



Gravity

DEVIL'S VENGEANCE MC BOOK 1

V.M. MORGAN

GRAVITY

DEVIL'S VENGEANCE MC BOOK 1

V.M. MORGAN

Copyright © 2022 by V.M. Morgan. All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in the writing form from the author. The only exception is by a reviewer, who may quote short excerpts in a review.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: January 2023



This book contains on-page and detailed descriptions of off-page domestic violence at the hands of a parent and parental death, mentions of violence and torture as a means of revenge, near encounters with sexual assault, alcohol consumption, on and off-page drug use, crass and foul language, sexually explicit scenes, extreme size difference and age gap tropes, and a brief mention of infertility and pregnancy.

Meagan, Cady, Sara and the Smutty Babes, thank you for your support, excitement and encouragement. Without you guys, this would still be an unfinished word doc on my laptop. Thank you for starting the petition and making it a law. You guys are everything.

To my mom, thank you for teaching me how to be just like you. Thank you for reminding me of who I am after I lost myself. To the stars and beyond, I love you. Stop reading here. Seriously, stop.

To my children, thank you for existing. Thank you for loving me even when I don't deserve it. You boys saved my life and I'll never stop trying to be worthy of your love.



CONTENTS

1. Maggie
2. Knight
3. Maggie
4. Maggie
5. Knight
6. Maggie
7. Knight
8. Maggie
9. Maggie
10. Knight
11. Maggie
12. Knight
13. Maggie
14. Maggie
15. Knight
16. Maggie

17. Maggie
18. Knight
19. Maggie
20. Knight
21. Maggie
22. Maggie
23. Epilogue

Chapter One



Maggie

I pushed the door to the library open, the sunlight hitting me like a ray of warmth and happiness. It was late mid-fall, the air slightly chilly by early evening, but the sun still hung on long enough to stave off darkness until later in the evening. I checked my watch, noting that it was already seven, so I had only an hour before I had to get home and serve dinner.

I made my way across the small campus, headed toward the main downtown area of the little historic town I lived in, where my favorite coffee shop was located. My steps quickened involuntarily, my breathing hitching in excitement. It was Friday, which meant *he* would be there. Knight,

president of the local motorcycle club, the Devil's Vengeance. Well over six feet, golden skin and black tattoos stretched over rippling muscles, dark hair and eyes that were always hidden behind aviators, he was a walking wet dream. He was always there at the same time as me on Fridays. Sometimes, I'd get lucky and he would also be there on Mondays and Wednesdays. My footsteps faltered and my heart skipped a beat before galloping into overdrive, as it always did when I pictured him in my mind or saw him in person.

I was incredibly shy, always having been slightly awkward, too small for my age and wearing clothes that screamed 'dirt poor', and it only got worse after I lost my hearing. I went out of my way to avoid interactions with other people, mostly because I was usually sore, bruised and in a hurry to get home so that my father was appeased. Once I lost my hearing, I was too embarrassed about my sudden speech impediment to engage in most interactions. So, I had never spoken to him, but I would get my eye-full and then either run or hide to avoid him.

I tugged the worn, frayed strap of my messenger bag up my shoulder a little higher, passing a group of athletes in their jerseys on the sidewalk as I neared Books and Brews. The boys laughed and shoved at one of the members of their group and I felt a pang hit me in the gut. I didn't have any friends to laugh with and I missed the sound.

I entered the coffee shop, checking my watch to be sure I had enough time to still make it home by eight, when dad would expect his dinner. Amber greeted me with her

customary greeting, the only sign language she knew, and when I nodded that I would have my usual, she rang me up. I pulled my tattered, thrift store wallet out of my equally tattered bag, removing my card and setting the wallet on the counter in front of me. I swiped my card and placed it back in its slot as Amber passed my latte over the counter. I made a grab for it at the same time she tried to set it in front of me and hot liquid splashed my hand as I reached for it. She grabbed a rag as I shook the hot liquid off, hissing in pain and scooting my wallet out of the path of the running liquid.

After cleaning up the mess on the counter and wiping down my hands, I apologized to Amber. I silently thanked her with a smile and a wave, walking to the end of the counter where a container offered an assortment of artificial and natural sweeteners, stir sticks and creamers. I grabbed two raw sugars and a stir stick before sliding down a step to where the trash can was. I dumped the sugars into my cup, tossed the trash in the can and stirred my drink as I surreptitiously eyed the patrons of the coffee shop, looking for Knight. He stood at the counter in all his tall, dark and dangerous glory. His hair was down today, waving loosely to his shoulders. Goosebumps raised across my skin at the sight of him as I tossed the stir stick in the trash.

I made my way over to the door, giving Knight a wide berth, and turned to catch Amber's eye and wave goodbye. Amber didn't even look at me like she usually did, staring at Knight with wide, lustful eyes.

I glanced back to him. *Knight*. My heart fluttered and something deep in my gut turned over before clenching tightly. He wore dark jeans and a leather vest with the words “Devil’s Vengeance” in bold white lettering curved across his shoulder blades and the bottom of the vest, a skull with horns and singed angel wings swallowed up by flames between the words. God, he was big. Like, really big. Muscled, wide shoulders tapered to a trim waist. His jeans hugged his firm butt and thick, muscled thighs. His hair was longer than when I first saw him, falling in gentle waves to his shoulders, but I knew if he pulled it into a bun, the sides and back of his head would be shaved. He was tall, way taller than my measly four feet, eleven and a half inches. I’m not sure why, because I never have cared much about guys, but from the first time I saw him three years ago, Knight had captured and held my attention. He was the star of all my fantasies and daydreams, not all of them sexual either. Despite my major, *major* crush on him, I was positive he didn’t even know of my existence.

It had taken me three months to gather the courage to stick around long enough to investigate the patches on his vest – from afar, of course. He had a patch over his heart that read *KNIGHT* and one directly below it that read *PRESIDENT*, and below that, *DVMC*. There was an array of other patches adorning his vest, but none of them meant anything to me. The DVMC ran this town, but they fed a lot of money into local businesses, so people tended to turn a blind eye to the rumors of their less than savory business ventures.

Knight turned toward the door just as my phone vibrated with the pattern that alerted me my dad was texting. My stomach fell out of my body and the tips of my fingers began to tingle as I noticed the time. Seven-forty-five. The phone, coupled with my urgent need to escape before he saw me ogling him broke the spell that always seemed to come over me when he was near like a bucket of cold water. I quickly turned, opening my dad's text as I left the coffee shop. I texted him back with one hand while I sipped my coffee with the other and made my way down the sidewalk at a quick clip. I noticed the streetlights were beginning to come on, the sun just starting to sink past the buildings, casting shadows over the sidewalks.

I was so caught up texting my dad, being sure I worded my text perfectly, erasing words and retyping them, counting every second that passed as I made my way home. So caught up, I didn't notice I was being followed until someone grabbed my arm, effectively stopping my progress and spinning me around. I was thrown completely off balance. My coffee cup dropped to the ground, splattering my clothes and shoes while my phone flew out of my hand and bounced off the sidewalk, skidding into the street. I was so surprised, in fact, that I did something I rarely ever did. I spoke.

“Hey! What the fuck!” I yanked my arm away, belatedly realizing that I was staring at a leather-clad torso. My eyes lifted – way, way up – until I met the piercing gaze of the one man I had gone out of my way to avoid for the better part of

three years. His eyes were like sunlight through amber, flecks of darker brown dotting the golden color.

He wore a shocked, slightly confused expression and said something, but I was too focused on his eyes to catch what he said. He backed away, bent down and grabbed my phone from the street, turning it over to inspect the screen. He said something again, but this time he was facing away from me. When he stood, he turned to me with his head cocked and a slight frown marring his face. I realized he was waiting for me to say something.

“I-uh-I-I’m sorry. I’m hearing impaired. I-I can’t hear you and you were turned away from me. Is my phone okay?” I cleared my throat. I didn’t do much talking since I’d lost my hearing, and usually my throat was scratchy and sore while speaking, unused to the strain. I preferred to give one-word answers when necessary, but otherwise, I just nodded or hummed a response. Even those few sentences made my throat feel scratchy.

Surprise registered on his face, his eyebrows rising, and he held my phone out to me, screen up. I was relieved to see the screen mostly undamaged, only sporting the one crack from when I dropped it the day after I got it, several years ago. I glanced back up at him and grabbed my phone from him. He held a hand up, palm out.

“Sorry, Butterfly. I called for ya, but you didn’t stop. Didn’t mean’a startle you. I found your wallet on the counter, in there.” He held out my crappy, worn wallet.

I immediately snatched it out of his hands, wanting to make sure my debit card and the twenty dollars I had were still there, but not wanting to be rude while curiosity bounced around my brain at his choice of name. *Butterfly? What the fuck is that about?*

I glanced between him and the wallet, eventually deciding to check because I can't risk my debit card being stolen. I may not have saved much yet, but every penny is precious. I opened it, flicking my eyes down and breathing a sigh of relief when I saw the blue card still in its slot.

I peeked back up at him and mumbled a quiet thanks while stuffing the wallet into my messenger bag. His eyes were focused on my face, fierce and probing and I subconsciously adjusted my big dark sunglasses. Again, I found myself spellbound by him, but this time it was way stronger. I had never been this close to him. His eyes held me trapped, making me feel slightly breathless and completely weak in the knees. My eyelid twitched with the need to blink, but I just couldn't.

His skin was olive toned, tanned by many hours in the sun, his face half covered by dark hair, longer than stubble but not long enough to be called a beard. Again, I noted how his hair had grown. It looked soft and had slight waves to it, nowhere close to my wild, unruly spirals, but not straight either. His cheekbones were strong and prominent, his lashes long, his lips the color of light caramel, metal glinting through the left side of the bottom one, and his teeth were white and mostly straight. His nose had a slight bump in the bridge, like maybe

it had been broken. He was a gorgeous man. Even his eyebrows were handsome. I stood transfixed, shaking with Knight-induced adrenaline, my body unused to being this close to him. My brain screamed at me to run, hide, anything, but my feet refused to move.

My phone vibrated another alert and I jumped, nearly dropping it again. I glanced down to see a second text from my dad.

