in the large t-shirt she wore to bed and a pair of yoga pants before drying her hair with the towel the best she could and combing it.

Emily packed up her things, left the pile of bloody clothes, and walked into the room. She stopped short when she saw all eight men sitting around eating hamburgers. They’d brought in a few more chairs and had a game on.

“Emily.”

She turned to look at Hawk, who sat on the end of the bed.

“Sit here and get comfortable.”

Setting her things down, she walked over to him and crawled into the bed to sit back against the headboard, pulling up the blanket he held out.

He handed her a sandwich.

She shook her head. "I'm not hungry."

"You'll eat anyway. You look like you could blow away with a stiff wind."

That was true. She'd never been this skinny before in her life, but running away from home and walking for miles could do that to a person. She unwrapped the sandwich and took a bite. She didn't taste anything, but she knew she needed the nutrients.

"Here, drink this," Hawk said and handed her a can of pop. "It will help."

"Okay." She drank half the can and was surprised when the buzz from sugar instantly started giving her a little energy to finish the burger.

Hawk studied her and nodded. "I'm going to have Doc look at you."

She shook her head. "No, really. I'm fine."

"We'll look anyway." He took the empty can from her. "Go brush your teeth first."

She moved off the mattress, aware of each male's scrutiny. When she came out of the bathroom, everyone was gone except Hawk, Brick, and Doc.

Hawk motioned her over. "Let Doc look at you."

She shook her head and crossed her arms over her chest. "I'm fine. I promise."

Hawk sighed, looked at Doc, and nodded. The man stood, picked up a bag, and walked out.

"Thank you," she said.

"You've been through enough tonight. I figured we didn't need to add to it," Hawk said. "Why don't you hop into bed?"

She nodded and gingerly lay down on her side to face the guys and pulled the blanket up to her chin.

The men settled back, drinking beer and talking softly or watching a show. Brick had pulled out the sofa bed and was laying back on it while Hawk sat next to her on the king-size mattress. She had no idea why she felt so positive that he'd watch over her. Maybe she had to tell herself that because he was all she had. Her eyelids lowered, and she slept peacefully for the first time in forever.

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## Chapter Three

“Is she finally asleep?” Brick asked.

Hawk looked down at her and nodded. “Yeah.” It’s what she needed the most. He’d had to hold himself back from questioning her. He wanted the answers to his questions but knew she was at the end of her rope.

“What are we going to do with her?”

“Hell if I know.”

“We can’t let her go on her own,” Brick said.

Hawk nodded. “I’ll think of something.”

“I’m going to crash.”

“Night,” Hawk said. He sat there after the two were asleep and finished his beer. He brushed his teeth and turned off the lights. He pulled his cut, shirt, boots, and socks off before laying down next to her. He stayed on top of the blanket, so she didn’t freak out when she woke up.

He was just about asleep when an idea came to him. Emily couldn’t stay on the road with them. Women couldn’t handle going for days, not bathing, sometimes sleeping out in the open, and constant movement.

He and his men had seen every part of the United States except Alaska and Hawaii. They were all getting older and appreciated a nice bed to sleep in, a roof over their heads, and food whenever they wanted. There was one place he thought he and his men would be happy settling down. He would just have to talk to his friend and see. At the moment, he needed sleep.

When he opened his eyes, the sun shone in the window, and he had a sweet woman plastered to his side. How in the hell had she gotten this close to him without him knowing? It was disconcerting. Everyone who knew him knew not to touch him when he was sleeping, or they were liable to get killed.

He rolled out of bed and took his clothes and bag into the bathroom to shower and get dressed. When he came out, Brick was sitting up, but Emily was still sleeping.

He dumped his bag on the floor. "I'm going to make a call. I'll be right back."

Brick nodded and lay back down.

Hawk dialed the phone and waited. When a sweet voice answered, he couldn't help smiling.

"Would this happen to be Striker's old lady?"

There was a pause. "Um, yes. I suppose you could call me that."

His grin widened. One of his close friends, Striker, was the Viper Crew's prez, and his woman was Kristina. She was unlike any other woman he'd ever known, and he could sit all day talking to her or just watching. She was incredibly fun to tease and was the cutest thing when she got mad.

"This is Hawk, honey."

Another long pause.

"Oh, well, I'm sure you would like to talk to Striker."

He chuckled. "Eventually. How about you tell me how you're doing?"

"Oh, um, fine. How about you?"

She was always so damn polite, even when she was pissed.

"I'm very well, thank you for asking," he said.

He had to bite his lip when he heard her growl.

"How about I get Striker for you?"

"That would be fine, honey. But I'll see you soon because I'm pretty sure we'll be coming to visit in the next few days."

He couldn't hold back his laugh when he heard her say, "Yay me," before she set the phone down.

“This is Striker.”

“Hey, man,” Hawk said.

“Awww, it’s you, I wondered why my old lady was in a tizzy.” Striker laughed.

“She lets you call her that now?” Kristina hated the name “old lady.”

“She doesn’t *let* me do anything. If I want to call her that, she’ll have to get used to it.”

“If you don’t watch it, you’ll be sleeping on the sofa, and then no sex for you.”

Striker laughed. “Naw, that’s one of the benefits of having your own woman — you get her anytime you want, and know she hasn’t been touched by another man, and it’s your duty to fuck her out of her pout.”

Hawk chuckled. That didn’t sound too bad to him. He’d been sick of fucking whores for a long time because it grossed him out to know another man had just finished with her.

“So why did you call?” Striker asked.

Hawk went over everything that happened the night before.

“And you’re thinking of bringing her here?” Striker asked.

“Yes. I think it’s the safest place for her. I haven’t gotten her whole story, but I’m guessing she’s running from someone.”

“Bring her here. I’ll have Kris and the girls help her. What are you and your men going to do?”

“We’re not sure. I know we’re getting too old to stay on the road.”

“I’ve got some ideas we can go over when you get here,” Striker said.

“I’ll take suggestions,” Hawk said. “Expect us in two days.”

“Good. See you then.”

Hawk leaned against the motel and stared around the area. It was still early, so there were very few people up, and everything was quiet.

He heard a commotion in the room. When he opened the door, he saw Emily in the middle of the bed with the blanket down around her waist, looking around, confused. She had bruises all over the skin he could see, and her hair looked like she’d stuck her finger in a light socket.

Brick exhaled. “I’m glad you’re back. I was worried she was going to scream.”

Hawk closed the door and walked over until he stood by the bed. “Emily.”

She blinked a few times and then looked up at him.

He smiled. It still looked like she was having a problem waking up. He sat down next to her. “Emily. Wake up.”

She studied him and then nodded. She still didn’t move.

“Are you hurting?”

She looked confused, making him roll his eyes.

“How about a shower?”

“Okay,” she said and raised her arms.

It took him a moment to understand. She wanted him to lift her up and carry her. Jesus, he didn’t know if he should be pissed or charmed, but he did exactly what she wanted. Hawk ignored Brick laughing and carried her to the bathroom.

“Can you handle things from here?” he asked.

“Yes.”

He set her on her feet and held her shoulders until she seemed steady. He wanted to smooth her hair away from her

face. Since she had gone to sleep with it wet, it looked a bit crazy at the moment. "I'll be out here if you need me."

She nodded. He closed the door and wiped a hand down his face.

"Are you going to keep her?" Brick asked.

Hawk looked at him. "How? She can't live on the road with us."

"No, but we've talked about settling somewhere. All the guys are in agreement."

"It's going to take time to find a place."

Brick nodded. "Maybe, but it can be done, man. I wouldn't mind a chance at her if you don't want her."

Hawk bit back the growl he felt growing and shook his head. "No, she's mine if she's anyone's."

Brick grinned as he put the sofa bed back. "I figured."

The bathroom door peeked open.

Emily cleared her throat. "Hey, can I have my bag, please?"

"Sure." Hawk brought it back and handed it to her. He snorted when she tried to pull it through the small crack. She tugged a few times, opened the door just enough, and quickly yanked the bag into the bathroom before slamming the door.

Hawk sat on the mattress and leaned back on his elbows. There was a knock on the door, and then Brick opened it to see all the guys. They were probably hungry. They never seemed to fill up.

"I want pancakes, Boss," Ink said.

"Of course you do," Hawk said.

"Where's Cinderella?" Doc asked.

"You mean Snow White?" Grizz said.

"Ain't she the one with the little people?" Ink asked.

"You mean dwarfs?" Doc asked.

“Yeah, but I don’t think that’s politically correct anymore.”

Spider laughed. “Like you’ve ever been PC.”

“Fuck off,” Ink said.

Hawk looked at Brick when he grunted.

“Aren’t you going to do anything?” Brick asked.

Hawk shook his head. “Naw, they’re entertaining.”

“What about Beauty and the Beast?” Razor said.

A few of them snickered.

“Well, we know which one is the beast,” Ink said, and everyone looked at him.

Hawk had his knife out and flew it through the air. It went by Ink’s ear and buried into the wall behind him.

“Jesus Fucking Christ, man,” Ink said as he ran his fingers over the side of his head. “You almost took my ear off.”

Hawk snorted. “If I wanted your fucking ear, I’d have it.”

He turned when he heard a gasp behind him. Emily had her bag clutched in her arms in front of her chest, and her eyes were wide, although still swollen.

“You’d cut off his ear?” she asked.

Hawk shrugged. “Maybe, he hasn’t pissed me off enough to really hurt him.”

She looked back and forth between the men. “You’re kidding, right?”

Hawk grinned at his guys. “Sure.” The guys laughed.

If it weren’t for the shadow of fear in her eyes, he would have loved the shock on her face.

## Chapter Four

She tried to talk herself into thinking they were messing around, but then she thought of the night before when they killed the men that hurt her. They were huge, brutal, vicious bikers, and she couldn't let herself forget that because they were being nice to her.

"Boss, I want pancakes."

Hawk rolled his eyes. "You sound like a child."

Emily relaxed and even smiled.

"You like pancakes, don't you?" Ink asked her.

"I ... yes, I do."

"See, Boss. Everyone likes pancakes."

She took a quick step back when Hawk stood. He seemed even bigger than the night before.

"Let's pack up, men."

"I want to thank you guys for helping me. I'm afraid to think about what would have happened if you hadn't come along."

They all stared.

"Well, so, I need to get on my way."

The men looked at Hawk.

"You're going with us," Hawk said.

She shook her head. "No, I can't impose any more than I already have."

"She's a sweetie, Boss. Can we keep her?" Razor asked.

Her mouth dropped open. "Wait, you can't just keep me."

"Why not?" Ink asked.

"Because it's against the law," she said.

Hawk shrugged. “We’ll worry about this later. Let’s eat and get on the road.”

The men started out of the room, and then Hawk snatched her bag out of her arms and threw it to Brick. “Take that.”

“Wait, I need that,” she said.

“No, you don’t. Not right now.”

She tried to hit his hand, which grabbed onto her upper arm.

“Wait.”

Hawk pulled her closer to him and then crouched so she could face him head on.

“Listen up, babe. You’re going to stay with us. We’re taking you to a place I know you’ll love and be safe.”

She lifted her chin. “What if I have somewhere else I need to be?”

“Is there?”

She opened her mouth.

“I better warn you that I’ll know if you’re lying, and you don’t want to know what will happen if you do. Right?”

Her shoulders relaxed. “No, I don’t.”

“Good. Let’s go.”

She let him lead her down to the bikes, where the rest of the guys were already waiting for them. He helped her on again, and she automatically circled his waist to hold on.

The rumble of the motor didn’t startle her like the night before. She closed her eyes as the wind blew through her hair, drying it. The fresh morning air and sunshine felt good on her skin. She knew she still looked like a mess but would get better every day.

Within thirty minutes, they were pulling up to a little diner. Hawk helped her off and then held onto her until her legs were steady.



“Thank you.”

He looked so surprised when she was polite to him.

The group walked into the diner, and the place was half full. Everyone stopped talking and turned to stare at them.

“Why are they staring?” she whispered.

A few of the guys snorted.

“Because we’re strangers,” Brick said.

Some of the guys laughed.

“It’s because we’re bikers, babe. Most people are afraid of us.”

“Oh. Yeah, I get that.”

A waitress came to them, and Emily could see how she shook.

“We don’t want any trouble,” she said.

Emily pushed Brick out of the way and put her hand on the woman.

“We’re just here for the pancakes. You have nothing to fear from us.”

The waitress gasped and put her hand over her mouth. “Did they do that to you?”

Emily had forgotten about her bruises. “No, I promise. They saved me from the guys that were hurting me.”

The waitress relaxed a bit. “Go ahead and find someplace to sit.”

“Thank you,” Emily said.

The men moved to the back of the diner, where there were three empty booths. Hawk nudged her in and then sat beside her. Brick and Doc sat across from them, and the others took the last two tables.

The waitress came over with a tray of coffee cups and three pitchers. She gave everyone a cup and set a pitcher of coffee on each table with a stack of menus.

“I’ll be right back to take your orders.”

“Thank you,” Emily said.

She was reading her menu when she became aware of Hawk’s stare. She looked up at him. “What?”

“You’re one of those nice people.”

“What does that mean?” she asked.

“You’re polite and care about others’ feelings.”

“You sound like it’s a bad thing,” she said.

He grunted and turned his attention to his own menu.

Everyone ordered and started talking among themselves. It was a little disconcerting the way several people continued to stare at them.

“Ignore them, babe,” Hawk said.

She looked up at him and then nodded. The waitress took their order and rushed off.

Emily was surprised by how fast their food came out, but the guys didn’t seem shocked.

The first bite of French toast melted in her mouth. “Mmmm.”