If ur not home in 10 mins I swear to god u will regret it

I cleared my throat again, breaking out in a cold sweat. I glanced over my shoulder, gauging how long it would take me to run home. I began to back away from him. “Th-thank you so much for my wallet. I-uh-I have to get home.” I hugged the phone to my chest, clenched tight in my right hand as I took another step back. “Thank you,” I mumbled again as I turned and ran, leaving him and my coffee cup there on the sidewalk.

I knew it would take me more than ten minutes to get home so I ran as fast as I could, not stopping to wait for the crosswalks to tell me to cross, just glancing both ways then bolting across the streets. I was panting, my side hurt, my mouth was drier than the Sahara, but I made it home in eight minutes.

I ran through the side gate, stopping to drop to my knees in the mud and make a mess out of my pants so that I could have some excuse for being late, if my dad asked. If he did, I could just say I fell on my way home or something. Luckily, there was no one in the kitchen when I stepped through the back

door. I made sure to close the door hard enough to announce my presence and let out a deep breath. I walked past the doorway to the living room, glancing to see what my dad was drinking before grabbing another six pack of beer from the fridge. I pulled a serving bowl from a cabinet and dished out the chicken pasta I had put in the crock pot this morning. I took out a stack of plates, putting the bowl of hot, cheesy pasta on top and grabbed the beers, taking it all to dad and his friends in the living room. They all ignored me, which I was grateful for, except for Pete who leered at me, licking his lips ridiculously and giving off serious serial killer vibes.

I made my way to my bedroom, suppressing a violent shudder the whole way, locked the door behind me and stripped out of my muddy pants. I dropped my purse on my bed and its contents spilled out, my wallet falling out and open. There was a white piece of paper sticking out of the inner pocket, which I hadn't noticed before, too focused on my worry over the debit card. I grabbed my pack of cigarettes and the wallet, snagging a lighter off my bedside table before I made my way over to my bedroom window. I slid it open, lit my cigarette and then pulled the paper out of the wallet. On it was a manly, messy scrawl.

539-555-8149 Knight

There was also a rough sketch of the symbol from the back of his leather vest. I smiled and wondered what the fuck was happening. Guys don't give me their phone numbers. They don't even ask for mine, for that matter. I had never, in nineteen years, had this happen to me. I grabbed my phone and

pulled up my text messages. I tapped the icon for a new text and typed in his number, checking twice that I entered it correctly, before tapping the message bubble. The number turned blue, letting me know he had the same type of phone as me.

Thank you for returning my wallet. I would have completely panicked when I got home and realized I didn't have it. Thank you so much.

I reread the message three times, unsure of what I should actually say. I finally tapped the send button and flicked my cigarette into the mud outside my window, leaving the window open to let the fresh air in. Gathering up clean clothes for a shower, I tossed the phone on my bed and poked my head out of my bedroom door, making sure none of my dad's friends were within sight. When I decided the coast was clear, I darted across the hall, closing my bedroom door, then the bathroom door and flipped the lock on the handle.

I turned the water on as hot as I could stand it and savored the sting on my skin. I soaped my body, gently running the suds over various scrapes and bruises, gently rubbing the horribly disfigured, melted-looking skin of my lower belly, as memories and tears assaulted me. Reaching for my shampoo through the blurry tears, it slipped out of my wet fingers and fell into the tub, skidding across the bottom and coming to rest near the drain. I cringed, knowing that had to have been loud. I prayed my father hadn't heard it and stood frozen under the hot water, waiting for I don't know what. I counted to eighty and just as my body relaxed, the shower curtain was yanked

aside. The rod holding it gave way under the sharp tug and clattered half into the tub.

My dad's red, angry face filled my field of vision and I instinctively reached to cover myself and crouched into a small ball in the tub. He yelled at me, but his lips moved too fast and his words were too slurred for me to make out what he was saying. He raised his fist and brought it down hard but I ducked my chin just in time. His fist connected with my eyebrow, knocking me sideways and throwing my face into the soap dish mounted to the tiled wall. I yelped as I felt the burn as the skin on my lip and cheek split open. Before I had time to recover, his boot came down hard on my right side, causing my head to smash into the side of the tub again, with my boney hip catching the brunt of my weight. I stayed curled up, waiting for the next blow, but it didn't come. I glanced up and he was gone, leaving the door open behind him. I sighed in relief, stood and hung the shower rod and curtain best I could.

I quickly washed my hair and turned the water off, wrapping my body in a towel before grabbing the first aid kit from under the sink. I tended to my split lip and the bloody trickle coming from my eyebrow and cheekbone. When the bleeding stopped, I dabbed on some Neosporin, and pulled on my night clothes, wincing at the pain in my ribs and hip. I darted back into my bedroom door, locking the door behind me.

I grabbed the remote, turning on the TV and leaving it on whatever channel came up, checking the volume was muted

before setting the remote down. I grabbed my phone off my bed, wincing as a headache began to pound behind my right eye. I flipped my light off, hoping that would help. I made my way over to the window again, lighting another cigarette and fighting tears over the fact that this was my reality. I inhaled from the cigarette, relishing the false calm it brought, and unlocked my phone, shock settling in the pit of my stomach.

If I was late...a shiver worked its way through me, goosebumps pocking my skin and fear raising the hairs on the back of my neck. The muscles in my stomach twitched erratically at the memory of my father's ire regarding his dinners.*Knight*, my mind whispered, as I swiped his message to open it.

CHAPTER TWO



My phone vibrated in my pocket as I swung my leg over my Harley and stood up on slightly tingly legs. A party was already in full-swing, the front yard and porch of the club house packed with bodies. The smoke risin' from behind the house meant someone lit a bonfire. I heard splashin' and made a mental note to have a prospect shock the pool in the morning, knowin' it'd be unsanitary after tonight. I made my way over to the steps on the porch, pullin' my phone out as I went. It was a text from a number I ain't recognize and my chest clinched, hopin' it was her. I paused at the bottom of the stairs, swipin' the notification open.

Thank you for returning my wallet. I would have completely panicked when I got home and realized I didn't have it. Thank you so much.

I bit my lip against a smile, fiddling with my lip ring while I typed out a quick response.

No problem. Glad I'm the one that found it and could return it safely. Hope you made it home ok.

The smile disappeared as I remembered how jumpy she was after she received a text, barely saying another word before she turned and hauled ass away from me. Figured maybe she had an ol' man at home and doubted I'd hear from her. I reread my message, adding a plain smiley face emoji before hittin' send. I waited a moment but when the bubbles that meant she was typing didn't pop up, I locked the screen and shoved the phone back in my pocket.

Climbin' the stairs two at a time, I made my way 'cross the porch to the front door. A prospect stood by the door, his hand up one of the bunnies' skirts, another one on her knees blowin' him.

“Hey, 'spect! Wrap that shit up. Never know where Crystal's been this week.” I chuckled under my breath as he snatched his hand out from under the bitch's skirt and her outraged gasp followed me through the door.

Crystal's a cunt, a total pain in my ass. She wants to be an old lady so bad, she been caught pokin' holes in condoms several times. She been around the club for years, though, else I'd have banned her ass a long time ago. But she's a great

stripper and brings a ton of money in. Plus, her pops was a brother that died a couple years back, so I kinda felt like I owed him to keep her around.

“Yo! Prez! Whatcha drinkin’ tonight?” Smoke, my VP, yelled from over by the bar. He held up a bottle of Jack and I gave him a chin lift, making my way over to him. Without thinkin’ too much ‘bout it, I pulled my phone out to see if she had responded, but there were no new notifications. My nostril twitched in annoyance, like it always did when I got annoyed, and I shoved the phone back in my pocket as I reached Smoke and grabbed the bottle he held out to me.

“How’d it go today?” I eyed him, watchin’ for any tell that his errand didn’t go as smoothly as we had hoped it would. He was relaxed though, his arm around Jessie’s shoulder.

“Great. They’re on board.” He smacked Jessie’s leather-clad ass. Her fake red hair swished as she turned to look away from the other girls she’d been talkin’ to. “Get me a pool stick and wait by a table, babe. Be there in a minute.” She gave him a small smile as she turned, her fake tits barely bouncing as she sauntered over to a table. He watched her ass as she went before turnin’ back to me. “The Guns’re cool with the deal. They agreed to the new product and the higher price. After I let Skin try it, it was a done deal.”

The tension in my shoulders relaxed and I nodded as I took a swig from the bottle. “Good. We’ll sort the details in Church tomorrow.” He nodded and turned away, headed towards Jessie and the pool table. I turned and surveyed the room,

lookin' at all the half-naked women. Most of them were draped over my brothers' arms or sitting on laps. Some were giving blow jobs, others straight up fuckin'. *Damn, these parties get crazier every fuckin' day.*

Amy caught my eye as she made her way over to me, swaying a little but still trying to look sexy. Her tiny top barely covered her tits and her black, fake leather shorts looked more like underwear, ass hanging out the bottom.

“Hey, baby. I was wonderin' when you'd show up. You ain't let me take care'a you in a while baby. I miss you.” She pouted her lips out and I felt my nose twitch again. Her raspy, smoker's voice grated my nerves, but I usually put up with it 'cause she deep throats like a fuckin' porn star. But, as I watched her sway again, I realized I ain't even interested. 'Stead of her fake blond hair and big, fake tits, all I saw was wild red curls and a teeny, tiny body, hidden 'hind clothes too baggy, eyes just a little too large and a little too wide-set, a round angel's face covered in freckles, and pale pink lips just slightly too big. She wasn't classically pretty, but fuck me if she wasn't the most gorgeous woman I'd ever seen. Her hair held me captive, her pale freckled skin begged me to pay homage to each and every one.

I wonder where else those freckles go. A swift, familiar feeling of guilt followed that thought, as it always did when I thought 'bout her like that. Wasn't sure why, but I always felt kinda like I'd disrespected her when I thought 'bout her the same way I would a club slut. Ain't stop me from jerkin' it in the shower while I thought 'bout her, though.

I shook my head to clear it, sendin' Amy a chin lift.

“Sup, Amy. Lookin' mighty drunk tonight.” She giggled and draped herself over my arm, rubbing her hard, fake tits on me. I suppressed a shudder, my upper lip curling slightly and my nose twitchin' repeatedly. “Not tonight, Amy. Ain't interested in anythin' but my man Jack tonight.” I lifted the bottle to my lips again, pulling my arm away. She pouted but knew not to push and walked away to find someone willin' to give her what she wanted. I pulled my phone out of my pocket again, disappointed to see there was still no response from my Butterfly, aka Margaret.

God, she is seriously fuckin' hot. I saw her for the first time three years ago. I'm absolutely positive she moved here 'round that time, else I'd've noticed her 'fore then. Her incredible, fire red spirals reached all the way down past her ass. *Ain't never seen such long hair.* Every time I saw it, it made me want to sink my fingers in it, wrap it 'round my fist, somethin'. Anythin', honestly, long as I got to touch it. I watched her for months, tryin'a guess her age and hopin' like hell I wasn't a creepin' on a child, 'fore figurin' out she frequented Books and Brews. I suddenly had a hankerin' for overpriced coffee at least three times a week. One day, 'bout three months after she showed up in town, she drove a beat-up, red Camry into the shop, needin' brakes and an oil change. After she'd left, I pulled the paperwork to sneak a peek at her license. She was sixteen at the time and I'd felt like a dirty ol' man, so I'd watched her for years, never approachin' her. But

after she turned eighteen, I started tryin' a figure out ways to talk to her.

Every time I got close though, she'd skip out, disappearin' like a fuckin' butterfly on the wind. Hence, the nickname. That, and the fact when she moved, it was like watchin' grace personified.

Swear to God, if my brothers could hear my thoughts, I'd never live it down. They'd probably rename me Shakespear or some shit.

Shark walked up and leaned on the bar next to me, arms crossed, brows pulled down. "Hey, Prez. Lookin' distracted tonight. Y'good?" Shark is the Enforcer of Devil's Vengeance, and he is one of the only people on this earth I'm afraid to take on. Not that I'd tell him that. But, yeah, he's a bad motherfucker. Almost big as me, bald, tatted from scalp to toes, pierced in places I could see and probably ones I ain't got no desire to know 'bout, too. Ears gauged, right brow had three rings through it, a bull ring hangin' out the middle of his nose, lips pierced in several places, nipples and God knows where else. Dude loved body mods.

"Yeah, man, all good. Nothin' a worry 'bout. Just off my game." Again, visions of fiery red curls blowing in the breeze, teasin' me with glimpses of that tight little ass, flitted through my brain. Green eyes the color of fresh spring grass or wet moss or some other poetic shit haunted my thoughts.

Shark started talkin' 'bout all the hot pussy here tonight, but my phone vibrated in my pocket and I quickly yanked it out,

grabbin' his attention. "Sure you good, Prez? Ain't never seen you go for your phone so fast 'fore. You hate that thing." His words said one thing, his tone said another. He knew somethin' and he wanted me to know it, too. He just ain't want'a say it out loud without invitation.

Phone clenched in my fist, I met Shark's sharp, brown eyes. His expression gave him away, a slight smirk on his lips. "Fuckin' me. A dream?" Shark inclined his head. Not really a nod, but 'nough to be an affirmative. I've known Shark since we were kids. When we were eight, he dreamed his mom was sick and she died a couple's weeks later from pneumonia that she had insisted was just a cold. When we were ten, he dreamed my ma was pregnant and nine months later, Mia was born. When Shark says he had a dream, I listen. We all do.

"Whatcha see, Shark?" He smirked, but it quickly disappeared.

"Not much. Some shitty brown wallet, some long red hair," he paused for a moment, his mouth flattening, "one hell'a bruise." My gut clenched.

"Bruise? What do you mean, a bruise?" I looked at the phone and saw her text, openin' it quickly.

Shark grabbed my attention 'fore I could read her message. "Man, I don't know. You finally meet her?" Shark was one of three people that knew about my near-obsession with my Butterfly. Smoke, Shark and myself. I had started callin' her Butterfly 'cause she was so small and always disappeared when she noticed me, like the wind just swept her away. It'd

stuck, even after I learned her real name, and we all called her B, for short.

I nodded. “Yeah, at Books and Brews. Left her wallet on the counter. She’s deaf, man, and I had no fuckin’ idea. God, and she’s fuckin’ tiny dude, way smaller up close. Five-foot, most. Whatcha mean, a bruise?” I asked again.

He shrugged. “I don’t know. Didn’t see it in my dream, just know it was there. Maybe more than one. This one was weird, man. I could feel her pain. I keep thinkin’ maybe it was her face, but ain’t for sure.”

My eyes darted back up to his as my mind conjured an image of the massive sunglasses she wore so often. “Bro, she always wears these ridiculous shades. Huge, and she kept reachin’ up to make sure they were still in place. You think...” I trailed off, my gut clenchin’ and the tips of my ears burning with anger, nose twitchin’ like crazy. “If someone’s hurtin’ her, I’ll fuckin’ tear this town apart until I find ‘em.” Shark’s surprise barely registered on his face before he had it under control, an eyebrow barely liftin’ before settlin’ back into place.

That’s one of the best things ‘bout Shark. He’s always in control. “Not a word. Not ‘til I know what the fuck’s goin’ on, ‘kay?” I turned my attention back to my phone.

“You got it, Prez.” He smacked my back and walked away, headed towards Smoke and Jessie at the pool table where Kylie waited for him. They were just friends, had been for as long as I could remember, but he took care of her in every

sense of the word, payin' for her schoolin' and givin' her a place to stay when she ain't here with him. She was shy and had always been a little self-conscious of her slightly plump figure, not that she had any reason to be, but she was comfortable with him and almost always turned down any of the other brothers in favor of him. They'd eventually quit tryin'a pull her and left her alone mostly.

I unlocked my phone again, opening her message and reading it twice.

Yeah, I made it home in time. My dad's got his friends over tonight, so I'm headed to bed. Thanks again, for my wallet.

So, the text wasn't from a boyfriend. Somethin' that had been clenched in my gut released, makin' me realize that I'd been tense ever since the idea that she was already taken had gripped me. That meant, if she was bein' abused, it was probably at the hands of her pops. Rage boiled in my gut, but I took a big swig of Jack before I typed out a response.

No problem, Margaret. Sorry for jerkin you round like I did. Hope I ain't hurt ya

I hit send and propped my butt on a stool, grabbin' a pack of smokes out'a the pocket inside my cut. I flicked the zippo lighter I always carry and when I turned to grab an ashtray, the screen on my phone lit up with another text.

I've had worse. It's no big deal. You owe me a coffee, though. Goodnight, Knight.

Had worse? Whats that mean?

I puffed on my cigarette and less than a minute later, her response came through.

Nothing. I shouldn't have said that. Goodnight.

I frowned at my phone, taking a deep inhale of nicotine before typing another response.

Night Butterfly

I took a long swig of the Jack, followed by a deep inhale of my cigarette. *Had worse? The fuck's that mean?* My thoughts spun in circles as my eyes traced the room, catchin' on Shark and my thoughts ground to a stop. Record scratch, time stop, all that shit.

Some shitty brown wallet, long red hair, one hell'a bruise.
Words played in my head over and over again.

I've had worse.

Bruise.

I've had worse.

Bruise.

Over and over again, those words ran through my mind as I sat and watched the party, drinkin' my Jack and smokin'. When the bottle was almost gone and my body was well past numb, I decided ain't nothin' I could do about it at three in the mornin' and made my way 'cross the room, steppin' over bodies, some sleepin', some fuckin', and one chick in the corner pukin' on my fuckin' floor. As I headed up the stairs to

the rooms, I texted Smoke. He was either passed out or fuckin', but he'd see it in the mornin'.

Make sure the chick in the corner layin in her own puke don't come back. Needa talk before Church. Find me when u wake up.

I let myself into my room, headin' straight for a shower. I washed quickly and stepped out, headed to bed as I ran a towel over my hair. I grabbed my brush as I sat on the edge'a the bed and lit another smoke. I roughly brushed my hair, starin' at my phone like it had personally offended me. I threw the brush on the nightstand and grabbed the phone, flickin' ashes into the tray. I unlocked the phone and brought up her texts again, rereadin' her words and seein' her hair blowin' in the breeze in my mind's eye.

I blew smoke out my nostrils, frustrated that I couldn't let this go. *Tomorrow, I'll figure it out.* I stubbed out the cigarette and turned the lamp off, throwin' myself back on the bed.

Chapter Three



Maggie

I worked at the campus library as part of a work-study program. Whatever hours I worked went towards my tuition. I was off work early and didn't have my online class so there was really no need for me to go to the coffee shop, other than the fact that I didn't want to go home yet. I walked into the coffee shop and Amber looked up from her phone, surprised to see me here so early, and on a Tuesday. I usually come in after work on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, so I could read the lecture for that day and do whatever homework I had. As I walked toward her, she set her phone down and raised her hands.

Your usual? She had asked me specifically to teach her that phrase, just so that she could ask me when I came in. I nodded and pulled out my wallet, careful not to put it down so I didn't leave it behind again. I paid for my coffee and put my wallet back in my purse as she left to make my drink. After she handed it to me, I grabbed two sugars and a stir stick and turned to find a table.

I hadn't been here since last Friday, skipping my lecture on Monday since I was still sporting a gnarly black eye and limping from the pain in my hip. The bruising was still present, and I shouldn't have risked being seen, but I wanted to avoid my dad, his friends, and our house as much as possible. I still wore the ridiculous sunglasses, but the pain in my ribs was the worst, aching every time I took a breath, though the pain in my hip was pretty intense as well.

As I painfully settled at a table, I subconsciously adjusted my sunglasses again. The light on my phone strobed as it vibrated against the table. I sighed. It was either my dad or Knight, and both were equally unappealing. Knight had texted me every day since Friday, asking if I was okay. I responded with a quick yes and then ignored him until he asked again the next day, afraid I'd do something stupid and slip up again, like I did on Friday. I sighed as the words played through my mind again.

I've had worse. I mentally facepalmed again. How fucking stupid.