Hawk smirked. “Is it that good?”

She cut off a bite and held it up to his lips. She could tell it surprised him, but he opened his mouth and accepted the bite.

“It is good,” Hawk said.

The look on his face made a blush cover her face, and with the bruises, she hoped no one noticed. When he grinned, she knew the rat saw her embarrassment.

They paid for the food and headed out. She was getting better at climbing on and off the bike.

She had no idea how long they rode, but it was hard to stay alert when she kept dozing off against his back. His hand would come back and tap her thigh to wake her.

“Babe, we’ll stop soon. Just hold on a bit longer.”

She sighed and tightened her arms around his waist.

It was afternoon when they pulled into another hotel. When he helped her off, she had to bite back a groan when her leg and back muscles cramped.

Jesus, how could they do this all day, every day? It was a way of life she wouldn’t ever be able to comprehend.

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## Chapter Five

Hawk kept a grip on her as she massaged her back and tried to move her legs. They should have stopped sooner, but he wanted to get them to Viper's Crew compound.

"How are you doing?" he asked.

"I'm sore but okay. Let me walk around for a moment."

He released her and watched as she moved around.

"Hey, Boss, they had only three rooms, but they all had double beds and sofa sleepers in them."

"We'll make do," Hawk said. "Who's hungry?"

All the men yelled "Me!" making him roll his eyes. Why did he even ask?

"Let's order pizza."

"That sounds good," Brick said.

"Get your bags, men."

Hawk wrapped his hand around Emily's upper arm. "Let's get you settled. A nice hot shower will help your soreness."

"That sounds wonderful," she said.

They had three rooms on the bottom floor. Two were together, and one several doors down.

Hawk tossed his bag on the bed farthest from the door. "What do you need out of your bag?"

"I'll just take all of it."

He led her to the door and checked it out. "Okay. Take your time. Call out if you need anything."

"Thank you."

He listened for a moment to hear the shower start before turning away.

“Someone order pizza!” he yelled.

“I already did,” Brick said. “I got several different kinds, so hopefully, she’ll like something. I also sent Grizz to get beer and pop.”

“Good man,” Hawk said. He lay down on the bed, grabbed one of the pillows, and stuffed it under his head. Someone turned on a stupid game show, but he watched it because it was the only thing on, and he didn’t want to talk.

The shower turned off, and then he heard the blow-dryer. The last place didn’t have one, so she went to bed with wet hair the night before. He grinned when he remembered how it looked when she woke up the next morning.

The pizzas were just coming in the door when she walked out of the bathroom. He could tell she had colored her hair black, making her look even paler than she was. He was starting to see her features as the swelling went down, and he liked what he had seen so far.

Everyone sat on every available surface after they grabbed a piece of pizza and beer.

Hawk got a napkin before looking at her. “Pepperoni, meat lovers, or cheese?”

“Cheese, please.”

“Beer or soda?” Brick asked.

“Soda, please.” She sat beside Hawk on the bed and enjoyed the pizza. He watched her smile a few times when the guys razzed each other.

“Hey, Emily, do you want another piece?” Doc asked.

She shook her head. “No, thank you. This was plenty.”

He looked at her when she tugged on his vest.

“I’m going to brush my teeth. Where am I sleeping tonight?”

He nodded at the bed they sat on. “Right here with me.”

“Oh.”

He waited for her to say something else, but she just walked away.

The guys that were sleeping in the other rooms left, leaving him, Brick, Emily, and Doc.

Hawk pulled back the blanket while Brick took over the other bed, and Doc pulled out the sofa bed.

He watched her stop.

“Come on and get into bed. I’m going to shower, and then I’ll be out.”

“I’ll take one after you,” Brick said.

“I’ll take one in the morning, but I do need to brush my teeth,” Doc said.

Hawk came out with his jeans on but unbuttoned. It was damn uncomfortable for him to wear them to bed because he was used to sleeping naked or in his boxers.

Emily was lying on her side with her hands tucked under her cheek listening to the other two talk.

He pulled the blanket up, turned off the light next to the bed, and slid in. They still had the light from the TV, so he was able to see her face.

“How are you doing?” he asked.

“I’m still achy, but I think I’ll feel better tomorrow.”

“Your swelling has gone down.” He didn’t mention she was still mottled with bruises. “We’ll be at the place I’m taking you tomorrow.”

“Can you tell me a bit about it?”

“It’s an MC club. They’re friends of ours. There are several women like you living there.”

“Like me?”

“Yes. Sweet and normal.”

“How long do I have to stay there?”

“If you like it, forever.”

“They won’t care?” Emily asked.

“No. You’ll have to help the women in the kitchen, but they seem to enjoy working together.”

“What if they don’t like me?”

“I guarantee they will.”

“Are you going to stay there, too?”

“The man and I are discussing our options right now.”

“Oh. I’ll be able to leave whenever I want, right?”

“Yes, but it would be a stupid move. You’re safer with them than anywhere else.”

He studied her when she looked away. He couldn’t make the woman stay. There wasn’t much he could do about it, especially if he wasn’t there.

“Why were you running?” he asked.

“I wasn’t happy where I lived.”

“Tell me the truth,” Hawk said.

Emily sighed. “That is the truth. I lived with my father. He’s an alcoholic and abusive. I worked two jobs so he could sit home and drink all day. I was tired. So, I left.”

“Did he know you were leaving?”

She shook her head. “No, I packed a bag, threw it out my bedroom window, and left for work. I grabbed the bag before I left the yard. I really didn’t have to work because I had already quit both places. I wanted a head start just in case he tried to come after me.” She touched her hair. “I even dyed my hair as an extra precaution. He wouldn’t be looking for a brunette.”

“If you’re an adult, there’s nothing he can do.”

She nodded. “I know. I just don’t want to deal with his bullshit. I’ve been saving up money for the last year, so I knew I had time to find a place to live.”

“You planned ahead?”

“Oh, yeah.”

“Let’s see how you like the club I’m taking you to.”

“I will.”

“Good. Go to sleep.”

She rolled over. He heard her breathing even out and deepen.

She woke up from a nightmare twice during the night but settled when he pulled her against him and whispered to her.

When morning came, he was wiped out from lack of sleep and the lust that had grown with her being so close and unable to take care of it.

He got grumpier when they took off with her arms around his waist. He needed to get her to Striker so he didn’t have to deal with her anymore, or at least until he got his emotions under control.

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## Chapter Six

Emily looked around when they pulled in through large gray metal gates. There were at least a dozen huge men standing around, and they all turned to her and stared, making her feel self-conscious and scared.

“Come on, Emily, get off,” Hawk said with a hand out to her.

She took it and slid off the bike. She locked her knees to keep from falling to the ground. They had only stopped once, so she was feeling especially sore. It seemed the closer they got to the MC, the grumpier Hawk got. Hell, he'd actually gotten out of bed growly.

She noticed his men didn't question him and were quieter than normal. She wondered if something had happened and they hadn't told her, but she wasn't about to question any of them.

Hawk grabbed hold of her upper arm and started pulling her around the back of the big building. She dug in her heels. “Hawk, stop. I can walk on my own. You don't have to drag me everywhere.”

She couldn't decipher the look he was giving her before tightening his grip on her and dragging her again. She rolled her eyes and tried to keep up. He pulled her in the back door and into a huge, wonderful kitchen. Several women were standing around making something.

Hawk released her. “Kristina, I want you to meet Emily.”

“Oh, no, what happened to you?” the woman said and gently squeezed her forearm.

“A few guys attacked me.”

Another woman walked over. “What happened to the guys?”

“Hawk and his men took care of them.”

“I hope you cut them to pieces,” another woman said.

Hawk snorted. “Still bloodthirsty, I see, Willow.”

“Did they deserve it?” Willow asked.

Hawk nodded.

“Then you took care of them?”

“Yes. They’re in Hell where they’re supposed to be.”

“Good,” another woman said and walked over. “I’m Meg. I’m Feral’s woman.”

“My name is Kristina, and I’m Striker’s.” She pointed at the other women. “That’s Alicia, Charlie, and Willow. They also belong to men, but I can tell you’re hazy right now.”

The back door opened, several men walked in, and the room erupted with happy male voices and thumps.

“Hey, it’s good to see you, man,” Hawk said.

Emily watched him greet everyone by pounding each other on the back. It could be considered a hug. Maybe it was an MC hug. She could tell they all really liked each other.

Hawk waved her over. “Striker, this is Emily, the woman I told you about. I’m hoping you have a place for her here.”

It was really hard to look the man in the eye. They all were terrifying, but some more than others.

“I’ll talk to Kris, but I don’t see a problem.”

Kristina walked over and stood next to the man. Emily was surprised to see the guy soften and actually smile.

“I want her to stay if she wants to,” Kristina said and smiled at her.

“I don’t want to put anyone out. I work hard, so I’ll help with anything.”

Striker kissed the woman. “Good to know. I’ve got some things to talk to these guys about.”

“Which room can I put her in?” Kristina asked.

“How about the third one down on the right? That’s still empty, right?”

Kristina nodded.

Emily watched the man plant a hard kiss on the woman’s lips and then walk off with the group. When she realized Hawk hadn’t even looked back at her, she suddenly felt lonely.

Kristina took her hand. “Come here so we can see how badly you’re hurt, and then we’ll show you your room. Alicia has medical training, so she’ll check you over.”

“Are you sure it’s okay for me to stay?” Emily asked.

All the women nodded.

“Hell, yeah. We’re so outnumbered. It’s pathetic,” Willow said.

“You’ll tell me if you want me to leave, okay?”

Alicia pulled her over to a stool. “Sit here.”

Meg brought over a bag of peas and set it on one of her eyes.

“Most of the swelling has gone down,” Emily said.

“Good. You’ll have to tell us the whole story sometime,” Meg said.

Emily nodded. “Sure.”

Alicia looked her over, even raising her shirt to check out her midsection, and didn’t see anything that concerned her. “I think you’ll be better by the end of the week.”

“Good.”

“Let me show you to your room,” Meg said.

Emily followed her and Kristina up a flight of stairs and down a long hallway. They stopped at the third door and opened it. The room was medium-sized with a large bed, an entertainment center with a TV, and a closet.

“There’s a bathroom two doors down, and a laundry room was the first door to your left at the top of the stairs you

can use.”

“I don’t have much,” Emily said.

Kristina opened the closet door. “Us girls can give you some clothing.”

Emily blinked a few times when she felt the burn of tears.

“Don’t you dare cry,” Meg said. “You’ll start me going, and I look horrible when I cry.”

“She’s not lying,” Kristina said, then cursed when Meg hit her arm. “Ouch.”

Emily grinned. “It’s been a long time since I had any girlfriends. I think I’m going to like it here.”

Kristina smiled. “We hope so. We’re making some cookies right now, and then we’ll start on dinner in an hour. Come down and get a plate, or if you’re tired, one of us can bring one up.”

“Can I help you in the kitchen?” Emily asked.

“Sure,” Meg said. “But don’t push yourself. We can tell you’re exhausted.”

“I’ve actually had some sleep the last two nights. It’s helped.”

“Oh, who have you slept with?” Meg asked.

“Hawk. He’s been very sweet to me.”

Both women’s mouths dropped open.

“You’re kidding. The man is usually an asshole,” Meg said.

“He hasn’t been with me.”

Meg and Kristina grinned at each other.

“This would be great if she could mellow him out.”

“Oh, wait, it’s not like that,” Emily said.

The two women chuckled.

“Come on down,” Kristina said.

Emily looked around as they walked down the stairs. She must have made a sound when she saw two guys going at one woman.

Meg laughed. “It takes some getting used to, but eventually, you won’t see it.”

Emily nodded. She didn’t know if she’d be able to do that, but she would ignore it to the best of her ability.

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## Chapter Seven

Hawk sat in one of the chairs in the office and waited for everyone else to get comfortable and the door to be closed.

“What’s up your ass?” Feral asked and grinned.

Hawk wiped a hand down his face. “Do you know what it’s like to sleep next to a sweet woman and not be able to fuck her?”

The guys laughed.

“Fuck, yeah. It sucks,” Striker said.

“That it does,” Hawk said.

“Let’s go over some ideas we discussed while we were waiting for you,” Striker said.

Hawk straightened his legs and rested his hands on his stomach.

Striker sat back. “We’ve got a house. It’s on the property, and we think we could renovate it for you guys.”

“I’ve never seen another house,” Brick said.

“We bought several acres on the east side of the property and added it to ours. We snatched it up when the old guy that lived there died. The house was on it, and we never figured out what to do with it.”

Hawk narrowed his eyes. “If we stuck around, what would we do? We’d need to earn our keep.”

“Do you have some money saved?” Striker asked.

Hawk nodded. “Yes.”

“There are two businesses in town that are for sale. We talked about buying them, but we already have enough on our plate.”

“What are they?” Brick asked.

“One’s a tire store, and the other is a trucking company. They’re both lucrative businesses. The owners have

to sell for different reasons. They've been around for years, so they're established. They have all the personnel already working."

"How would the employees and customers like the fact an MC owns the business?" Hawk asked.

Feral cleared his throat. "The business owners have talked to their employees and are okay with it. They just want to keep working. They know we have the best interests of the town and not breaking the law."

Hawk glanced at Brick. "What do you think?"

"It sounds good to me. We'll have to talk to the guys, and I'd like to look at the house and businesses before we decide. I'm guessing the guys are going to say yes."

Hawk nodded. The men have been talking about settling somewhere for the better part of a year. The main reason was sitting on a bike for ten hours a day or having to crash on the ground because they were not near a motel.

"Let's go look at the house," Hawk said and stood when Striker did.

The small group walked through the kitchen. Hawk could hear Emily's voice and caught one glimpse of her but otherwise ignored her.

He didn't know what his problem was. She'd done nothing to piss him off. It was just the way she made him feel. Emotions he'd heard about but never felt, and he wasn't sure he liked. He had a lot on his plate for the moment, so he decided to try to put her out of his mind for the time being.

The other house was about a fourth of a mile from the main one. The outside needed a fresh coat of paint, but it had a large yard where he could imagine putting a firepit.

Striker had removed the fences between the houses and added the new land to the main one, which made their compound bigger.

They walked up the back steps, into an enclosed porch, through another door, and into a kitchen. It was on the small

side but could be fixed. The wall between that and the dining room could come down because they didn't need it. The other wall in the dining room would come down, too, if it weren't load-bearing. It would make most of the first floor open.

There were two other decent-sized rooms on the main floor with a full bathroom. He thought his guys would appreciate having a slut or two in the house, and he'd use one room for them. The other could be used for a bedroom or office, depending on their needs.

The place was bigger than he expected. They walked up the stairs and found five bedrooms and two bathrooms. There weren't enough bedrooms for them, so they'd have to add on.

"A few of your guys can crash at the main building until this is added onto," Striker said, reading his mind.

"Let's get our guys over here to have a meeting and look at the place. We all have to agree on this," Hawk said. "How would we deal with the two clubs?"

"That's something we'll have to think about," Feral said. "Striker and I have had a conversation about it. You could add your club to ours."

"We'd have the Viper's Crew name?" Brick asked.

"If that's what you guys choose," Striker said. "Or keep them separate for the most part, but we'll all be known as one group with two names."

"We'd be a subsidiary or branch of yours?" Hawk asked.

Striker nodded. "Yeah. That's a good way to say it."

"Would we work together with two prez's because I can't see myself taking orders at this stage of my life?"

"If we make a branch for the club, I think you will need to stay the prez. We'll just all make decisions together. Feral and I already do that with a few of the guys," Striker said.



Hawk nodded and walked to one of the front windows. The compound's fence enclosed them but had an opening for vehicles. They'd have to get a gate for security. He remembered seeing a large garage in the back of the house, but it was old and looked like it needed to be torn down, and another one was put up.

“Can we buy the land around the house?”

“You won't need to since you'll be part of the club.”

It all sounded good to him, but he'd have to put it out for a vote.

“It's about dinnertime. Let's go eat, and then you guys can have your meeting,” Striker said.

It sounded good to him. Hawk missed the meals they got here.

They walked into the main kitchen to see a line of men already walking through to get their food. The food was way better than any they got on the road.

He and the others stood off to the side, talking, waiting for their turn. Hawk saw Emily glance at him a few times out of his peripheral vision but didn't acknowledge her.

After getting their plates, the men walked out and sat in a group, talking. It was the most pleasant, relaxing time he'd had in a long while.

Hawk watched the women walk out and sit on a long picnic table. If he remembered right, it was the women's table, but no sluts or men were allowed. Emily was in the middle of them, and it looked like she fit in already. Striker had told him once that the old ladies knew if a person was good or bad within the first few minutes of meeting them. It seemed they deemed Emily to be a good person, but he could have told them that.

One of the sluts sat down on the arm of his chair and started running her fingers through his hair. He was about ready to push her away but saw that Emily was looking at him. He relaxed back in his chair and drank his beer, ignoring the

slut. But for some reason, he wanted Emily to see it and get the impression he wanted the attention.

The women stood and started to go back into the building. When Emily didn't look his way, it pissed him off.

It was these kind of emotions that were driving him crazy. He needed time away from her to get himself under control. Until then, he'd stay away from her.

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## Chapter Eight

Emily was at one of the tables folding towels when she saw Brick walk through with what she thought was his bag.

“Brick.”

He turned. “Yeah, Em.”

“Are you going somewhere?” she asked.

“Yeah, we’re heading out.”

She pressed the towel in her hands up to her chest. “Oh. I didn’t know that. I want to say goodbye to you guys.”

“We’re loading up now.”

“You’re all going?”

Brick placed a hand on her shoulder. “Don’t let him get to you.”

“Who?”

He snorted. “You know who. Hawk. You’ve done nothing wrong.”

“Are you sure? Because he won’t even look at me now.”

“I have no idea what’s going on in his mind. If I had to guess, he felt too much for you, and he’s running scared. He’s never had feelings for a woman.”

She wanted desperately to believe that.

“Come on out.”

She nodded and followed him outside. The rest of the guys were on their bikes, with Hawk in the lead. He was talking to Striker when she walked over.

Striker tipped his head at her. “I’ll leave you guys.”

He walked off, and then she faced Hawk.

“I ... I heard you were leaving?”

His eyes were hard, but she also saw a muscle tick in his jaw, showing her he was feeling something.

“Yeah.”

She looked around and then back. “I didn’t know.”

“Why do you have to know?”

She inhaled. “You’re right. May I ask you a question?”

“If you hurry,” Hawk said.

“Have I done anything to make you mad?” she asked.

“No.”

“Then why do you seem angry with me?”

“Not everything is about you,” Hawk growled.

Emily took a step back. “Yes, you’re right. Will I ever see you again?”

“I don’t have time for this.”

“Okay. Thank you again for your help. I hope you stay safe.” She turned without letting him talk and waved at the other guys. “Bye, guys. Take care and stay safe.”

All seven of them commented and waved.

Without looking back, she walked into the house and up the stairs. She let the tears come when her bedroom door was closed and locked behind her. She couldn’t remember hurting this badly before in her life. The fact that she felt this depth of emotion told her she cared more deeply for Hawk than she first thought.

Emily sat down on the side of the bed and pressed her face into her hands. She let her tears flow until there were none left.

She had to remind herself that her life was better than it had ever been. She had a great, safe place to live and friends she cherished for the first time in her life. There was nothing else she could ask for. If she’d let her feelings for Hawk get out of control, it was on her. Hell, maybe her feelings were just

because he'd saved her? She liked that idea. She'd think about that when she started to get sad.

Emily walked into the bathroom down the hall and washed her face with cold water before going back down the stairs to finish folding the towels.

"Hey," Willow said and wrapped an arm around her waist. "What's up?"

Emily sighed. "Hawk left, and he wasn't going to say goodbye. When I went out, he was very harsh with me. I probably won't ever see him again."

"You haven't heard?" Willow asked.

Emily set down the towel and looked at Willow. "Heard what?"

"The Nomads are going to live here. They'll have their own house and own businesses, but they'll be like a subdivision of the Vipers. They'll still be called the Nomads."

Emily felt both nauseous that she'd have to put up with Hawk's aggression and happiness that she'd see him again. God, it was all so confusing.

"Guys are assholes. The grouchier they get is nine times out of ten because they feel too much. I guarantee Hawk cares about you but is running scared. What pussies."

Emily smiled. "They're assholes and pussies?"

"Fuck, yeah."

"Babe, I heard that."

Emily stiffened. Willow's man was a bit crazy and scared the shit out of her.

Willow glared over her shoulder at him. "I don't fucking care. It's the truth."

Blood growled as he stalked toward them. Emily tried to move away, but Willow tightened her grip.

Blood stopped and stared at her with his hand on his hips. "That's bullshit."

Willow snorted and rolled her eyes.

“Um, Willow...” Emily said.

They both looked at her.

“Hun, this man would never hurt me because he knows I’d cut off his balls.”

Emily wasn’t as sure as Willow was.

Blood yanked Willow away and tossed her over his shoulder.

“I think we need to have a little talk,” Blood said.

Willow beat on his back. “Fucker, put me down.”

Blood grunted. “No, I’m going to show you what pussies and assholes look like, so you’re not confused.”

Emily listened to them argue until their bedroom door slammed upstairs. She inhaled and made herself calm down.

“Yo, bitch.”

Emily turned to see one of the sluts. She couldn’t remember her name. She just knew she was one of the mean ones. She usually had some gab of insult every time she passed her.

“Can I help you?”

The slut walked over. “Yeah, I need a towel.” The woman grabbed one from the bottom and yanked, causing all of them to fall onto the floor.

Emily’s mouth popped open. “What is your problem?”

She shrugged. “Nothing, I just want you to remember you’re just like us.”

“You mean a whore?”

“Yeah.”

Emily laughed. “I never have and will never be like you. I respect myself too much, and I don’t mind hard work, unlike most of you women. I’d be embarrassed. These men

could care less about you. All you are is a hole to fuck. You're not a person to them."

The woman growled. "Listen, you fucking whore..."

"Is there a problem here?"

Emily saw a few of the guys standing in the kitchen doorway.

The slut smiled and made a seductive pose which made Emily snort. "No, we were just talking."

The man looked at Emily. "Is that true?"

Emily looked at the woman and then at the guy. "Yeah. We're fine."

"I'll be watching you, slut."

The men turned and walked off.

The slut faced her. "Watch yourself, bitch. So many things could happen to a person here."

"Are you threatening me?" Emily asked.

"No, just a friendly comment."

The woman turned and walked away, and Emily watched her go with one thought in her head. She'd made an enemy of the slut and didn't know why. She thought about talking to the girls about it. Until then, she knew she'd have to watch her back.

## Chapter Nine

A few weeks passed before Hawk, and his men pulled into their private driveway. They were all exhausted, hungry, short-tempered, and just wanted to crash.

He saw the lights on inside when he parked his bike and didn't think much of it until he walked in the back door. The place sparkled. He could tell someone, most likely the women, cleaned the place, and he was grateful. More than grateful. He had been dreading it.

He walked through the living room and saw the sofas, tables, and huge TV he had delivered. Instead of the boxes he expected, they had placed them around the room, making it look like a home. He kept walking around, noticing everything they'd done.

He walked down the hallway to the other two rooms. He had eight beds delivered and hadn't thought about where to put them. He'd been dreading it because he'd have to tell two of his guys they were sharing until they got the addition done. He'd still have to choose, but he thought the two most recent guys to join the Nomads would share the room. It seemed the fairest. The girls had put two mattresses in the bigger room that would eventually become the sluts' area and one in the smaller room. The bathroom was spick-and-span with towels and soaps.

The group made it upstairs.

"Fuck. This is great. I was not looking forward to sleeping on the floor," Razor said.

Each room had a bed and nightstand. Like the room he'd chosen, a few already had a desk. Just like downstairs, everything was clean, and the two bathrooms had supplies in them. Their beds were even made and had pillows.

Hawk and Brick took the two big rooms upstairs. The two that had to share a room didn't seem to mind, maybe



because they knew they would start building on the house the next day.

Hawk pulled out his phone as he looked out his bedroom window toward the main house where Striker lived.

“Hey, man, thanks for the clean house and everything else. We’re thrilled. Now we can crash without sleeping on the hard floor.”

Striker chuckled. “That wasn’t me. You have the girls to thank for that. They directed a few guys to help put the furniture in place, but they did the rest.”

“I definitely will.”

“A few of them were headed your way with dinner. They were going to put it in the oven. We didn’t think you’d be back so soon.”

“The guys will appreciate the meal very much. I’m afraid if I don’t feed the fuckers and let them go to bed, they’ll start fighting. Now, I don’t have to worry or bash heads together.”

Striker laughed. “They’re like children sometimes, aren’t they? Call if you need anything.”

“Thanks, man,” Hawk said and hung up. He was walking downstairs when he heard voices and headed for the kitchen. He stopped in the doorway to see Willow, Kristina, Meg, and Emily placing dishes on the counter and the men already opening them up and groaning.

He was shocked by the color of Emily’s hair. She had told him she’d dyed it, but he hadn’t thought about her true color. He was used to it being black, but now it was a light blonde. The color fit her better than black, and he guessed it was her natural color. He caught sight of the side of her face and noticed there were no bruises left.

“We have plates and silverware. They’ll get you by until you get some,” Kristina said.

Meg popped up. “There are some things in the frig and cupboards. If you guys want to make a list for the grocery

store, we're going tomorrow."

"That would be great," Brick said. "Jesus, you're making this way easier than we expected. We appreciate all of it."

"We like taking care of people," Meg said.

"Are you planning on eating at the big house?" Kristina asked.

"Maybe sometimes. We have a lot of work to do with the house and the businesses we bought," Doc said.

Hawk hadn't been noticed yet, and he couldn't get over how relaxed Emily was with his men. They all seemed to treat her like a younger sister and poke fun at her. His gaze ate her up. He'd thought about her several times every day. At first, it had pissed him off, but then he got used to it. He wasn't at a place where he'd let her in, but he was getting closer to giving in and taking her.

"Hello, Hawk," Willow said.

Hawk watched Emily stop and turn toward him. The color seeped from her face before she turned away. He wanted to reach out to her but caught himself. He was too damn tired to deal with emotions at the moment.

She said something to Kristina and walked out the back door. He could see the frown on Kristina's face as she watched the door close. She smiled when she turned back to them, but Hawk could tell it was forced.

He couldn't believe how angry he was when Emily ran instead of trying to talk to him. She acted as if she despised him, and that shit wasn't happening. He knew she was his. He just had to come to terms with the fact.

He ignored all the looks from his men.

"If you guys need anything else, give us a call," Willow said.

"Thanks, girls," the men called out.

The girls left.

Hawk looked at the guys filling plates and getting beer out of the frig.

“Aren’t you going to eat?” Ink asked him.

“Yeah, I’m waiting for you guys.”

After everyone entered the living room, he filled his plate and grabbed a beer. They’d left him one of the chairs and turned on the TV to a game.