I flipped the phone over and hit the button to wake the screen. The notification said it was from Knight. I sighed and opened the message.

You've barely responded since Friday. You good?

I sighed again and set the phone down, resting my head in my hands. I took a deep breath and reached for my coffee as my phone lit up again. I glanced down at it, my stomach tightening in anxiety. He'd never texted me twice in a row, so I expected to see my dad's name, but nope.

Rude to ignore people you know.

My head snapped up, my eyes scanning the coffee shop, my head whipping in both directions, sending my hair flying over one shoulder and then the other. He was standing outside on the sidewalk and waved his phone at me through the window. I flushed bright red and stood. Shoving the phone in my pocket, I bent to pick up my bag. For one quick, sickening second, my ribs and hip hurt so bad I thought I might puke before they relented and allowed me to bend the rest of the way to the floor. I grabbed my bag and stood again, grabbing my coffee off the table and turned for the door, resisting the urge to lay a hand on my throbbing ribs.

As I approached the door, he opened it for me, and I turned to wave at Amber. She was staring at Knight holding the door for me, her eyes wide as they locked on mine. My face flushed again and I turned away quickly.

I kept my eyes down, my face tilted away from him so that I could hide in my hair. He gently placed a hand on my back,

and I flinched at the unexpected contact, practically jerking my body away from his touch. His fingers twitched, but he didn't remove them, steering me towards the bench sitting in front of the coffee shop's window. I continued to hide in my hair as I sat next to him, allowing it to fall forward and create a curtain between us.

He was having none of it, though. He brushed the hair over my shoulder, his fingers running along my neck before his hand gripped my chin with gentle, calloused fingers as he tilted my face up to his. His thumb gently brushed the split skin of my lip before tracing the cut on my cheek, a frown marring his face and causing a small indent between his well-shaped, manly eyebrows. I involuntarily flinched as he gently rubbed the split skin, pain mixed with sparks of pleasure that radiated from where his skin touched mine.

“What happened?” he asked, being sure that I could see his face.

As I debated on what to say, his eyes scanned my face, locking on the stupid sunglasses. God, I hated talking, but I had a feeling he wasn't going to let this go. I ran through a few excuses in my mind and just as I opened my mouth to spit out the most believable, he reached for the sunglasses. My body froze in panic, waiting to see what he was going to do.

He began to slowly, gently slide them off my face and my body finally unfroze. I jumped up, sweat breaking out on the back of my neck as I quickly secured the sunglasses back in place.

“What’s wrong, Margaret?” he asked, looking concerned, confused, and maybe slightly angry, too.

I swallowed, looking around, hoping to see something that would save me. When I saw nothing, I licked my dry lips and noticed his eyes tracking the movement. “N-nothing. N-nothing’s wrong. I-I have to go. I have to go.” The words spilled out of my mouth so fast I was sure he didn’t understand them. I turned, walking away quickly, leaving my coffee there on the bench with Knight.

I looked over my shoulder and he was looking at me. No, he was *staring* at me. His penetrating gaze locked on my retreating form, causing my pace to quicken. As I looked away from him, I tripped on something and almost went down, catching my weight on my hands, scraping my palms on the concrete sidewalk. Pain ripped through my battered body and I cried out.

Embarrassment clung to my chest and caused my face to flame, yet again. I quickly righted myself, taking off at a quick jog down the sidewalk until I turned the corner, out of his sight.

I slowed my pace, the pain in my hip near unbearable, but in no hurry to get home. All too soon, the house came into view. The driveway was packed. All his friends were over tonight. I quickly scanned the cars for the old brown station wagon Pete drove, spotting it parked by the mailbox, sandwiched between two other cars. I stood at the end of the street and lit a cigarette, debating what to do. I could walk around town a bit

more, but my body was sore from my near-fall and speedy escape from Knight. I could text Casey, a girl I worked with at the campus library, and the only person I considered anything close to a friend. I could ask if I could stay at her place tonight. I know she'd let me and she wouldn't ask questions. We had never discussed it, in fact, we didn't talk much at all, but she knew I wasn't beating myself up every week.

In the end, pride won out and I trudged up the street towards my dad's house. I walked around the side, entering through the small gate and tossing my cigarette in a puddle of water under the leaky outdoor faucet. I opened the back door, trying to be as quiet as possible. Of course, for all I knew I could have sounded like a stampede of elephants. The kitchen was, thankfully, empty, and I gently shut the back door before checking on the dinner warming in the crock pot. It was ready so I dished it up and brought all the plates, forks and serving bowls into the living room. I studiously ignored all the men in the room, keeping my eyes low before making a speedy exit. I quickly made my way down the hall to my bedroom. I shut and locked the door, closing myself into my one safe place in the world with a sigh of relief.

I set my purse down by my nightstand, pulled my phone out of my pocket and plugged it in, and set my sunglasses on the nightstand. I flipped on the TV, changed into a pair of sleep shorts that were years old and way too short, and gently wrestled my way into a tiny white tank top, careful of my movements, trying not to hurt my ribs again. It was at least one size too small, exposing my midriff and clinging like a

second skin. The ugly black and purple spattering the left side of my torso and right hip and thigh caught my eye in the mirror and I twisted to look at both. Gently touching my ribs, my body jerked at how bad the gentle touch hurt.

I laid down on the bed and reached for the romance on my nightstand. I tried to focus on the words, but my thoughts kept straying to Knight and how he had almost found out about the secret that I kept so closely guarded, out of self-preservation. God, if my father knew someone suspected, he'd probably kill me. I don't know how long I laid there, staring blankly at the same page, thinking about Knight and my father's reaction if he ever found out that someone suspected, but as my mind wandered, my eyes began to drift shut.

Someone touching my face woke me some time later. I don't know how long I had been out, but my mind was sluggish to catch up with reality. At first, my groggy, dream-laden mind thought it was Knight touching my face but when I realized I was no longer dreaming, my eyes popped open wide.

Pete stood over me, his dirty, grease-stained pants slightly tented by an unimpressive erection right in front of my face. I rolled off the other side of the bed, moving away from him as quickly as I could, ignoring the pain that set my body on fire. I wrapped my arms protectively around my torso and gave him my best *fuck off* look. His face transformed into a mask of anger and he stalked around the side of the bed towards me. I quickly backed away, unsure what to do or what to expect. He

had never hurt me, but his creepy looks always freaked me out.

He grabbed my arm roughly, yanking me towards him. I flinched and cried out as the sharp movement made the fire-pain in my ribs blaze brighter. He grabbed a fistful of my hair, yanking my head back. The realization that this was really happening set in and panic took over. I reacted out of instinct, slamming the heel of my palm as hard as I could up into his nose. I felt the crunch vibrate through the bones in my arm as blood immediately spurted, splattering the front of my white tank top and across my face. A wave of violent nausea hit me, but he released me and grabbed his nose. I brought my knee up hard and fast, nailing him as hard as I could in the dick. He crumpled and I jumped up on my bed, running across it and snatching my phone off my nightstand as I raced out the door. Despite the panic, relief that I'm so much smaller and faster than him sloshed in my chest.

I ran out the back door, not even bothering to close it. I ran down the street, moving as fast as my tired, sore body would allow. I felt the concrete tear at the bottoms of my feet but I didn't stop until I was out of the neighborhood and limping down the main street, passing all the dark, closed-up shops. I stopped and dropped onto a bench under a streetlight, trying to regain control of my breathing and panicked thoughts.

Just as I was calming down, my dad's red Toyota Camry turned the corner at a dangerous speed, swerving and stopping in front of me, double parked across two spaces, the headlights blinding me momentarily. He got out, swaying and almost

losing his balance before he slammed the door. He marched over to me, his face angry and purple, the vein in his forehead bulging. He stalked towards me and I scrambled backward, but not quickly enough. He grabbed my arm, yanking me to him and my already throbbing body screamed in protest.

“WHAT DID YOU DO TO PETE?!” he yelled in my face. I felt the vibration of his words in his chest, the noise loud that I could actually hear him - though if I hadn't seen his face, I wouldn't have been able to make out the words. I tried to speak but fear clogged my throat and paralyzed my dry tongue. He shook me violently and called me a stupid bitch. He raised his hand and I struggled against his grip on my arm, losing my balance. He brought his hand down hard, slapping me across the face and letting my arm go in the same second. I fell to the sidewalk and felt the rough concrete scrape my knees and then my right thigh when I rolled off the curb. My bruised hip and ribs protested so sharply, I screamed in pain. I grabbed my phone off the sidewalk, knowing what was coming next. He used his boot and shoved me over, but I caught myself on my hands, using the momentum to push myself up and took off down the street.

I ran two more blocks down the road, into the less-frequented side of downtown. I ran until I felt like my hip would give out, and slipped between two buildings, limping down the alley behind them and then crawling under a broken chain link fence, which snagged and ripped my shirt, scratching the skin of my back. I hid behind a bicycle repair shop, next to a stinky dumpster, crouched down in the dark

shadows. I felt warm wetness trickling out of my nose and down my cheek from my eyebrow, dripping off my chin from my split lip. I used the end of my torn shirt and gently dabbed the blood off my face, and then, stupidly, tried to rub the blood off my chest with my fingers. It smeared the blood, making me look like a murder victim and I sighed, examining my knee instead. It wasn't too bad, but there were scrapes and blood there, too. My thigh didn't bleed, but the concrete had caused angry red scratches, barely visible through the mottled bruising left over from the shower attack.

I sat in my hiding place, panting in fear and panic. My nose started to trickle blood again, so I dabbed at it with my ruined shirt while I tried to decide what the fuck to do now. My gaze fell to my phone and for some reason, before I knew what I was doing, my finger hovered over the text bubble under Knight's messages. I paused for a moment, wondering if this was the right thing to do.

What the fuck, Maggie? You don't know this guy! He's in a motorcycle club! He could be dangerous!

But I knew in my heart that wasn't the case, at least not for me. I imagined he could be very dangerous to other people, but I knew I was safe with him. He had texted me every day asking if I was okay. He had shown genuine concern for me. Before I thought about it any further, I typed out a quick message.

I need help. Call me.