He watched the men instead of the TV and could tell they were more relaxed than he’d ever witnessed, and he attributed this to having their own place and putting down roots. He wished they had done it earlier, but it was the right time now, with the Vipers getting the house they could have and the two ventures they’d bought and would run. The purchase of both was made, and the papers were signed.

Each man would have their own job. They had talked about what they were good at or interested in and picked which places they would oversee. The businesses were running just fine without them, but he wanted the employees to know who was in charge.

They decided to call their corporation the Nomad Group, and they planned to buy more places over time.

Hawk pinched the bridge of his nose before he stood. “I’m going to get my bag out of the van and crash.”

Brick nodded. “I’m right behind you.”

Brick followed him outside to the massive van they had rented to move their stuff. They had everything they owned in a storage locker two states over. The men had packed the things they had collected over the years, stuffed everything into the van, and hooked up the two bikes they weren’t using because those men were driving the vehicle back. It had taken them two days for that alone, but they had stopped for an extra day to buy some essentials they would need.

Hawk picked up a box of his and his bag and headed back into the house. Once in his room, he set everything down on his desk. The box he planned to unpack later, but he wanted

his clothes put away and to take a shower before he went to bed.

Fortunately, he was the first to get the shower, and within twenty minutes, he dropped into bed and groaned. The mattress was the best he'd ever been on. Sleep was pulling him down, and his last thoughts were of Emily.

It pissed him off the way she'd taken one look at him and ran. He knew he'd been a prick the last time they'd talked, but he hadn't realized he'd hurt her that badly.

Hawk had a lot to learn about relationships. He just hoped he got it right before he made her run from him for good. Hell, she already had earlier that night, but this time wasn't forever.

If it weren't for the fact he saw deep emotion in her eyes, he'd think she had moved on. That thought made his stomach ache. He couldn't lose her before he'd ever had her. It would make him crazy.

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## Chapter Ten

A few nights later, Emily dropped off the food the women had made for the group. She heard no one around, so she set it on the stove, covered it with a towel, and hurried to get out of the house.

“What are you doing?”

She gasped and spun to face Hawk. “I ... I’m dropping the food off. Kristina told me to.”

He nodded but said nothing.

“I’ll get out of your way.” She headed for the door only to have an arm wrapped around her waist.

“Where do you think you’re going?” he murmured against the side of her head.

“Home.”

“So, you do consider this your home now?”

She felt a shiver race down her spine. “Yes, I guess. Is that a good thing?”

“Maybe. It depends on who wants you to stay.”

Her stomach convulsed in pain at what he was hinting. “You don’t want me here?”

“Maybe, maybe not.”

She tried to pull away from him and gasped when he tightened his grip on her.

“What do you want, Hawk?”

“Have you let any of the guys touch you?” he asked.

She stiffened. “It’s none of your business.”

“I’m making it my business.”

“No. No man has touched me.”

“Have some tried?” Hawk asked.

Emily sniffed. “Why are you asking me this?”.

“Answer my question?”

“Y-yes.”

“Is there anyone you want here?” Hawk asked.

God, what did she say to that? Should she be honest? He was confusing her, and she didn’t want to make the wrong choice.

Emily swallowed. “Well, um, no, I don’t think so.”

“Is that right?”

His tone of voice told her he didn’t believe a word she had said, but she nodded anyway.

“I’ll have to ask Striker if you’re causing problems.”

“Why would you care, Hawk?”

“Because I’m the one that brought you here, I feel a certain amount of responsibility.”

“Then ask him. If he says I am, I’ll leave.”

She felt him stiffen.

“Oh, where would you go?”

She wanted to scream in frustration. “It doesn’t matter. I’m getting the feeling that you’re trying to find something to use against me just to get me to leave. Why does my being here bother you so much?”

“Who said it did?”

She’d had enough. “Let me go. I’m too tired to play your game.”

One of his hands slid down and pressed against her lower abdomen, and the other went the other way and cupped one of her breasts. Every thought splintered in her head, and her breath caught in her throat.

He pulled her tighter against his body, showing her without words that he wanted her because of his hard cock that he rubbed against her ass.

“Am I making you feel good?”

She heard his voice but couldn't decipher what he was saying.

“Babe, answer me.”

“W ... what did you say?” she asked.

“Does me touching you make you feel good?”

She closed her eyes and nodded.

“Would you like me to touch you more?”

“Please don't play with me, Hawk.” She couldn't help the tear that ran down her face or the emotion in her voice.

He released her, and she had to grab onto the doorjamb to steady herself.

“You're right. I need to talk to Striker first.”

She turned and looked at him. “Or I could just leave.”

He shrugged. She turned and ran out the door, ignoring his call.

Emily wrapped her arms around her as a brisk wind blew through the trees between the big house and Hawk's. It felt like the temperature had lowered several degrees in the short time she was in the house. She guessed most of it was the interaction she'd just had with Hawk and would think about it more when she got to her room.

She heard a sound behind her and turned. The piece of branch that swung at her hit her in the head and made her crash to the ground. She blinked a few times and then felt the veil of darkness inducing her to pass out. The last thing she heard was a voice.

“That's what you deserve, you bitch. Go away. Listen to Hawk. No one wants you here.”

That was it before she fell unconscious.

No one saw the tears that escaped her eyes and ran down her cheeks into the dirt.

## Chapter Eleven

Hawk was pissed at himself. He hadn't meant to push her and didn't know what he expected from her. He knew part of it was he wanted her to admit she wanted him. Even though he already knew it because she was so easy to read.

This was the first time in his life he wanted something, or in this case someone, more than anything, and he was terrified something would happen to take it away. He knew that didn't make sense, especially when he goaded her and pretty much admitted to her that he didn't want her there. That's why he was so fucked up in the head.

He pulled his phone from his pocket when it rang. "Yeah."

Striker laughed. "Is Emily coming back here tonight, or did you finally get your head out of your ass?"

Hawk looked at the microwave clock. He'd been standing there deep in thought for the last ten minutes. "She should have been there already. Is she outside talking to someone?"

"Let me check and call you back."

Hawk walked out into the backyard and looked toward the big house. The dark shadows made the trees look bigger, everything darker, and it would be harder to see where you were going. He could vaguely see the yard lights through the trees. It was far enough for some privacy but close enough to walk to.

His phone rang again.

"She's not here. Are you sure she's not talking to some of your men?" Striker asked.

"Hold on." He whistled, getting a few of his guys' attention. "Have any of you seen Emily?"

"No, Boss."

Fuck. "They said no."



“I’ll send out a search party. Kristina is freaking out. The last time a woman went out on her own, she was brought back dead.”

“Are you talking about Sally?”

“Yeah.”

“But the Black Demons are gone, aren’t they?” Hawk asked.

“There’s always a chance a few are still out there and wanting revenge, and that’s why I’m hypervigilant with the girls. I have no idea why Emily was alone. She’s always supposed to have a man with her.”

“I’m going out to look with my guys. We’ll find her.”

“Good.” Striker hung up.

Hawk whistled for the men. When he saw several, he told them about the situation. “Let’s go.”

They fanned out.

Five minutes later, Hawk saw her on the ground behind some bushes. There was a gash on her head, and her jeans were pulled down. Her panties were still in place, and he didn’t see any blood, so he hoped that meant she hadn’t been raped.

“Over here,” he yelled as he pulled up her jeans and removed his cut to wrap around her.

“What the fuck,” Striker said as he ran over to them.

“I know. Someone hit her in the head, dragged her body behind the bushes, and pulled her jeans down.”

Striker growled. “I will find out who did this, and they will feel so much pain before I slit their throat.”

“No, the fucker that did this is mine.”

They were hurrying up to the big house.

“Someone get Alicia and make sure she’s in the office,” Striker shouted. He turned back to Hawk. “So, you’re finally going to stop fucking around with her?”

“Yes. We’ll talk later.” They walked into the back door and directly to the office where Alicia, Stone, Kristina, and a few other women were waiting. They had put a blanket on the sofa, and Alicia had her box of supplies and some already laid out on a table near the sofa.

Someone yelled for a bag of frozen peas for the knot on Emily’s forehead. Hawk was pushed aside as the women gathered around Emily and worked on her.

Hawk was worried that she hadn’t woken up yet.

Alicia wiped the blood off her forehead and was now probing the cut. It looked deep to Hawk. He found himself cringing every time he saw more damage done to her. Jesus, what the hell happened to her? She hadn’t been gone that long.

“Do you think she has a concussion?” Striker asked.

Alicia looked at him. “Maybe a mild one. I’ve checked her pupils, and they look fine. But I’m going to want her to wake up every hour overnight and maybe tomorrow. We’ll need to take her in if I see anything I’m concerned about. Right now, I think she’s doing fine.”

“I can stay with her tonight,” Hawk said.

Everyone in the room froze and stared at him.

“Are you going to stop being an asshole?” Willow said behind him.

He rolled his eyes. Leave it to Willow to ask what everyone was thinking. “Yes, Willow. I’ve never had a relationship with a woman, so I have a lot to learn.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll help train you,” Meg said.

Hawk smiled when Feral growled.

“Train? Woman, you don’t train us.”

Meg patted his arm in a condescending tone. “Of course not, baby.”

There were a few snickers in the room, and everyone was fighting a smile.

“Are you done with Meg?” Feral asked.

Alicia nodded. “Sure. I know there are things you want to discuss with your old lady.”

Meg hissed. “You’re a traitor, bitch. You better watch your back.” A scream tore from her throat when Feral threw her over his shoulder.

As weird as it sounded to him in his head, that was what he wanted with Emily.

Everyone turned back when Emily moaned.

Hawk got her attention. “Alicia, when I found Emily, her jeans were down around her knees.” Kristina cried out.

“Fuck,” Alicia said. “Did you see any blood or fluid?”

“None.”

“Let’s hope they didn’t get a chance to rape her. I don’t think there was enough time, was there?” Alicia asked.

Striker was holding Kristina in the corner, and he could hear the woman crying and Striker murmuring to her. He would pay better attention to the couples because he thought he’d be able to learn a lot just by watching them.

He turned back to see Alicia sitting next to Emily’s hip and asking her questions. Kristina came to kneel beside them and held Emily’s hand.

“What happened?” Alicia asked Emily.

Emily blinked a few times. “I don’t know. Where am I?”

“You’re in Striker’s office, hun,” Kristina said.

“Oh.” Emily reached for her forehead, and Alicia grabbed her hand.

“Don’t touch it. I have butterfly bandages on it. It’s deep enough that I think we should go in for stitches.”

“If there’s a threat against her, I’d rather have her stay home,” Striker said. “The way you closed it will heal quickly and only leave a small scar.”

“I don’t want to go to the doctor. I know you’ll take care of me,” Emily said.

Every word seemed to hit Hawk in his gut. This woman he was going to make his own had been attacked and hurt. The rage of that alone was enough to make his jaw ache because his teeth were clenched so much. Seeing her hurt made him feel a fury he had never known before.

When he found out who did this, he’d make them pay dearly before he killed them. They’d regret ever touching her.

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## Chapter Twelve

Alicia went over the symptoms of a concussion with her, and they determined besides a headache and little nausea, she was okay.

“Let’s sit you up. I want to check and see if you’re dizzy and if it makes your nausea worse.”

Kristina and Alicia helped her to sit and lean back against the sofa.

“Any dizziness, double vision?” Alicia asked.

“No.”

Emily’s head felt like it was about ready to explode. “Can I take some Tylenol?”

“Yes. We can give you that every four hours for the first twenty-four hours and then go to Advil or Aleve, which will help.”

“Can you remember anything about the attack?” Striker asked.

Emily looked up to see several people in the room with them. When her eyes met Hawk’s, she instantly lowered them.

Alicia squeezed her hand.

“The person hit me with a branch, I think. I heard the person saying something after I was on the ground and before I passed out.”

“Did you recognize the voice?”

“No. It was distorted somehow,” Emily said.

“What did they say?” Kristina asked.

Emily cleared her throat and kept her gaze away from Hawk. She did want to ask him why he was there, but it would take too much effort. “They said I deserved to be hurt. They called me a bitch and told me to go away.”

Her gaze went to Hawk and then Alicia. “They said I should listen to Hawk and go away, that no one wants me here.”

All the women gasped and turned to face Hawk.

“Who was around when you said that?” Striker asked Hawk.

“I didn’t,” Hawk said.

“Yes, you did. You told me you were looking for an excuse to make me leave.”

The women in the room glared at him.

“I didn’t mean it,” Hawk said. He walked over and sat down next to her.

She stiffened when his hand lifted hers.

“I know I’ve been a jerk...” Hawk said.

“Ya think?” Willow said snarkily.

Emily saw the men scowl at the woman, but Willow didn’t care.

Striker went to the door and whistled. “Get Blood for me.”

They only had to wait a few minutes before Blood walked in. “What’s up, Boss?”

“Take your old lady out of here.”

“Does she need to be punished?” Blood asked in an excited tone and with a grin, slapping his hands together and rubbing them back and forth.

“Yes,” Hawk and a few others said simultaneously.

Willow held a hand out when he went toward her.

“Don’t you dare, you bastard.”

Blood just laughed gleefully, tossed her over his shoulder, and walked out as she yelled at him and pounded on his back.

The silence left behind helped ease Emily’s headache.

“Jesus, they really are perfect for each other,” Brick said.

Emily smiled.

Hawk squeezed her hand to get her attention. “We’ll talk about all this later. I still have a lot to learn, and I know I’ve fucked up a few times. I can tell you’re in pain, and I want you to lie down.”

“I agree,” Alicia said. She turned to Kristina. “Can you get a glass of water and another bag of peas for her forehead? I’ll get her up to her room.”

“I’ll carry her,” Hawk said.

Emily shook her head. “No, you’ll hurt yourself.”