I focused on my breathing while I waited to see what would happen. I stared at my phone, praying it would ring. When it didn't immediately indicate a call, I laid my head back against the bricks, taking a deep breath and then choking on the taste of the garbage littering the alley. I glanced at my phone, noting it was after one in the morning.

My hope that he would see my text died instantly. *He's probably sleeping, dumbass.* I sighed, lowering my phone. As soon as I set it in my lap, it began to vibrate in the pattern indicating a call. I yanked it up to see Knight's name on the screen. I pressed the green button and counted to three slowly to be sure the line was connected.

"I'm in the alley behind Bob's Bikes. I'm hurt and scared and cold and I don't know what to do." A sob worked its way up my throat, bursting past my lips and I ended the call before he heard and thought I was a blubbering mess. If he was going to respond, he'd have to text me, which he did, about three seconds later. It occurred to me I could've just texted that, instead of having him call me but my panic riddled brain hadn't thought about that course of action until now.

5 minutes. Stay.

I sighed in relief and my whole body relaxed. I crept towards the end of the alley, careful to stay in the shadows. What felt like an eternity later, a huge red pickup pulled up to the curb and two men got out. Panic struck again, until Knight walked around from the driver's side and the headlights illuminated his form. Breath whooshed from my lungs and I

stepped out of the alley before remembering the other guy with him. As soon as I stepped out of the alley they both saw me and, although I was mostly focused on Knight, the other guy's massive form caught my attention and my body froze, refusing to move an inch.

The dude was *massive* and seriously scary looking. If looks could kill, everything within a five-mile radius would shrivel and die under his stare. I squished myself against the wall, near the mouth of the alley. He stopped moving towards me, pausing in the headlights, and Knight stepped up, gently pulling me away from the wall and towards the truck. I limped along behind him, my torn-up feet and battered hip protesting every step viciously. I looked at the other man out of the corner of my eye. He was tall, but not as tall as Knight. While I only stood to the bottom of Knight's sternum, the top of my head would probably hit this guy in the middle of his chest. But while Knight had the body of a man who lifted weights recreationally, muscled but not grossly so, this guy looked like he might worship the god Steroid, and his bald head sported a massive tattoo. His neck was tattooed, his arms and hands sporting black ink, even one side of his face. Knight had just as much artwork adorning his skin, but something about this other guy screamed *danger*.

When we stepped into the light cast by the headlight, Knight's hand snapped up, reaching for my face. I flinched violently, my hair flying wildly over my shoulder as I turned my face away from the incoming hand. He frowned deeply, slowly moving to grab my chin, tilting my face so he could see

better. I noticed his hand was covered in black ink, even his knuckles, but the beautiful black and gray butterfly on the back caught my eye. He gently swiped underneath my nose and wiped his thumb on his jeans. I guessed it was bleeding again but I hadn't noticed. I sniffed and wiped under my nose self-consciously. My eyes flickered from his face to the huge man standing beside us. He pulled on my chin and my eyes flicked back to his.

“Who did this to you?” he asked. His eyes were so sharp I would've sworn he could shoot lasers from them. When I didn't immediately answer, fear in the face of his tangible anger making me immobile, he stepped closer, causing me to crane my neck back to keep eye contact. “Who?” he asked again, wrapping his hand around the side of my neck in a gentle, protective gesture.

Out of habit, I put my open hand to my forehead, making the sign for father, but belatedly realized he wouldn't know what that meant and whispered, “My dad.”

His head whipped around and he looked at the big, bald man with him. The man pulled out his phone and called someone, but it was too dark for me to read his lips so I looked back at Knight.

He gently grabbed my elbow and led me to the driver's side door. He opened it for me and I gingerly climbed in - with a helpful boost from him -, sitting in the middle with the stick shift between my knees since the other guy was climbing in the passenger door. Knight climbed in after me and I scooted

as close to him as I could, plastering my side to his, far away from the big scary guy who was talking on the phone, trying to make myself as small as possible. Not a hard feat, honestly.

Knight started the truck and reached over my leg to shift the truck into gear, backing out of the spot and heading in the direction they had come from. The big guy next to me hung up the phone and lifted his hips, sliding it into one pocket and pulling a pack of cigarettes out of the other. I eyed the cigarettes and debated whether or not I was too afraid of him to ask for one. Once the smell of the smoke hit my nose, my decision was made. Frayed nerves were demanding the bliss of the nicotine and for the first time in a long time, I didn't feel the almost-guilt that usually accompanied the nasty habit.

I scooted a little closer to Knight but poked the guy on the thigh before snatching my hand back to my chest. He looked down at me and I flinched at the anger in his gaze, but quickly flicked my gaze to the cigarette. He rolled his eyes.

“I ain't puttin' it out.” He smirked and turned away from me. I swallowed heavily then poked him again and pointed to the pack that he had thrown up on the dash.

I cleared my throat and whispered, “May I have one, please?” He raised an eyebrow but handed me the pack and a metal lighter. I quickly lit one and handed the lighter and cigarettes back to him. He took them back and then reached towards me. I flinched harshly, my body retreating and bumping into Knight's warm body. The other guy paused in

his reach, then slowly inched his hand forward and opened the ashtray in the dash, under the radio.

Knight laid his hand on my thigh and I flinched - again - as he touched the scrapes and bruises. He pulled his hand off and reached up to turn on the cab light. The angry, black, blue and purple bruising was illuminated by the light, bright red scratches slowly oozing blood now. He turned the light off and reached for the cigarettes on the dash, lighting one of his own.

Chapter Four



Maggie

We arrived at a large, sprawling compound with a gravel driveway and small parking area. There was a large shop-style building that had windows and a porch. I assumed it was some type of clubhouse or something. There were a couple smaller buildings of the same style that had multiple doors, like a motel, and one larger one that had bay doors, like a mechanics shop. There were tons of motorcycles lined up on one side of the parking area, a few cars on the other side. Knight parked the truck as I looked around and noticed there were tons of people wearing leather vests like his, and lots of mostly naked women. Some wore as little as only bathing suit bottoms and some were wearing dresses that

I imagined only strippers or prostitutes wore. Others were wearing ripped jeans and leather and heavy black boots. It was...eye opening. I knew I would stand out like a sore thumb.

The other guy, whose name I still didn't know, got out of the truck and walked towards the house while Knight turned the ignition and headlights off. He opened the door and got out, holding a hand out for me. I scooted across the seat, grabbing his hand for support as I climbed down from the tall cab. As soon as my torn, bare foot touched the gravel, though, my knee gave out from the sharp pain and I cried out. He quickly scooped me into his arms and walked toward the large house.

I noticed the men in leather vests and the women alike all staring at me, so I turned my face into his neck and hid in his long hair, curling into a tighter ball in his arms, tangling my fingers in his shirt and pulling my knees up to my chest. His arms tightened around me, pulling me higher up his chest so I could press my face tighter against his neck. He smelled like leather, smoke and something that made me think of fall leaves crunching underfoot. As soon as we entered the house, I faintly heard the bass of music. It vibrated through my chest and made my tired head pound. He walked further into the room and sat me on a bar counter. I looked around the room. It was a huge living area, with several L-shaped couches, dotted with recliners and wooden chairs. There was the bar area, which I was sitting at, and on the opposite end of the room sat three pool tables, a dart board hanging nearby. Beyond the pool tables was a staircase leading up to a dimly lit hallway.

The main room was also dimly lit but it was enough that I could still see well.

Knight waved at someone and I followed his gaze to see a tall, thin, but still solid man heading our way. He was lean, but still muscled, with the body of a man more into endurance training than weight lifting. When he got closer, I noticed he had eyes the color of melted chocolate and long brown hair that he had pulled into a messy bun at the back of his head. Based on the size of the bun, I'd guess his hair hung well past his shoulders. He smiled at me but looked at Knight in question.

“The fuck, Prez? Doc said y'all was talkin' and then you got a phone call and just took off, Shark with ya. What the fuck's goin' on? Why'd ya bring her *here*?” His eyes flicked back to me and took in my battered face before his eyes darkened to near black. “The fuck happen to her face?” I wrapped my arms around my torso, instinctively protecting my most injured body parts from his visible anger.

Knight must've answered him because the man's eyes widened, his face turned red and his hands clenched. “Bull-fuckin'-shit!” I looked to Knight to see what his response would be, but he just inclined his head once, his lip curling and his nostril twitching. I glanced back at the blond man and swallowed my fear, shyly holding my hand out to shake.

“Hey, sweetheart, name's-“ his words cut off as he looked over his shoulder and greeted a passer-by with a knuckle

bump, before looking back at me. My face flamed with embarrassment and I looked up at Knight for help.

“Smoke, she’s deaf-” he glanced at me briefly, “-uh, hearing impaired. You gotta make sure she can see your face when you speak.” His eyes focused on me, even though he was speaking to the other man. He turned and grabbed a napkin off the bar, then reached up and brushed under my nose. He folded the napkin and began to dab at my split eyebrow, holding my stringy, tangled hair back away from my face. I glanced back at the guy I guessed was called Smoke, trying to break the intimate feeling of Knight cleaning my wounds.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know. My name is Smoke.” He spoke slowly, exaggerating the movement of the words. Frustration took over, my frayed nerves and years of being spoken to like an idiot piling up and spilling out on poor Smoke tonight.

“I’m deaf, not stupid! Don’t talk to me like I’m an idiot!” I slid off the bar and Smoke took a step back with his hands raised. The image almost made me laugh. I had never once stood up for myself but just thirty minutes ago I fought off Pete and now I was practically yelling at this biker who had easily a hundred pounds on me. Yet, instead of getting angry, he retreated, his hands in the air. I almost felt like a badass.

But, as I slid off the bar, my foot hit something slippery, spilled alcohol I assumed, if the burn in my cuts was any indication, and I slipped. Smoke and Knight both reached for me to stop my fall. Smoke grabbed my right arm as Knight grabbed me around the waist. The pain from Smoke pulling on

my arm and Knight grabbing my maybe-but-probably-not broken ribs caused me to scream in pain, my throat instantly burning, protesting the abuse. My hand flew to Knight's, where it rested on my throbbing ribs, and my nails dug deep on their own accord. Smoke released me immediately, but Knight adjusted his grip to under my arms and helped me get back on my feet. I noticed several people staring at me, probably wondering what the fuck I was screaming for.

Tears stung my eyes, sweat beading on my upper lip and I wrapped a shaky hand around my sore ribs, panting to breathe through the pain. Knight gently lifted me onto a stool and Smoke stood behind him, his face full of concern and his hands fluttering around, clearly wanting to help but not knowing what to do.

As Knight reached for the hem of my shirt, I fought him, holding it down. The guy that had been in the truck with us walked over as Knight was trying to convince me to lift my shirt and I saw the front of his vest declared him as *SHARK* and *ENFORCER*. My eyes locked on the bottle of Jim Beam in his hand and I reached for it with my unoccupied hand, quickly yanking it from him without asking. He released it without a fight, his eyebrow raising. I took a big swig and Knight used my momentary distraction to lift my torn shirt. I squeaked in surprise, quickly trying to pull it out of his hands but he easily brushed mine aside and lifted the shirt, revealing my ribs.

Even though it had been four days, the tread from my dad's work boot was still easily visible against my milky, pale skin,

mottled bruising surrounding it. Knight's eyes flew to mine before he looked at Shark and barked, "Get Doc." Shark turned on his heel and jogged toward a man lounging on one of the couches on the other side of the large room, one woman sitting on his lap, another curled next to him, her legs dangling over the leg not occupied by Girl Number One. As soon as Shark spoke, his arms flying wide and one hand pointing in my direction, the man stood up, dumping the girl in his lap to the ground. Doc's eyes flew over in my direction and he stepped over the girl who looked to be yelling at him. He and Shark both jogged back in my direction.

Knight gently traced the boot pattern on my skin before sliding lower, tracing the dark, shiny scars and melted skin spanning my right side and stomach and I twitched and hollowed my stomach, shrinking away from the touch that grated on my nerves even though the pain from the injuries was long gone. He moved his hand away, brushing over my bruised hip and thigh. He looked at me, concern on his face and questions shining from his eyes as his focus dipped to my right hip and thigh again before returning his gaze to mine. I took a shaky breath and shook my head, taking another guzzle of the Jim in my hand.

More people were staring now and I looked to Knight, but he was talking with Smoke. I tapped his shoulder and he immediately looked at me, cutting off their conversation. I glanced around at all the people staring and he followed my gaze. He must've said something because several of the people near us jumped and they all scattered, one of the women

tripping in her sky-high heels. I gave him a small smile in thanks.

Knight gave Doc an abridged version of what he thought had happened to me, but I cut in, brushing my fingers against his, resting softly just below the bruises covering my thigh, his large hand almost encircling it completely. He and Doc looked at me and I looked between them before grabbing a napkin off the counter and signaling like I was writing on it, hoping he understood that I was asking for a pen. Knight leaned over the counter and brought one back, handing it to me.

I leaned over the napkin, quickly scribbling. Knight leaned next to my right and Smoke leaned in at my left. I scooted a little closer to Knight, putting a little space between us.

There's more to the story. I glanced up to see if he was watching me write. He gave me a nod, which I assumed meant to keep writing. *My dad had all his friends over again. They were drinking and doing drugs.* My hand paused as I glanced down the bar at the guy three seats away that was snorting a line of coke. I had a sudden flash of guilt, hoping I hadn't just inadvertently insulted my rescuer's way of life.

Knight followed my gaze and kicked the guy's stool over, sending him sprawling on the floor, before pointing to the front door. The guy got up and scurried out. I bit my lip as he turned back to me, the pain reminding me of the split skin. I released my lip and leaned down to write again. *One of his friends came into my room while I was sleeping. He tried to attack me.* Knight's hand, which was resting on the bar near

my arm, curled into a fist so tight his knuckles turned white under all that swirling black ink. I quickly added, *I think I broke his nose, though.*

I looked up at him and he gave me a small grin, bringing his hand up to gently cup my cheek. “Little badass.” His thumb gently brushed my lip. “What ‘bout the burns, Butterfly? What’re those from?” My face paled and I shook my head, my eyelid twitching at the memory. I don’t even like to think about that night. No way was I going to tell someone I just met about it.

In my peripheral, I saw Smoke move and my eyes flicked over to him, then to Shark and Doc. Their faces were red, Shark’s fists were balled up tight and Smoke’s body practically vibrated. Ingrained fear planted itself firmly behind my sternum and I took a step back, burying my face into Knight’s ribs, trying to hide under his leather vest. He wrapped an arm around my lower back and put his big hand on the back of my head and a strong sense of security wrapped around me like a blanket. I felt the rumble in his chest that meant he was speaking and then I was being pulled towards the other end of the room, near the pool tables.

Shark, Doc and Smoke walked in front of us and I took the opportunity to take in my surroundings. Men of all shapes and sizes surrounded me, but one man caught my attention. He was massive, definitely taller than Knight, and way more bulked than Shark. He was built like a tank and suddenly Shark seemed a whole lot safer than this guy did. He had a bald head, covered in a tattoo that looked like chains and

barbed wire wrapping in and around each other. Some of the men were big and fat with long beards that rested on their big bellies while others were lean. Some, like Shark and Knight, were big and muscled, but not as scary as the other man, and then there was Doc, who seemed to be the shortest, scrawniest man in the room. As we approached the pool tables, I noticed a man sitting on a bar stool, getting a blow job from a naked woman, who knelt between his legs. My body locked up and I stood, sickly mesmerized. Knight kept moving, not noticing that I had stopped until my hand slipped out of his. He turned and looked back at me, quickly pulling me to his side and putting his big hand over my eyes, pulling me out of the main room and towards the stairs at the back.

Instead of leading me up the stairs though, Shark opened a door that was hidden in the shadows and I was guided through, into a room with a long table with chairs surrounding it. The wall behind the table sported a massive painting of the horned skull and angel wings. With my fingers still knotted around Knight's, I pulled his hand up and traced the same symbol on the back of his hand, then looked back to the wall.

The realization that this was a real, honest to God motorcycle club hit me and nerves settled in my belly, making me feel like the little bit of bourbon I had in my belly was going to make a reappearance.

CHAPTER FIVE



I watched as my Butterfly looked ‘round our Church, the room where we held all our private meetin’s, then looked at my hand and back to the big paintin’ on the wall. Her face paled and her body began to tremble. I pulled my hand out’a hers, wrappin’ an arm ‘round her and pullin’ her into my side. My hand settled on her lower back, where her shirt was ripped. Warm skin made my fingers tingle and her long hair caressed the back of my hand where the DVMC emblem was tattooed.

Doc closed the door and the pounding music dulled to just back-ground noise. I looked away from the top’a her head and

at the three men in the room with me. All of ‘em wore shocked expressions.

B’s face was buried in my ribs again, her tiny hand fisted in the back of my shirt under my cut, so I stroked my fingers ‘gainst her lower back while Smoke spoke up.

“Uh, Prez? Man, she ain’t ‘posed to be in here.” He spoke quietly, like he was afraid of scarin’ her, or pissin’ me off. Since she couldn’t hear ‘im, I assumed it was the latter. I locked eyes with him, wordlessly darin’ him to speak again. He dropped his eyes and raised his hands. I looked at Doc next.

“Doc, her ribs’re fucked. Wantchu to take a look.” He nodded, his body language changin’ as he switched into medical professional mode. He may be a biker, but he’s a doctor, too.

I slid my hand up Margaret’s back to cup her head and gently pulled her back to meet my eyes. I’d fantasized ‘bout havin’ my fingers tangled in her hair and the feel of it was even better than I could’ve imagined - soft and silky, even as dirty and tangled as it was. I stepped ‘way, tuggin’ her by the hand towards the large meetin’ table. I gently lifted her by the hips, mindful of all her injuries, settlin’ her on the edge. Doc walked over and I moved to step out of his way – but her hand shot out and fisted in my shirt with surprisin’ strength, stoppin’ my progress. She eyed Doc with wide eyes, her fear radiatin’ out of her expressive green eyes, her body unconsciously leanin’ away from his and toward mine.

Doc raised his hands and made sure she was lookin' at his face before he spoke. "My name is Doctor Thomas McKinney, but everyone here just calls me Doc. It alright if I take a look at your ribs? Just want'a make sure there's no real damage, 'kay?" Her fist tightened in my shirt and she glanced at me. I nodded at her and she looked back to Doc.

"Okay," she whispered quietly, her nerves causin' her voice to shake. He took a slow step forward and reached for the hem of her shirt. She flinched slightly, yankin' my shirt to lure me closer, but then straightened her shoulders and raised her chin, her eyes lockin' on a picture of my grandfather's Harley, hangin' on the wall 'hind Doc's head.

He raised the hem of her shirt, careful not to expose more than needed, and gently probed her ribs. Her whole body twitched 'fore she visibly clenched her jaw and her nostrils flared. Tears welled in her eyes, but she fought 'em, unwillin' to let 'em fall. He continued probin' and she kept her body locked in place, determined to seem brave and strong, her knuckles turnin' white where she gripped onto my shirt and the edge of the table.

My little badass, the possessive thought came across my mind unbidden. Never failed to shock me that my possessiveness over her didn't send me into a panic. Normally, the thought of bein' attached to any one woman would've sent me runnin'. But with Margaret, all I wanted to do from the first time I seen her was hide her from the world, protect her from anythin' that might hurt her.

Doc dropped her shirt back into place and reached for her chin. This time she didn't flinch and allowed him to inspect her eye, cheek and nose. "Kay, Margaret-" He cut off as she interrupted him.

"Maggie. My name is Maggie." Her voice was strong and loud, though definitely hoarse, nothin' like the quiet whisperin' I'd heard so far. Her words were stunted and slurred, but her voice was solid and strong. The husky sound of it reminded me of whiskey and cigarettes.

Maggie. Margaret. Butterfly. My little badass. I tested the names out, decidin' Maggie fit her. She was small, and sweet, remindin' me of a doll, just like her name. Doc smiled at her and gave her a reassurin' nod.

"Kay, Maggie. Well, I do think you got a broken rib. When'd this happen?" She glanced at me quickly before her eyes flicked to Shark and Smoke, then back to Doc.