Several of the men snorted.

“They’re always trying to protect us,” Stone said.

Hawk stood and picked her up.

“Hawk...” Emily said.

“Hush. You’re going to let me take care of you.”

Emily exhaled and wrapped her arms around his neck. She studied the side of his face as they climbed the stairs. The exercise didn’t seem to affect him at all.

As they climbed the stairs, she gazed at him. He had a very strong profile. She could see several scars and a bump on his nose that told her it had probably been broken at least once in the past.

His chin had a slight indentation in the middle. His dark brown hair was too long, and he had a few days’ scruff on his face, but he was still the most beautiful thing she’d ever seen. His body was huge. Every muscle was evident and pronounced, and the tattoos made him look larger somehow. They definitely made him look scarier.

He sat her gently on the side of the bed. She sat still because it helped with her head. Alicia came back with a washcloth.

“Do I have dirt on me?” Emily asked.

“Yes, that and blood,” Alicia said.

“In my hair, too?”

“Yes.”

“I want to shower. I can’t lay down in bed and sleep like this,” Emily said.

“Fine, but someone will have to be there with you.”

Emily kept her gaze from Hawk. “Can you?” she asked Alicia.

“Of course. Let me get some comfortable clothes for you to sleep in.”

She could sense Hawk wasn’t happy, but she wouldn’t be comfortable with him while she showered because they still hadn’t talked, and she’d never been naked with him.

Alicia led her into the bathroom and shut the door. She turned on the shower before helping Emily get her clothes off.

Damn, she had liked the t-shirt she was wearing, but there was no way the blood would come out of it. It could still be used. The women would tear it up and use the clean parts for rags.

“Do you want me in there with you?”

“No, I think I’m okay. I’m not dizzy. I just have a headache.”

“If you get shaky, tell me. I’ll stand right out here.”

She scrubbed herself, careful of the cut and knot on her forehead.

Alicia was there with a towel and helped her dry herself, set another towel on the toilet seat, and then worked on her hair.

“I need to redo the bandages,” Alicia said.

Emily hadn’t thought about that. “I’m sorry. Is it bleeding a lot?”



“No. Don’t be sorry, hun. I would have done the same thing as you.”

Alicia helped her pull on panties and a large t-shirt and then blow-dried her hair.

“Is there anywhere else on your body that you ache or hurt?”

Emily shook her head. “No. Just my head.”

“Why don’t you brush your teeth so you don’t have to get out of bed again?” Alicia said.

Alicia stood behind her and then followed her into the bedroom.

The drapes were closed, and the small lamp by the bedside was the only light on. No one was there except Hawk, and he was leaning against the dresser with his massive arms crossed over his chest. She tried to ignore him while Alicia redid the bandages and then made her take the pain pills.

“Hop into bed. Hawk is going to stay with you and wake you up every hour. I’m just being cautious. You’re never certain with a head injury. Hawk, call me if she can’t answer a simple question, or she starts vomiting, or her headache worsens. I’ll check on you all in the morning.”

“Thank you, Alicia,” Emily said.

Alicia waved at the doorway before closing the door.

Emily sat there with her head down.

“Let’s get you into bed,” Hawk said.

She glanced at him. “I’m fine, I swear. You don’t have to be here.”

He grunted and started to pull off his t-shirt before he sat next to her and pulled off his boots and socks. Her mouth dropped open when he stood and proceeded to take off his jeans.

“Wait. What are you doing?”

“Getting undressed. I’m not going to sleep in my clothes. I’ll leave my boxers on for now.”

“You wore your clothes before when we had to sleep in the same bed.”

“That was when we didn’t know each other, and you had been traumatized.”

“It’s just I don’t feel comfortable...”

“Too bad. I’m going to brush my teeth, and I’ll be right back to get you settled.”

She was in shock and didn’t have a comeback. Her mouth snapped shut when the bathroom door closed.

She wondered for a split second if she might still be unconscious and that this was just a dream. If it was, she didn’t want it to end.

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## Chapter Thirteen

Hawk came out of the bathroom to see Emily still sitting on the side of the bed. “Scoot over and lay down, babe, and I’ll put the frozen peas on your forehead.”

She slid to the other side and pulled the blanket up to her chin. Hawk turned off the light, grabbed the bag, lay down beside her, and gently set the peas on her face.

“Is that okay?” he asked. He could see her clearly with the streetlight shining through the window, and she didn’t flinch in pain.

Emily hummed. “Yes. It feels good.”

“It will help with the swelling and pain. Now, go to sleep. That will help the most.”

“Okay,” she murmured.

He watched her as she closed her eyes. Within a few minutes, her breathing had evened out. He lifted the bag off her head and dropped it on the nightstand.

He bunched a pillow between his arm and head and stared down at her. She was the prettiest thing he’d ever seen. She was so damn tiny he was afraid he’d hurt her. After watching the other men with old ladies, he understood that being with her could be done. Every other guy with an old lady was huge, and their women were small like Emily. He’d just have to learn to be gentle.

He got very little sleep because he had to wake her up every hour and give her pain medicine a few times. When he woke up the last time, she was cuddling his chest, and he had an arm over her hips.

She woke up shortly after. It was enjoyable seeing her blink her eyes open. She had a hard time in the morning waking up, and he knew he would never get sick of watching her. Maybe soon, he’d be able to tuck her under him and start fucking her before she realized what was happening and wasn’t fully awake.

She tilted her head back so she could look at him.

“Hi,” she said.

“Hi.” He gently touched the injury to her forehead. It was still a bit swollen, and the bruise had darkened, but it looked better than the night before. “How do you feel?”

“I ... um ... I think good. I still have a headache, but nothing like last night.”

“You’ll have to move slow, or it might come back,” he said.

She smiled. “I planned on that. I need to get up and use the restroom.”

He looked at the clock on the DVD. “It’s still really early, so I want you to come back to bed.”

“But I need to help in the kitchen.”

He shook his head. “Not today, babe.”

“Why do you get to suddenly tell me what to do?”

His hand slid down her body until it rested on her stomach and then slid up to cup one of her breasts. He could see the tit stiffen into a hard little ball from how it pressed into his palm.

“This right here,” he murmured. He hid a smile when her breath caught, and she arched. “Do you see? You already belong to me.”

“But what if I don’t want to belong to you?”

He chuckled. “Babe, if I didn’t know you had a headache right now, my hand would be in your panties and my fingers in that tight cunt, and I guarantee you’re already wet for me.”

He effortlessly lifted her over him and onto her feet. “Go pee and then come back.”

He stopped her as she walked toward the bathroom. “And if I have to chase you down, your ass will feel the flat of my hand.”

He loved how her mouth dropped open, but a flush of desire colored her face. She growled, twirled, walked into the bathroom, and slammed the door shut.

Fuck, he loved her spirit. He relaxed and listened as she flushed the toilet, and the sink came on. A moment later, she was opening the door and staring at him.

He held out his hand. "Come here. I want you to take some more aspirin before you lay down."

She crossed her arms over her chest and lifted her chin, delighting him. "Babe, you're not up for where this is going, so I'd hustle."

"What does that mean?"

"It means when you disobey me, I'll spank your ass and then fuck it. Is that what you want right now? From the horror on your face, I'm assuming you've never been ass-fucked, so I will have to prepare you."

"Hawk, I don't think..."

"I don't want you to worry about it right now. I hope you know I'd never hurt you, right?"

He hated that she took a moment to think about it.

"No, I don't think you would."

"Good answer. Now, get your ass over here."

She walked over and took the bottle of aspirin from his hand. She took out two and swallowed them. She gasped when he lifted her again and put her back on the side of the bed that faced the far wall.

"Wouldn't it be easier for me to sleep on that side since I pee more than you?"

He arranged her with her back against his chest. "No, I want to be between you and the door."

"Why?"

Damn, she was so innocent in ways. "In case there's a threat, babe."

She looked over her shoulder at him with a frown of concern on her face. “But you might get hurt.”

“If one of us is going to get hurt, it will be me because I’m bigger and stronger. I can take a hell of a lot of damage before it takes me down.”

“I hate thinking about that kind of stuff.”

“That’s fine. That’s my job, so you don’t have to,” he said.

“So, what changed? You wanted me gone yesterday.”

He ran his fingertips down her cheek. “I never wanted you gone. I wouldn’t have allowed it.”

“But, if I wanted to go, there’s nothing you could do about it.”

He smiled. “There’s plenty I could do about it, babe. But I have to tell you that I’ve never had a relationship with a woman, so I’m going to make some mistakes and say things that will piss you off.”

“Seriously. No relationship?”

“Never, ever.”

“But you’ve ... you know, with women?”

“Do you mean fuck?”

She cringed, making him smile.

“Yes.”

“Yes, babe, I’ve fucked women. But that’s all it was. I’ve never cared about them, and I have never slept with one. You’re the only woman I’ll ever care about.”

“What if you decide you don’t really want me?”

“I can’t see that happening,” he said.

“But what if?”

He rolled his eyes. “I really don’t know. I don’t want us even to think that way.”

“But...”

He turned her on her side. “Enough. Go to sleep. We have plenty of time to hash all of this out.”

He heard her sigh, but she didn’t say anything else.

Several minutes later, when he heard her breathing deepen, he closed his eyes and slept.

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## Chapter Fourteen

Emily walked into the kitchen with Hawk hot on her heels and a scowl on his face. He wanted to keep her in bed all day so she could rest, but she told him she'd go bonkers.

When he tried to insist, she told him that was fine. They could stay in bed all day. It would give them hours and hours to talk about their relationship. She had to hide her smile when he abruptly gave in but said he'd be watching her.

Kristina cried out and ran to her and pulled her into her arms. "How are you doing?"

Emily hugged her. "Much better."

"Come here and sit down so I can check out the bandages we put on," Alicia said.

Emily sat while Alicia started to work on her. "You know, you're very good. Have you thought about being a doctor?"

Alicia smiled. "Thank you. When people ask me about medical training, they always ask if I want to be a nurse. Like women couldn't be doctors."

"That's crappy," Emily said.

"To answer your question, I already have a paramedic license, and I've been taking courses online. I enjoy taking care of our family so I won't be gone at school when someone needs me. They keep me busy enough."

"I bet."

"How's the head?" Charlie asked.

"I just have a slight headache."

"Do you want some more Tylenol?" Meg asked.

"She could have Advil now, and it might help her more," Alicia said.

"I'll get some."



Emily looked around. "Where is Willow?"

The women chuckled. "Blood took her out for a ride. It was the only thing that would get her to forgive him."

Emily grinned. Those two were always at each other, and if Emily couldn't see how much they enjoyed it, she'd be worried. She turned her head when she felt someone against her back. The heat and hardness had her guessing it was Hawk.

She swallowed and looked up at him. "Hi."

Hawk smirked. "I'm going to leave you with them. You are not to go outside today."

"Why?" Emily asked.

"Babe, someone hurt you yesterday. Remember? Until we figure out who it is, you stay inside."

"But the girls like to go out after a meal and talk at the picnic table."

Hawk placed his hands on her shoulders. "I don't like it. I can't be sure there will always be a man around."

"We'll watch her, Hawk," Meg said. "No one will be able to get to her."

"Girls, I need her to be watched every minute."

They all nodded.

"Good. Where's Feral and Striker?"

"In the office."

"Okay." Hawk kissed the top of her head and walked out.

The girls' laughing got her attention.

"What?" Emily asked when she turned to see them staring at her.

"It looks like you guys made up?" Meg said.

"We weren't fighting. We're just trying to find our way. Neither of us is used to this situation."

“I remember that phase,” Kristina said. “I wanted to kill him part of the time.”

“But you got through it,” Charlie said. “We all had adjustments.”

“Yes,” the other girls replied.

“Let’s start breakfast,” Meg said. “We’re already behind.”

“What can I do?” Emily asked.

“I don’t want you to overdo it,” Alicia said.

“She can do the toast. We’ll take one of the stools over to the counter where the toaster is,” Charlie said.

Alicia nodded. “That would work.”

They got her situated and set to work making a meal that would feed fifty people. She didn’t know how they did it or how they made it look effortless, but she was learning.

After the majority of people were fed, the girls took a plate out to the picnic table. They ate, laughed, teased, and relaxed. It was one of Emily’s favorite times. She loved how Hawk would track her down and ensure she was okay. It showed he cared, at least.

“Can you guys tell me about the beginning of your relationships with your men?” Emily asked.

“Hell, I wanted to kill Blood within the first hour,” Willow laughed.

“I’m surprised you haven’t already,” Meg said.

“That’s because I have awesome willpower.”

The girls laughed.

“Taz was an asshole. I threw a wrench at him once,” Charlie said.

“Feral irritated me,” Meg said.

“Meg, he still does,” Kristina said.

Meg grinned. “That’s true.”

“I think they all drove us crazy initially,” Alicia said. “But there’s something about them that makes us want to stay.”

Charlie reached for her hand. “No matter what, even though they can be total assholes, they will always be with us, and we will always be protected and loved.”

Willow wiped an imaginary tear from her cheek. “Wow, woman, that was like poetry.”

Charlie scowled and threw a balled-up napkin at Willow, hitting her in the head.

Emily laughed so hard that tears came to her eyes. God, these women were hilarious. She hoped to stay just for them, but it would be even better if Hawk finally made a move.

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## Chapter Fifteen

Later that night, Emily relaxed back with the girl gang. All the girls were squashed together on one of the big sofas. The day had gone well. She stayed with them the whole time but saw Hawk check on her a few times.

No one could find any evidence about the attack the night before. It made her feel edgy, and she found herself looking around, hoping to see someone that would act out of character.