"Um, it was- uh, it was Friday night." Her hands moved, almost second nature, and I assumed she was usin' sign language. My gut clenched and my ears burned. My eyes flicked to Shark's.

I've had worse.

One hell'a bruise.

Shark's jaw was clenched, his eyes hard, but his face was a little pale. Smoke's fists were clenched again and I knew he was itchin' to go find her pops. My fingers twitched at the thought'a wrappin' 'round his throat.

My brothers and I all looked at each other, anger reflectin' on all our faces and my nose twitched convulsively. B shifted on the table, pullin' a foot up into her lap and whimperin'. Doc immediately turned and grabbed her foot, inspectin' the bottom with a frown. "Knight, need a clean cloth, soapy water, and antibiotic cream. Shark, go get my bag out'a my room." I pulled my phone out and called Sandra, our resident mom. She'd lived here, with the club for as long as any of us could remember. She was in her sixties, almost small as Maggie, but tough as nails. She could, and would, put any one'a us in our place.

"Knight! What the fuck is this I hear about you bringing some battered, bruised woman into the club house? Why wasn't she brought directly to me?" She practically screamed in my ear and even though I'm thirty-four and more than twice her size, I felt like a chastised five-year-old.

"Ma, not now. Doc says he needs clean cloths and soapy water. We're in Church. Bring it, please?"

I heard her gasp and she stuttered for a moment. "She-sh-she's in *Church*? With you?" I rolled my eyes.

"Please, Sandy!" I never used her first name, not 'less I was real serious.

"Right, soapy water. Okay. I'm coming. Has she eaten?"

I looked to Maggie, but she was lookin' down at Doc as he poked 'round the bottom'a her feet, her hair creatin' a curtain 'tween us again. I brushed her hair over her shoulder and her

tear-filled eyes locked on mine. I put my hand to my mouth like I was eatin' and asked, "You eaten? Hungry?"

As if on cue, her stomach growled and she put a hand to her flat, scarred belly. I laughed. "She's hungry, Ma."

"I'm on my way." As I put the phone back in my pocket, Shark entered the room again, carryin' Doc's medical bag and a glass'a whiskey. He handed the bag to Doc and the whiskey to Maggie.

She sipped it then set it 'side, her eyes goin' back to Shark. Her face flushed and she dropped her eyes briefly, before lookin' back up at him. "Shark, that's your name right?" His whole face softened and I knew, in that moment, she'd been accepted. No matter what happened 'tween us, she was family now. Shark nodded at her and she twisted her fingers together. "I'm sorry. I left my house so fast I didn't grab my stuff." She trailed off and I rubbed the spot over my heart, my chest feelin' funny under the knowledge that she was almost violated in the worst way tonight. The image of her scarred skin floated through my mind and my heart thudded harder. "Um- uh, may I have another c-cigarette, please?"

Shark's face softened more as he smiled at her, but I fished my pack out of the pocket inside my cut and handed her one, 'fore puttin' one 'tween my own lips. I held the lighter up to hers 'fore lightin' my own. She took a deep drag and winced as her leg twitched as Doc touched somethin' on her foot that hurt. She blew the smoke out on a shaky breath just as Ma walked in, carryin' a tray with a bowl'a steamy, soapy water, a

stack of white cloths and a plate with a ham and cheese sandwich on it.

She set the tray on the table and chattered to Maggie, who had her head hangin', eyes closed, fingers absently tracing gouges in the table and face hidden from Ma by her long red hair. She inhaled on her cigarette, oblivious to Ma's chatter.

"Oh, you poor dear, look at your feet. Oh, you poor thing, here, I made you a sandwich. I see the boys are taking care of you. Oh, you poor thing, what happened to you?" When Maggie didn't answer, she looked up at me, confused. I smirked at her.

"Maggie's deaf, Ma. She can't hear ya." Ma's mouth dropped open and her eyes filled with compassion. She turned and touched Maggie's hand softly. Maggie jumped and yanked her hand away, her hair fallin' away from her face as her head turned toward Ma and me.

Surprised colored Maggie's face at seeing a woman and Ma audibly gasped at the sight of a Maggie's bruised and beaten face.

"Oh, you poor dear." Ma's eyes filled with tears as she wrapped Maggie in a tight hug. Maggie sat stiffly, eyes wide and locked on mine, arms half-lifted but not wrapped around Ma. I smirked at her.

"Maggie, this is Sandra. We call her Sandy, or Ma. She's like a mother to all of us. Ma, this is Maggie." As I spoke, Ma released her and Doc began to wash the bottom of her feet.

She flinched with the first swipe'a the washcloth, but giggled on the second.

Her sweet, soft giggle made my chest tighten and my dick harden. "It tickles," she said, watchin' Doc. Her foot and leg continued to twitch as he cleaned it and Ma stepped up, holdin' the plate.

She gently touched Maggie's shoulder, holdin' the plate out. "Maggie, I made you a sandwich. Are you hungry, honey?" Again, Maggie's stomach grumbled. She put her cigarette in the ashtray and reached for the plate. She ate, scarfin' the food down as Doc finished cleanin' her feet.

When Doc was done with her feet, he touched her knee and asked, "Any other injuries, Maggie? Does anythin' else hurt?"

She blushed and looked at me quickly, 'fore lookin' back at Doc and clearing her throat. I wondered if it wa botherin' her, cause she seemed to be getting quieter with every sentence. "Um, I crawled under a fence and scratched my back."

"Lemme see." He jerked his chin in her direction and she slid off the table, turnin' her back to him. He lifted the two parts of her ripped shirt, exposin' a long, deep scratch and my nostrils twitched again.

"This ain't too bad, but there are a couple spots that could use a stitch or two." As he spoke, he pulled out a syringe, a small vial and his stichin' shit. Her body went rigid, so I approached her, standin' in her line of sight and holdin' her eyes. I gave her a small nod.

“Knight, I’mma give her a local and then stitch her up.” I relayed the message to her and he touched her back with his finger before shootin’ her up with the numbin’ shit. She held my eyes through the whole process, barely blinkin’ despite the grimace on her face. I laid my hand over hers, windin’ my pinky finger ‘round hers.

When Doc was done and the plate was empty, I looked ‘round the room.

“Shut it down. Want this place quiet in twenty.” I leaned down and scooped her off the table. I carried her through the door and out of the room without lookin’ back at my brothers or the woman I considered a second mother.

Chapter Six



Maggie

As Knight swooped me into his arms and turned to walk out of the room they had called ‘Church’, I looked over his shoulder and my eyes connected with Shark’s. His eyes held hidden knowledge, as if he knew something I didn’t. As Knight exited the room, he stopped and I felt the rumble in his chest that meant he was speaking to someone. As the door swung shut behind him, I turned to see who he was speaking to. There were two men, wearing vests like most of the other men here, standing with their arms crossed, feet spread wide. For one ridiculous moment, I wondered how much I’d had to drink. I was seeing double. The two men were identical in

posture and looks. I looked at Knight, and even though he was looking at the men, speaking, I interrupted.

“Woah. How much have I had to drink?” One of the men threw his head back and laughed and the other raised an eyebrow, a slight smirk raising one side of his mouth. Knight chuckled, the movement slightly bouncing me in his arms and I gasped at the sudden throb in my ribs. He stopped immediately, his arms tightening slightly.

“These’re Nuts and Bolts. They’re twins, but you won’t find two people more different. They work on all the bikes, when we need ‘em to. They own a mechanic’s shop in town.” I remembered taking my dad’s Camry to the shop with the horned skull on the sign outside, only about three months after we moved here. I glanced back at the twins, my eyes flicking from one to the other. Knight spoke again, but I was taking in the men, their serious posture and their identical haircuts. On the front of their vests were their names. The one called Bolts was talking and I looked back to him just in time to catch the last of his words.

“-the fuck did this to her? I’ll fuckin’ kill ‘im.” I looked to Knight to see what he would say.

“Her father. He’ll pay. She’s stayin’ here. We’ll figure out what to do tomorrow. Make sure no one bothers us. She needs rest.”

“You got it, Prez. Who’s on guard tonight?” Nuts spoke this time and I suddenly felt exhausted, confused and emotionally drained. I laid my head on his shoulder, my nose buried in his

hair as I curled tighter against his chest. I felt so small against his much larger body, safe and secure in his arms.

I didn't understand their way of life. Who knows what they were involved in that warranted the need for guards? But, as Knight adjusted my weight in his arms, curling me even tighter into his chest, I realized it didn't matter. They could be criminals, murderers, and it wouldn't matter to me. Since I'd met Knight, he'd been nothing but kind and had even rescued me at one in the morning when I was crouched in a dirty alley, traumatized, bruised, and bloody. He'd brought me here and everyone I had met had either helped me or threatened to kill my father for hurting me.

Kill my father. The words bounced around in my head but I felt nothing in my heart. He had been terrible to me ever since my mom died. I think my father had died with her and he became nothing but an evil, angry shell of his old self. Or, maybe he had been this way all along and she protected me from it. The thought soured my stomach so intensely, I feared I might puke on Knight. I took a deep inhale of his unique scent and allowed it to calm my stomach.

Knight's chest rumbled again and he turned and climbed the stairs. I didn't watch where he was headed, keeping my head against his shoulder and my eyes closed. His smooth movements lulled me and my foggy brain became even foggier. He shifted me, setting my nearly-bare ass on something cold. I opened my eyes to see that I was in a bathroom. It wasn't very large, but it had his and her sinks, a large shower stall big enough for three people and a toilet. On

a shelf next to the shower stall sat neatly folded black towels. The coldness under my butt was black granite with pretty gold flecks. The sink was black also, with gold fixtures. The shower was tiled with black tiles and the floor was dark hardwood. It was a really pretty bathroom and way, way better than my musty, carpeted bathroom at my father's house.

I watched as Knight turned on the shower, testing the temperature before coming back over to me. "You need'a wash, Butterfly. You got cuts and scrapes all over your body. Ma sent some girly shower shit up. It's already in the shower, 'kay?" I nodded and gently stepped down from the vanity. "You need me, I'll be right outside." He turned and walked towards the door that appeared to lead to a large bedroom.