The girls turned toward the doorway where a few of the guys stood.

Hawk held out a hand. "Come here, babe. Striker wants to talk to you, and then we're going to bed."

"Here?" Emily asked.

"No, we're going to my room."

"Oh." She stood and hugged the girls, walked to Hawk, and took his hand. "What's he want to talk about?"

"He has some questions."

She could feel the tension in the room when Hawk pulled her in. The only people in the room were each group's prez and vice prez.

Hawk brought her over to a chair, sat, and pulled her into his lap.

"I want you to go over everything that happened last night," Striker said.

"Oh, okay. I left Hawk's place and was headed back home. I heard a sound behind me, turned, and immediately got smacked with the branch."

"You didn't see anything about the person?" Feral asked.

She shook her head. "No."

“Can you guess how tall they were?” Hawk asked.

She thought about it for a moment. “The branch came at me sideways and not down, so I would guess it was a shorter person.”

“I’d agree,” Striker said. “Tell us about the voice.”

“The person was definitely distorting their voice, making it deep and gruff.”

Hawk rubbed her back. “That helps, babe. We now know the person was shorter than the average guy here. We also know he’s one of us if he tried to disguise his voice, so you wouldn’t know who it was.”

“So it’s someone in one of our clubs,” Striker said. “Can you think of anyone that hates you or acts differently around you?”

Emily had to think about it and then shook her head. “No.”

The room seemed to get tenser as the guys looked at Hawk. She turned to look up at him. “What’s going on?”

Hawk pulled her tighter against his chest. “Baby, when I found you, your jeans were down around your knees.

It took her a moment to understand. “You think I might have been raped?” She couldn’t help the hysteria that changed the tone of her voice. The only thoughts were that someone might have intimately touched her, and she didn’t know about it.

“We can’t be one hundred percent sure unless you have a doctor’s visit.”

She flew from his arms so fast he was unable to grab her. She held her hands out in front of her when Hawk stood and took a step toward her. “No. Don’t. Stay back.”

“Babe, no blood or fluid was on your panties, and we found you fairly quickly. We don’t think he had a chance to touch you. Alicia asked if you were sore, and you said just your head was. Is that still true?”

She couldn't grasp a single thought because her emotions were in chaos.

"Answer me," Hawk said and took another step toward her.

"No, wait!" she yelled. She pressed her hands against her face and burst into gut-wrenching sobs.

"Fuck that." Hawk picked her up and turned to Striker. "I'm taking her home."

"I think that would be best," Striker said. "We'll talk in the morning."

"Can someone grab some of her things from her room?"

"I can," Brick said. "I'll just set them outside your door, so I don't disturb you."

"Thanks, man." Hawk turned and walked out of the room.

She cried the whole time getting to his house and up to his room.

After he laid her on the mattress, he started to take off her clothes.

"Wait, what are you doing?" Emily asked.

"I'm just going to take off your jeans. If you let me, I can tell if you were touched down there or not."

"How?"

"I'll use my finger. Trust me, babe."

He exhaled when she nodded and relaxed back against the mattress. She was still crying but not the awful sobbing she'd been doing just a moment before.

Her shoes, socks, and jeans were tossed onto the floor. She lay on her back, looking up at him with trust. It did something to his heart. He sat beside her on the bed, facing her, and pressed a hand to her stomach.

“I’m just touching. I’ll move my finger around, and we’ll check for any sensitivity. That will tell if you’ve been touched. Are you good with that?”

She nodded.

He watched her face as he slid his hand under her panties. He let one of his fingers slide between her pussy lips and down to the opening of her cunt.

“Anything so far?”

She shook her head.

“Okay.”

He used the tip of his finger and ran it around the outside before pressing into her. He assumed she was mostly dry because of her deep emotions. He kept at it and stopped when he had his whole finger in her.

“What do you feel?” he asked.

“It’s weird.”

“What is?”

“It feels like my body is heating up, but something’s keeping me from feeling desire.”

“I get it. Because we have to answer the question first. Do you feel any soreness?”

He watched her think about it a bit and then shook her head.

“How about when I move my finger?”

He started pushing in and out, watching her face for anything, and then pulled out of her. “Babe, you weren’t touched. You’re okay.”

Emily grabbed onto his arm when he tried to stand.

“What, babe?”

“Can we ... will you...” she stuttered.

“Spit it out.”

“Will you have sex with me? I want to get the image of ... you know, out of my head.”

“Are you sure?” he asked.

“Yes. Please.”

“Babe, you don’t have to beg me. I’ll give you whatever you need.”

He took her panties down and pushed her t-shirt up and off her before unhooking her bra and tossing that aside. She lay before him naked, and he couldn’t be more pleased with what he saw.

She was still a bit thin, but he loved the fullness of her breasts and the fact that they were natural instead of what the sluts do to theirs. She had rounded hips and a tiny waist. He knew he could wrap his hands around her waist and have his fingers cross each other in the back.

He slipped off his cut, boots, and socks before standing and reaching over his shoulder, grabbing his shirt, and pulling it over his head. His fingers went for his jeans next. He watched how her eyes glided over him as he undressed.

When he stood in front of her naked, he wrapped his hand around his straining cock and stroked up and down. His body was roaring to have hers. Now he just had to get her ready to take him.



## Chapter Sixteen

Oh, God. The man was beautiful. His muscles stood out, showing every indentation and hill. He had tattoos on his chest, arms, and one leg.

“Do you want to keep staring at me, or do you want me to make you feel good?”

She exhaled. “Make me feel good, Hawk.” She raised her arms.

He chuckled and lay down beside her. “The last time you raised your arms like that, you wanted me to pick you up.”

“When?”

“The morning after we found you.”

His hand landed on her neck, and he cupped her jaw. “I was glad to do it. Right now, I’d be thrilled to be able to taste you like I’ve been craving since we met.”

“Really?” she asked. She had thought he just put up with her until he could drop her onto someone else’s lap.

“Enough talking.” He lowered his head and pressed his lips against hers. It was the hottest feeling she’d ever had, and she was already craving more.

The kiss started out gentle, like he was just sipping at her. But within a few minutes, he had her mouth open under his, and he was ravishing it. Using his tongue, lips, and teeth, he acted like he wanted to eat her up, which made her body even hotter.

His hand started roaming over her. It would stop when he’d hit a sensitive area to play a bit before moving on. It was like he was trying to learn how her body works and makes it hot.

When he tucked his hand between her legs and said “open,” her legs immediately fell apart. This time when his fingers started to penetrate her, she was sopping wet for him.

He groaned. “Fuck, yes, this is what I want. I want you to always be like this, so you’re ready for me whenever I want to take you.”

“I don’t know if that’s possible.”

“Fuck, yeah, it is, babe. It will get to where your body will respond just hearing my voice.”

“What about you?” she asked as her hands roamed over every part of him she could reach.

“What about me?” he asked.

“Will your body react when you hear my voice?”

He grinned. “Fuck, babe, it already does.”

His mouth went back to hers, and at the same time, he finger-fucked her. The dual sensations scrambled every thought in her head. She hissed when he added another finger.

“Easy. I need to stretch you out so you can take me without discomfort. The last thing I want to do is hurt you.”

She nodded and watched his eyes. Usually, they were a delicious caramel color, but at the moment, they were black with arousal.

He started working three into her, which was enough to worry her because his cock was bigger than that.

He reached for something on his nightstand. Emily exhaled when she saw it was a condom. She was glad he thought of it because it hadn’t crossed her mind to protect herself from pregnancy.

When he rolled on top of her, she wrapped her legs around his waist and gripped his shoulders.

“Nice and easy,” he said.

She felt the head of his cock push into her. It stretched her, but it wasn’t enough to make her panic.

When he continued to thrust in and out and take it deeper every time, she could feel her apprehension start to rise.

“Babe, you’re fine. I promise. Just a little bit more, and I’m all in. Jesus, I’ve never felt anything this good before.”

It seemed to take forever, but maybe two minutes passed before she exhaled because she guessed he finally got his cock into her.

“Babe, I’m in.”

Her eyes widened. “All of you?”

“Yeah,” he laughed. “Now, let’s have some fun.”

She had thought she wouldn’t be overwhelmed anymore since he was in, but she was wrong. When he started thrusting inside of her, something started to build. It was like a band inside her gut tightened, but it kept getting harder as time passed. She’d had orgasms before, but never one that felt like this. It was like it was going to take over her body, maybe her sanity, and she’d have no ability to move.

“Hawk.”

He must have heard the tension in her voice because he slowed down and cupped her head in his hands.

“Easy, baby, you’re okay. Just relax and let me take care of you.”

“It’s just so ... I don’t know.”

“I know. I feel it, too. It’s like taking over my whole body.”

“Yes.” She was so glad he was going through the same thing.

“Everything’s going to be fine. Just remember I’m holding you so nothing can happen to you.”

She nodded and tried to relax.

“That’s it.”

He started driving into her again.

This time when it was built, it happened faster and harder. The deeper and faster his thrusts were, the closer she got.

“I want you to come for me.”

“I...” She couldn’t help the fear of building.

“Yes, you can. Let go.”

Just his demanding alpha tone was enough to throw her over. A scream tore from her throat, and it felt like part of her was flying. She vaguely heard him groan as he pounded into her the last few times.

When he stopped, he had his face in the crook of her neck, and his body lay over her, pressing her down into the mattress. She would have smothered if it wasn’t for his arms keeping his torso off her. His body trembled, and his breathing was heavy.

It helped to know he was as affected by their sex as she was.

He finally got the strength to tip them to the side. He held her there, tight against his chest, and with his cock still in her cunt. Her breathing evened out, and she felt herself start to fall asleep. She was drifting when he released her.

“I’ll be right back, babe.”

She thought she nodded but wasn’t sure. After the door closed behind him, she turned on her side and fell asleep.

She was jolted awake when Hawk got back in bed, pulled the covers over them, and then wrapped his body around hers.

Emily felt him press his lips against the back of her head.

“Good night, babe.”

She smiled and wiggled closer to him. “Good night.”

## Chapter Seventeen

Emily blinked as the sun shone on her face. She lifted her head and looked around. Hawk had left their room. She was a bit disappointed, but she also knew he was busy.

A look at the clock told her she had some time to shower and dress before getting to the main house to help the girls with breakfast. She dressed in one of Hawk's t-shirts, gathered the things she would need, and then looked for the bathroom. It was harder than she thought. She tried a few doors, and they were locked. Halfway down the hall, she heard a voice behind her making her scream and twirl.

“Jesus Christ, Em,” Brick said.

“I can't find the bathroom.”

“Fuck, Hawk isn't going to like you walking around like that.”

She rolled her eyes. “Brick, I'm wearing one of his shirts that goes down to my knees. It's like I'm wearing a dress.”

Brick grinned. “Maybe a see-through one.”

She looked down.

He grinned. “When the light comes through the window at the end of the hallway, it makes the shirt see-through.”

She gasped and tried to cover herself with the things in her arms, making him laugh.

He rolled his eyes and grabbed her upper arm. “Come on. I'll show you the bathroom Hawk uses. This might give him even more incentive to get the add-on done.”

She really hoped so, too.

“Here you go. I would suggest having a thick robe on the next time you walk to the bathroom.”

“Thank you.”

“Oh, you’re very welcome. It was a nice sight to see in the morning.”

She gasped and then scowled when he laughed as he walked down the hallway.

“You’re a brat,” she yelled.

That just made him laugh harder.

Emily rolled her eyes and shut and locked the door. She quickly showered and dressed. She was folding her clothes into a pile on the desk in Hawk’s room when the door closed behind her.

She gasped when she saw Hawk with his arms crossed over his chest and a scowl on his face. “Hi. Good morning,” she said.

He tipped his head once toward her.

“What’s wrong?”

“I just talked to Brick.”

Damn. “He’s a tattletale brat.”

Hawk’s jaw tightened. “I’ll be sure to tell him.”

“Are you really mad at me?”

“I’m trying to decide.”

She growled, walked over to him, and looked up at him. “Listen up, buster.” She ignored the way Hawk’s eyebrows rose. “I did nothing wrong. I didn’t know it was see-through, dammit. So, you can’t be mad at me.”

She nodded her head and crossed her arms over her chest.

Hawk’s jaw started ticking, and she assumed she’d made him mad but tough tootsies.

They stared at each other for what seemed like forever. Her neck started aching, being bent back so much.

“What have you got to say?” she asked.

“I’m thinking.”

“Could you think a little quicker because my neck hurts?” she asked with a sarcastic tone.

This time she saw his lips twitch.

“Fine. It’s not so much the fact Brick saw your body.”

She frowned. “Wait, he only saw the outline because of the sun.”

“If that’s what you want to believe,” he said, making her scowl. “It’s the fact that I wanted you still naked in bed so I could fuck you.”

Her mouth dropped open. “Wow, how romantic.”

“I thought it was.”

She rolled her eyes. “Well, I don’t have time. I have to get to the main house and help with breakfast.”

“Oh, I think they can wait another few minutes.”

Before she understood, he had her bent over the bed with her jeans and panties around her ankles.

“Hey, wait.”

She heard his zipper and then a condom wrapper before he started to push into her. Thank God she was already wet and ready for him because he pushed through until he got all the way inside her.

“See, wouldn’t you rather be doing this with me instead of cooking?”

Her mind was already going haywire. “Hush up and fuck me.”

He snorted but did what she asked. There was no build-up with him. He started pounding into her like a piston. Her breathing became labored, and her arms weak. She’d have dropped to the mattress if it weren’t for his grip on her hips.

“Come for me,” Hawk growled.

The coil inside of her shattered. She dropped her face into the mattress and screamed. He continued to fuck her until she felt his cock jerk inside of her.

It took a moment to realize her feet weren't touching the floor because Hawk had them elevated enough to get into her while standing. He pulled out of her and lay her on the mattress. She wouldn't have been able to stand on her own feet yet and would have dropped to the floor.

She heard the door open and close but didn't have the energy to look. When it happened again, she lifted her head to see Hawk with a washcloth in his hands.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Washing you."

She tried to wiggle away. A light smack to her ass had her frozen. He turned her over and pulled up her panties and jeans.

He grinned at her as she frowned up at him.

"Why are you mad?" he asked.

"You spanked me."

He chuckled. "No, this is spanking." Before she knew it, she was on her stomach, and his hand came down on her ass several times. Even with the jeans between them, it still stung. He rolled her to her back and came down on her but kept himself several inches away from her.

"Now, that's spanking."

She growled and hit his shoulder, gasping, and then cradled her hand because it was like hitting a rock.

That made him laugh even harder. She tried to push him off her, but of course, couldn't budge him.

"You're being a bully," she accused him.

She could tell he had to fight to keep from laughing and looking serious.

"I'm sorry. I'll try to do better," he said.

She narrowed her eyes. "No, you won't."

"I said I'd try at least. Now, ask me nicely to let you go, and after a kiss, I'll let you out of the room."



She wanted to growl again but knew it wouldn't do any good. In a fake sweet voice. "All right." She raised her arms, closed her eyes, and puckered.

She heard him grunt but then felt his lips on hers. It didn't last very long, and he pulled her up to her feet. He kept a hold of her as she steadied herself, grabbed her hand, and started pulling her out of the room.

They were at the top of the stairs when Doc yelled. "Hey, Boss, we need to add thicker walls to our new build."

"Why?" Hawk asked.

"Because I can hear you two fucking, and it's messing with my sleep."

She gasped, felt herself go bright red, and yanked her hand from Hawk's. Both men laughed roarily as she ran down the steps and out the back door.

She knew one of the other guys were following her to make sure she got there okay, but she didn't care. She used every bad word she knew and some made-up ones as she walked, ignoring the guy behind her, trying not to laugh.

She raced into the back door of the main house to see the women cooking.

"I'm sorry I'm late. What can I do?"

The women laughed.

"We know how that is," Meg said. "It's irritating sometimes."

"Yes." Emily nodded.

"Maybe you can tell us why you're beet-red after breakfast?" Alicia said.

Damned if her face didn't get any hotter, making them laugh hard.

Emily sighed. "You guys are brats."

"Takes one to know one," Willow said.

Emily couldn't help but giggle until tears came to her eyes.

“Come on, guys,” Kristina said. “Let's get this done. I'm so curious.”

“Not helping,” Emily said to her and turned to get to work.

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## Chapter Eighteen

Hawk sat back in one of the chairs in Striker's office and stared in disbelief.

"You're telling me a stranger was on the compound the night Emily was hurt, and no one knew?"

"Yes. It was a guy dropping off a computer he had fixed for Gunner. Gunner didn't know about the attack, and when he found out, he came to me. He told me he and the guy were standing outside the gate because Gunner didn't want him to come in and even watched him drive away, but that doesn't mean he didn't come back."

Hawk thought about it for a moment. "It doesn't make sense. Has Emily been in town at all since she's been here?"

"She went with the girls once to get groceries," Feral said.

"Even if he saw her, the attack felt more personal," he said.

"Unless the guy has a death wish, I can't see him trying to sneak into an MC compound and raping one of our women," Brick said.

"That's a good point," Striker said.

"So, what do we do?" Hawk asked.

"I sent Snoopy and Stone to question him. They are the least intimidating of all of us when they want to be. I didn't want to kill the man until we got a read on him. They should be back here in the next few minutes."

The small group talked about the expansion of the other house until the men returned.

There was a knock on the door.

"Come in," Striker called out.

Snoopy and Stone walked in.

“How did it go?” Feral asked.

“There’s no way he did it,” Stone said.

“Why?” Hawk asked.

“He’s an insecure nerd. He spends his life in a one-room apartment fixing computers for people for a living,” Snoopy said. “The place was also immaculate. I wanted to see how he’d react when I touched something. I put it back down, and he immediately came over and put it where it was before.”

“That sounds like OCD,” Brick said.

Stone nodded. “I could tell he didn’t like people in his space at all. I can’t see someone with that personality doing something like that. Also, when we asked him if he had come back for something or to talk to a girl, he looked horrified.

Stone and Snoopy laughed.

“I got a feeling if he was into anything besides computers, it would be men,” Snoopy said.

Stone chuckled. “I got that, too.”

“Fuck, so we’re back to step one,” Striker said.

Stone spoke. “You guys said it was a shorter person. The only short people here are the sluts and women.”

“A few days ago, I saw Emily and one of the sluts talking, and it didn’t look like she was happy at all,” Snoopy said. “I asked if things were all right, and they both said yes, but I didn’t believe them. I warned the slut I was keeping my eyes on her. I’ve tried, but she hasn’t been around.”

Hawk sat up. “Which slut?”

“Candy.”

Striker looked around the room. “Has anyone seen her lately?”

Everyone shook their heads.

“Call April in,” Striker said.

Brick got back with the slut and shut the door behind them.

The slut looked at all the men and turned white.  
“What’s wrong?”

“Where’s Candy?” Striker asked.

“She’s gone.”

“Gone where?” Hawk asked.

April shrugged. “She just said she was heading out.”

“Did she act weird?” Feral asked.

April thought about it for a moment. “I guess a little.”

“How?”

“Kind of like she was in a hurry.”

“What all did she say?” Feral asked.

“She just said she was taking off. I asked when she was coming back, and she said she wasn’t because she liked to breathe too much. Isn’t that weird?”

Hawk knew without a doubt they’d found who attacked Emily.

“Thank you, April.”

“You’re welcome, Striker. I hope I helped.”

“You did,” Stone said, letting her out of the room.

“Why the fuck would she pull down Emily’s pants?”  
Brick asked.

“To make it look like she was or was about to be raped,” Hawk said.

“I agree with that. It’s a good way to traumatize a woman. Fuck, the way Emily acted after she found out about her pants, it worked,” Striker said.

“Why don’t we call Emily in?” Feral said. “I’d like to know what they talked about when Snoopy saw them.”

Stone went to find her and was back within five minutes.

Hawk held out his hand when he saw how apprehensive she was. "Come here, babe."

"What's wrong?" she asked him.

"Nothing. We just heard that you and Candy argued," Hawk said.

"I wouldn't call it an argument, really. I was folding towels, and she came over and grabbed the towel at the bottom, causing the pile to be knocked down. I asked her what her problem was because she's hated me since I came here."

"She hates all the old ladies," Feral said.

"But I'm not."

Hawk grinned when the guys laughed.

She looked at him with wide eyes. "What?"

He kissed the side of her head. "We'll talk later. Now finish your story."

"She said I was like them, meaning the sluts, and I laughed. I told her I respected my body too much to be a whore. I don't mind working, unlike the women. I said I'd be embarrassed because you guys didn't give a shit about her and that she was just a hole..."

The guy grinned when she turned red.

"Fuck?" Brick asked.

She frowned at him. "Yes. A group of guys interrupted..."

"I was there," Snoopy said.

"Yes. You and a few others. You're the one that told her you'd be watching her."

Snoopy nodded.

Emily faced the others. "She said to watch out, that so many things could happen to a person. I asked if she was threatening me, and she said no and walked off."

Hawk looked at Striker. That was all they needed to know.

“Can you tell me now what’s going on?” she asked.

“How about Hawk tell you about it later? It seems you have some other things to talk about.” Striker grinned.

“You might try asking her,” Feral said.

Striker snorted. “Yeah, like you asked Meg?”

Feral laughed.

He pressed a kiss to her lips. “I promise to tell you all about it later.”

She nodded.

He lifted her to her feet, and before she got a step away from him, he smacked her ass. She gasped and turned around to face him. Her mouth was open, and both of her hands were on her butt cheeks.

“What in the world are you doing?” she asked.

“I just wanted to give you a pat on the ass.”

She stared at his grin with narrow eyes. “You’re a brat.”

“And he’s rude,” Striker said with a grin.

She nodded. “Yes. You’re a rude brat, and we’ll talk about this later.”

They waited until the door closed, and she walked away before laughing hysterically.

Hawk patted his stomach. “God, I forgot about Kristina calling us rude.”

“Yes. I don’t think she’s forgiven you, by the way,” Striker said.

“I got that impression when I told her I was coming for a visit, and I heard her say ‘yay me’ as she put the phone down to find you.”

They all thought that was extremely hilarious.

God, he would enjoy his woman for the rest of his life, and he couldn’t wait.

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## Chapter Nineteen

Emily was applying lotion on her legs when Hawk came into the room. He stood watching every move her hand made as his gaze burned and darkened.

“I’ll never get sick of watching you do that or brushing your hair.”

She snorted, making him grin.

“I’m going to need to get more of my things if I’m going to stay here a lot.”

He leaned back against the desk and crossed his arms over his chest. “I already had all your things brought here.”

Her head snapped up. “When?”

“Today.”

“You had guys do it?” she asked.

His brows pinched together. “Yeah. What’s the problem?”

She got to her hands and knees and faced him. “The problem is they had their hands on my panties and bras.”

“Yeah, so. You weren’t in them,” he said and grinned.

“That doesn’t matter. It’s embarrassing.”

“You mean you can watch the sluts and guys go at it, but you don’t want people touching your underwear?”

“For one thing, I don’t watch what happens in the house with the guys and sluts. But I have never had a man touch my intimate things before.”

“Babe, I will be all over your intimate things.”

She rolled her eyes. “That’s different. You’re my boyfriend.”

She watched him flinch, making her question what they were, if not boyfriend and girlfriend.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to say something that pressures you. We can always say we’re friends with benefits if you like that better.” She didn’t like the idea at all, but he was the one that had to choose. She didn’t like making him uncomfortable, and that’s what she was doing.

“We need to talk about that,” he said.

She sat back on her haunches. “No, we don’t.”

Hawk walked over to her and grabbed her shoulders. “Yes, we do. The guys think I need to inform you that you’re my old lady.”

She had to be mistaken about what she heard. “What? Say that again.”

“I’ve made you my old lady.”

She tried to pull away from him, but he just tightened his grip.

“Isn’t that something we need to discuss and maybe give me a choice in the matter since it’s my life?”

She could tell he was trying not to laugh, making her madder.

“I decided that we didn’t need...”

“You decided?” she yelled, interrupting him.

“Yes. We both know you would have said yes, so why bother with all the bullshit talking?”

“Can you hear yourself right now? And who said I’d agree? Maybe I want to be friends with benefits.”

“That’s not going to happen. And hell yes, you’d agree because you’re not the type of girl to screw around if you don’t care about the guy. Am I wrong?”

Her teeth snapped together. “No. Still...”

“No, still. It’s already done, babe, so let’s move on.”

Jesus, is this really the man she’d fallen in love with? She’d never heard him talk about his feelings. She wanted and needed to know how he felt. It would help to know.

“You know, we’ve never talked about emotions.”

His jaw hardened, his hands dropped from her shoulders, and he took a step back. “Guys don’t do that shit.”

“Yes, they do, if they care about the woman,” she said. “Talk to your friends with women.”

“Fuck. Can’t we just move on from here?” he asked.

“How about we sleep on it and talk in the morning?”

He looked relieved, which pissed her off. She got off the bed and pulled some clothes out of the drawer.

“What the fuck are you doing?” he asked.

“I’m going to go back to my other bedroom at the main house.”

“The fuck you are.” He took the clothing from her arms and threw them on the floor. “This is your only bedroom, woman. We’ll never be sleeping apart for the rest of our lives.”

That made her feel better, but he was still too cocky for his own good.

She crossed her arms over her chest and lifted her chin. “I’ll have to think about it.”

He got a hard look in his eye that made her nervous. When he started taking off his clothing, she took a step back.

“Get that shirt off and get on the bed,” he demanded.

“Why?”

“Babe, you’re already on thin ice. I wouldn’t push it.”

She raised her chin. “I’ve done nothing wrong.”

“The fuck you haven’t,” he said.

“Oh, really, what?”

“You’re questioning who you belong to, so I’m going to have to show you.”

“Show me how?”

“Get naked and lay on the bed. You’ll enjoy what I’m going to do. Well, most of it.”

Her back stiffened. “You know if you hurt me, I’ll never forgive you.”

After he was naked, he walked over to her, gripped her shoulders, and looked down. “Are you really saying that shit? You know better. Now do what I said.”

It was incredibly hard being this close to him and not touching him. His body was a work of art, and it took some strength to listen to him when she wanted her eyes and hands to go over every part of his body. “But...”

She squealed when he ripped the shirt she had on down the middle, tossed it aside, picked her up, and lay her on the bed.

“See how easy that was?” he said.

Emily wanted to smack the smirk off his face. Hell, who was she kidding? She’d never smack anyone unless they really, really deserved it.

He got some things out of the nightstand and put them under the pillow so she couldn’t see before lying beside her. He rested his head on his arm with his elbow planted in the mattress and started trailing his fingers all over her. He would kiss her deeply and then pull away from her when she wanted more.

Several minutes passed, and she got so frustrated when he never touched the places she needed him to. “Hawk, stop tormenting me.”

That just made him chuckle.

“First, I want you to admit that you’re mine, and you’ll stay mine.”

“Hawk...”

“My hand and cock won’t go where you need them until you do what I say. Now, say the words.”

“I’m yours,” she said in frustration.

“And?”

“And I’ll always be yours.”

He tucked his hand between her thighs and cupped her pussy. “See, I’m taking care of you. All you have to do is obey me.”

She stiffened and then gasped when he thrust one of his huge fingers into her cunt as far as it would go. “Ahhh.”

His lips started skimming her face and neck, stopping at the spot that made her crazy and biting down as he finger-fucked her.

“Oh, God.”

He added a finger.

She had no idea how long the foreplay lasted, but she’d never been so needy before in her life. She squirmed a little when she felt some pressure against her asshole.

“Wait,” she cried as his finger impaled her ass in one smooth glide. Her nails dug into his shoulders. “Hawk...”

“Shhh, I’m going to make you feel so good, and you’re going to give me your total submission.”

“How?”

“You’re going to beg me to fuck your ass.”

She shook her head. “There’s no way. You’ll rip me apart.”

He pulled out, swiped the copious amount of her cream, and pushed two fingers into her. The sting made her body tingle, and some other jittery feeling was starting to grow.

“You know better, babe. I’d never hurt you.”

She tossed her head. She heard his voice but couldn’t decipher what he was saying. The intense arousal just kept escalating, making her beg for something she didn’t know.

“Let’s get you on your stomach, babe.” He helped her maneuver. “Let’s get your ass up in the air.”

She should have felt self-conscious because he was looking at all her girly parts, but her focus was on the pleasure he was giving her.

He started again preparing her. When he started working three fingers into her tight ass, her anxiety started to come back.

“I can feel you tighten up. How about we get to the good stuff.”

Oh, God, if it were better than what he was already doing to her, she'd be dying. She heard him behind her and had no idea what he was doing. At that moment, she didn't care.

“Please, Hawk. Make the ache go away.”

“I know. I want to make sure you're lubed up.”

She felt something press against her anus, and then a cool gel started to fill her. “Oh, w-what is that?”

He chuckled. “It's the stuff that's going to help me get into you easier.”

He grabbed onto her hips. “Now, relax for me.”

He started to push what felt like a silky lead pipe into her. It kept going deeper and got thicker.

“God, I don't know if I can take any more,” she cried.

“You can. Just trust that I'm going to take care of you,” Hawk murmured behind her.

Emily trusted him more than any other person, but the fear of the unknown kept coming back to poke at her.

“We're just about there.”

A scream tore from her throat when he rammed the last two inches into her. She thought she'd feel pain, but all she felt was more ecstasy.

“Jesus, woman. I've never felt anything this hot and tight in my life. It feels like you'll squeeze my cock right off, but I don't care. I don't want to stop.”

“No, please, Hawk. I need you to go faster.”

His fingers dug into her hips. “Tell me if this is too much.”

The slow glide of his cock turned into a piston. The friction inside of her was exactly what she needed. Sparks started to pop behind her eyelids.

“Hawk!” she called out.

“I know. Come for me.”

Hawk rammed into her until her world shattered. Her scream was deafening, and when it mixed with his feral groan, she feared they’d heard it up at the main house. At the moment, she didn’t care. She was just trying to hold herself together because she felt close to passing out.

They both stayed still as they tried to control their breathing. Her heart felt like it would come out of her chest, so she concentrated on calming it down.

She collapsed onto the mattress when he gently laid her on her stomach. She felt him kiss her back and shivered, making him laugh.

“I’ll be right back.”

“Mmemnnum,” she murmured into the blanket but knew he wouldn’t be able to understand it because it was so garbled.

## Chapter Twenty

She felt a wet cloth between her legs and ass cheeks, and as much as she wanted to slap his hands away, she had no energy to turn her head.

He turned the light out and lifted her into the position he wanted her in when he had her tucked against his body. The heat from him made her feel lethargic. She wanted to say something but couldn't think of what it was, nor had the energy to try.

He made a humming sound when he rested his hand against her stomach.

“Thank you for trusting me, babe.”

She inhaled a deep breath and pried open her eyes. “I've always known I trusted you. At least deep inside.”

“Jesus, you went off like a rocket. How do you feel?”

She inventoried her body for a moment. “My fingers and toes are numb, my head feels like a balloon, and my bottom is sore.”

He chuckled and nuzzled his nose against her ear. “That means I did my job in satisfying my woman.”

“Oh, you definitely did that,” she said.

“Does that mean you'll let me into that tight ass again without much anxiety?” he asked.

She nodded. “I think so. But I'm guessing it's going to be overwhelming still, I think.”

“Probably.”

“So, I'm your old lady, huh?”

He chuckled. “Yes.”

“I'm glad, although I'd like to be included in the decision if it's something that major.”



She wondered if that was even possible. He'd only had to make decisions for himself his whole life. He'd have some adjusting to do, but if she was clever, she could train him without him knowing.

Emily grinned. She'd have to put it to the girls and ask for suggestions. God, if the guys ever found out about us girls manipulating them, none of them would be able to sit down for a week.

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There was a lot he'd have to teach her about the MC lifestyle and being an old lady, and he needed to do it without giving orders. He almost snorted. That's all he did was give orders. He'd been doing it so long that it would be hard to actually talk about a situation with her instead of barking at her.

Fuck, none of it mattered. She was stuck with him for the rest of her life, so she better get used to it.

He heard her whisper, "I love you," before she fell asleep, and it felt like someone had punched him in the gut. He'd never had anyone say that to him in his life.

He'd never had a girlfriend, and although he knew his men respected him and liked him, they didn't love him. His parents had been too wrapped up in their drugs even to remember he was there most of the time. Goddamn. It scared the shit out of him but also made him feel ten feet tall. This little woman loved him. Would he ever get used to it?

Hawk guessed that the feelings he'd had practically from the first day meeting her were love. He'd never felt it before. He just knew it was overwhelming to him, so he fought it for so long.

He was never going to fight it again. He wouldn't go around telling her all the time because only pussies did that, but he'd let her know he loved her unconditionally.

He pressed his nose into her hair and took in the sweet smell of her.

“I love you,” he said before falling asleep. It was easier than he thought it would be.

**The End**

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# **BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER**

## **HER MAFIA DESTINY**

### ***Maclean Mafia Men, 1***

**Lila Fox**

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**Sample Chapter**

“Yo, brother, I think you need to go back home and mellow out.”

Alastair turned abruptly to face his brother, Calum, getting in his face and gritting his teeth. “Would you like to say that to me one more time?”

“Jesus Christ.” Calum raised his hands and took a hasty step back. “Man, it’s just that you’re really pissed off....”

“Aren’t you usually like this after talking to your mother?” Alastair asked.

“She’s your stepmother. That counts, nut fuck. But yes, I do. The woman’s a viper. It’s just when you’re pissed like

this, someone usually ends up dead.”

Alastair rolled his eyes, turned, and walked down the long hallway. The woman, Calum’s mother, was his fourth stepmother. Alastair’s mother died a few days after giving birth to him, which ruined his father. From what his family had told him over the years, they had been passionately in love, surprising because of their lifestyle.

Being a part of the mafia was not easy. You had to be cold and vicious to survive. It was especially hard for the women. The wives and mistresses had to deal with a lot.

His father had married four more times, trying to find the love he’d had with Isabella, Alastair’s mother, and it had never happened. This last one, Una, Calum’s mother, was the worst.

The first three stepmothers had died of surprisingly natural causes and not murder like one would expect living with the mafia—one in a car accident, one in an accidental drug overdose, and an accidental fall down the steps.

Alastair had liked that one the most. Nessa had been Logan, Ewen, and Rory’s mother and had been sweet as can be. It had hit his father hard when she passed away. Not as hard as Alastair’s mother, Isabella, but it took a while for him to want to have another woman in the house and in his life.

This last wife was a viper, and Alastair hated her, but he had to get along with her because his father was alive. After the stroke, his father had been unable to lead the Maclean clan, so Alastair had taken over the whole operation then, which was fine because he ran most of it anyway.

He shivered inside. Two minutes with his stepmother was torture. The woman was as mean as they came, and he couldn’t understand what his father saw in her. She might have been attractive if not for the permanent sneer she had on her face.

His brother was probably right, but he couldn’t stand the thought of going home to the same house his stepmother lived in, knowing she’d probably try to hunt him down to talk

some more because he'd walked out on her tirade. The temptation to just kill her was too strong, and he didn't know if his father would ever forgive him.

“What exactly are we looking at?” Calum asked.

“Our strip joint in Newport needs new women, and I sent out some of our guys to find ones who were attractive and loved being a stripper. Most of the ones we have now are getting old and tired, so we'll get them other jobs in the business.”

“Cool. Maybe think about taking one of them home,” Duncan, another brother, said. “It might help your disposition.”

“Fuck off,” Alastair said without turning around.

Alastair opened the door to what could pass as a conference room. It had a long table and chairs and a small bar off to the side. Some meetings went late, and the guys were more pleasant if they had some alcohol in them. But not too much, or they started killing each other.

The women were already there waiting. The ones that noticed him stood as seductively as they could, begging for his or his brothers' attention. Being one of their mistresses was sought after not only for their good looks but mainly for the money.

“Hey,” Stuart, one of his best men who had been with him for years, said and walked over to shake his hand. “I think we did well.”

“You checked for diseases and made sure they had no children?”

“Sure, boss. I know what you like.”

Alastair nodded. “Where's Ross? He was supposed to be helping you.”

“He's coming in with the last one or two.”

Alastair turned to Calum. “Can you get me a bourbon on the rocks?” He wouldn't admit it to his brothers, but he did need to mellow out, and a nice drink helped every time.

“Sure.”

The first drink went down smoothly and helped calm his anger a bit as he talked to Stuart and ignored the women trying to vie for his notice and interest. He shook his head and snorted when his brothers did give the women their attention and had girls all over them.

“Craig is going to take these women to the club if you’re okay with them,” Stuart said.

Alastair turned and whistled for Duncan. “I’m going to put you in charge of this. Take them to Speedy’s, get the women who will live in our apartments next to the club moved in, and take the rest back to their place but tell them they have to be at work tomorrow. If they are late, they’re fired. There are no second chances.”

“I got it,” Duncan said.

His brother and a couple of the men rounded up the women and took them out a back door to the vans waiting.

“Are you going to wait for the last of them?” Stuart asked.

Alastair looked at his watch and sat down. “I’ll give them a few minutes.”

He hadn’t finished with his second drink when a side door opened and Ross, one of his guys, walked in, dragging a woman. She was crying and fighting to get away from him.

“Shut up, bitch,” Ross said and shook her.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Stuart yelled.

Alastair held up a hand, set down his drink, and stood to face Ross. He walked to stand in front of the man and crossed his arms over his chest to keep from strangling the man, trying to ignore the woman’s pleas and cries. “Tell me.”

Ross stuttered. “Oh, well, her uncle owed us some money, and I was supposed to get it, but he didn’t have it, and so I thought we could use her as collateral until he pays up.”

Calum, Stuart, and the rest of his guys cursed, and the tension rose in the room.

Alastair just stared at the woman. She was tiny but had curved hips and larger breasts. She was dressed in a long white nightgown with lace. Her dark hair was tousled like she'd been pulled from bed.

"Who gave you permission to do that?" Alastair asked when he turned back at Ross.

"Well, no one. I just thought..."

"Is it your job to think?" Alastair asked.

"Well, no."

"Jesus Christ, you dumbshit," Stuart said.

Alastair walked up, cupped the woman's chin, and raised her face. His breath stalled in his lungs because her eyes were the most beautiful he'd ever seen, even when they were red and swollen from crying. They were light blue in the middle and green on the other part, and they seemed to look right through him.

"Who is your family?" Alastair asked her.

She sniffed. "I don't have one besides an uncle I haven't seen in years."

"No husband?"

"No. Please, let me go home. I won't tell anyone. I don't even know you," she said.

For once in his life, he made a decision with his heart instead of his head. He pulled out a gun and shot Ross in the forehead in one smooth move.

Everyone in the room stood frozen and in shock until the woman screamed.

Alastair put his gun away and reached for her when it looked like she was going to faint, only to have her flinch in horror away from him. He knew why, but it still pissed him off, which was ridiculous. Of course, she would be terrified of him. He just murdered someone in front of her.



He didn't like the blood that had been sprayed over her from Ross's head, and he wanted her clean as soon as possible.

He kept a few feet away from the woman and waited for her to be calm enough to hear him. "My name is Alastair Maclean. We're the mafia in this part of the city."

Alastair heard his brother curse behind him and ignored him.

The woman was hunched against the wall. Tears mixed with blood and brain matter ran down her face. "Why are you telling me this? Are you going to kill me next?"

Alastair shook his head. "I'm making sure that you won't be able to go anywhere, ever."

"I don't understand. I've never done anything to you or anyone."

"I know. Sometimes your life takes a path you didn't expect." *No kidding.* He never predicted he'd kidnap a woman and plan to keep her forever. "My advice is to make the best of this. I'll treat you like a princess as long as you're loyal to me. Do you understand?"

"No, I don't. I don't understand any of this."

He sighed. "That's okay. We have plenty of time." He held out his hand and waited.

She shook her head.

"You can either take my hand and walk out of here with some dignity, or I can have a few of my men carry you out. Choose."

She studied him for a moment and before she reached for his hand. He could see how much she was trembling, but he would take care of her as soon as they got home. When her shaking, tiny cold hand slid into his hand, something inside of him settled, and a warmth filled him.

"That's good, baby." He pulled her along and looked at one of his men. "Take care of Ross."

"You got it, boss."

As he led her out to his car, he felt something shift in his universe, and he knew he'd forever be changed. He just didn't know if it would be for the good or bad. Only time would tell.

End of sample chapter

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