"Wait!" I called out to him and he turned, hand on the knob and door half closed. "Well, uh- um, Doc bandaged my feet." I held one foot out for him to see. "I don't want to get the bandaging wet."

"It's okay, Butterfly. Doc didn't think about you wantin' a shower, but he's sendin' up some more bandages for after. Be sure to wash your cuts good, 'kay?" I nodded and watched him leave the bathroom, closing the door behind him.

I removed the bandages that Doc had literally just applied, feeling guilty that he wasted his time. I tested the temperature of the water, turning the cold down a little before stepping in. I showered quickly, soaping and conditioning my long hair before scrubbing my uninjured skin with a bright pink loofah and grapefruit scented body scrub. I used a bar of unscented

soap to gently lather my injured parts, gently twisting to reach as much of the scratch on my back as I could, careful of the sutures. I tilted my head back, enjoying the warm spray with actual water pressure, in a clean bathroom that didn't smell like mildew.

After a few minutes, I turned the water off and wrapped in one of his black towels, leaving my hair dripping down my back and shoulders. Only once I was out did I realize I didn't have any clothes to put on, other than my tattered, bloody shirt and my tiny, dirty shorts. I opened the door to the bathroom, steam billowing out around me.

To my utter embarrassment, the room was full of people. Knight, Smoke, Doc, the twins, Shark and one older man with a long gray beard that was yellowed around his mouth from years of tobacco use, all stood in the middle of the large room. Knight stood with his back to me, but one of the twins noticed me, peeking out from behind the bathroom door. My grip on the towel tightened and nerves hit my belly. Knight noticed the twin's distraction and turned, his eyes meeting mine. His eyes were tired, shadowed by dark circles. He turned back to the twin, who was still looking at me and suddenly Knight's fist flew into the man's face. I jumped, the dull ache in my throat meaning I had made some kind of noise. Knight spoke and the men all turned and left the room quickly, one twin helping the other one off the floor while laughing and followed him out.

Knight grabbed a shirt out of his dresser and brought it to me. His hand gently brushed my dripping hair off my shoulder, his thumb catching a drop of water dripping down

my temple. “Put that on, B, and we can get some rest.” He gently closed the door in my face. I pulled the towel off and wrung my hair out with it before quickly pulling the black t-shirt over my head. It probably fit him like a second skin, but it hung loosely off my much smaller frame, hanging almost to my knees and sagging off one shoulder, baring my collar bone.

I walked out of the warm bathroom and the A/C from the bedroom pricked my skin with goosebumps. Knight had removed his own shirt and vest and was now wearing only his jeans with the button and zipper open, the jeans sagging low on his hips. I paused just outside the bathroom, admiring his muscular back. He had a montage of tattoos, with no apparent rhyme or reason, covering his deeply tanned skin. There were words wrapped in and around pictures, Greek Gods, a large Sagittarius constellation surrounded by a cosmic scene, and right between his shoulder blades was another horned skull, this one much larger than the one on his hand. Directly below the skull was another butterfly, a large colorful blue and black *butterfly*. My heart pounded as I saw his mouth, shaping that word while speaking to me. A large snake wrapped from his right shoulder, down his side and down into the waistband of his pants. I cleared my throat, garnering his attention.

But as soon as he turned, my mouth went dry, every brain cell I had short-circuited and something deep in my belly clenched tight. *Holy fucking fuck*. His body was *incredible*. He had tight, hard pecs, with metal glinting in each of his nipples, thick, washboard abs, and a deeply defined Adonis belt, all covered in colorful tattoos. His chest was lightly covered in

brown hair that arched down, straight into his open pants. Belatedly, I realized I was staring at him and I yanked my eyes up to his to avoid getting caught ogling, but his were locked on my legs and I suddenly felt much warmer than I had a moment ago. I shifted, rubbing my thighs together, attempting to relieve the sudden ache there. His eyes tracked the movement of my legs before trailing up my body, meeting mine.

I cleared my throat again, looking away from him because I was overwhelmed by the attraction I felt toward him. I spied my phone on the dresser and walked over, picking it up and unlocking the screen. The clock read almost four-thirty and I had three texts from my father.

U stupid bitch get back here and apologize to Pete

U fuckin cunt I gave u more than u ever deserved and u cant even give Pete a blow job when he asks

If ur not home in 5 mins, ill burn all ur shit I swear to god

My eyes flew to Knight who was standing a few feet away from me. Concern showed on his face and I turned the phone to show him my father's messages. He frowned at the phone before looking up at me. "Would he do it?" I shrugged, then changed my mind and nodded, tears stinging my eyes. "I'll make him pay for this, Butterfly. I swear it. No woman deserves to be treated this way. But for him to hurt *you*, Maggie... That's unforgiveable. He'll pay for this, I promise." The tears fell and he pulled me to his warm, muscular body. He was so much bigger than me that his whole body curled around mine protectively, his shoulders bowed over me and

his arms nearly wrapping me up twice, his hands strong and sure, yet gentle against my pain-riddled body. I felt his warmth infuse my body, deep into my bones and I shivered in pleasure.

His smell hit me right in the gut. *Oh, god. He smells so good.* He smelled like leather, smoke, sweat and that strange leafy scent. His tan skin was warm against mine and I rubbed my cheek against his sternum. His hand rested right above my ass while the other one ran through my hair, snagging on a tangle since I hadn't combed it yet. I took a deep inhale of his smell, brushing my nose along his skin, then quickly backed away before I did something stupid like lick him. He rested a large hand on the side of my face, his palm swallowing that half of my head, his thumbs rubbing my tears away before he turned and grabbed a brush off the dresser. He led me over to the bed and sat me down before sitting closely behind me.

I looked over my shoulder, waiting to see what he would do and startled when he began to run the brush through the ends of my hair, working the tangles out gently. Stroke after stroke, he gently brushed my hair and I closed my eyes to enjoy it, drifting in semi-unconsciousness. When the brush stopped, I opened my eyes and watched him walk back to the dresser, laying the brush down and grabbing a fresh roll of bandages and a tube of ointment.

He quickly bandaged my feet, covered the sutures on my back, and then grabbed his cigarettes. He brought them over to the bed before sitting on the opposite side, propped up against the headboard, legs stretched out. I mimicked his position, but snuggled my cold legs under the blankets, pulling them up to

my hips, highly aware of the fact that I wasn't wearing any underwear. He lit a cigarette and offered it to me. I took it while he lit a second one, keeping it for himself. As I smoked, I slowly scooted down the bed and before I knew it I was actually laying on the bed. Knight took the cigarette from me, stubbing it out before scooting down the bed and leaning over to flip the light off.

The darkness took over the room and I felt a crackling energy develop between us. He lay on top of the blankets, me under them. I closed my eyes and, although the room was just as dark as my closed eyes, all I could see was the desire on Pete's red face. My eyes snapped open and I peered into the darkness. I tried again, but again all I could see in my mind was Pete. I rolled over, trying to get the image out of my head. The movement brought me closer to Knight's warm body and I tentatively reached out a hand, laying it gently on his ribbed stomach. His muscles rippled under my hand and I snatched it back, afraid I had offended him. He grabbed my hand and brought it back, laying it in the same spot on his stomach and covering it with his own. I sighed and closed my eyes again, but this time, Pete's face didn't fill my mind's eye. Exhaustion swallowed me and my mind went blissfully blank.

CHAPTER SEVEN



I woke up warm and sweaty. My sleepy mind realized I'd slept better than I had in years. I'd ended up under the covers at some point, and Maggie was warm in my arms, face buried in my chest. Her soft breaths ruffled my chest hairs and my hard dick stiffened further. I had one arm 'round her waist, the other under her head and wrapped 'round her upper back, huggin' her to me securely even in sleep. My arms tightened involuntarily 'cause I really fuckin' liked the small weight'a her body held against mine.

Her legs shifted, her thigh brushin' my hard on. She rubbed her nose in my chest hair, her wild, frizzy curls windin' 'round

our bodies. She sighed and her eyes blinked open, meetin' mine instantly. I smiled at her, raisin' the arm from her waist and grabbin' a curl. I rubbed it 'tween my fingers, feelin' the softness and watchin' it bounce back in place when I let it go. Her hair was wildly frizzy, and I realized that it made sense that she normally wore it in a braid. She closed her eyes again, rubbin' her nose in my chest, breathin' deeply. A rush of satisfaction ran through my veins, knowin' that she enjoyed my scent as much as I enjoyed hers.

She abruptly sat up, whimperin' and grabbin' her ribs. I sat up with her, touchin' her shoulder. She looked at me with wide eyes that brimmed with unshed tears. "What's wrong, Maggie?" When she didn't immediately answer me, I touched her chin with one finger. "Butterfly, why ya cryin'?"

She blinked the tears out'a her eyes, one tear slidin' down each cheek. She took a shaky breath, cleared her throat and whispered, "I didn't have a nightmare. I always have nightmares. Every single night since my mom died." Her head tilted to the side. "Why do you keep calling me that?" she asked, her eyes focused on the butterfly inked on the back'a my hand. My heart thumped in my chest and I felt my face soften.

"That's a good thing, right? You were exhausted. Needed the sleep." I chose to avoid her question 'bout the nickname, for now.

She looked down at her fingers as she played with the frayed edge of my old t-shirt pooled in her lap. "It's not that I

didn't have a nightmare that freaks me out." She paused for a moment and took a deep breath, her eyes flickin' to mine before droppin' to her fingers again. Her face flushed bright red and my fingers itched to run across the color in her cheeks, so I reached out and ran a calloused finger down her red stained cheek. I found myself wonderin' if she flushed like that as she came. My dick twitched in my jeans, but her next words stopped that train of thought immediately. "It's the reason why that has me freaked." She softly cleared her throat again and I made a mental note to pick her up some warm tea to help with the ache I knew had to be botherin' her.

I stared at her profile for a moment before she finally looked back up at me. "Ain't a bad thing that sleepin' with me kept the nightmares 'way, B." Even though she couldn't hear me, I kept my voice soft. Tears began to swim in her eyes again, fallin' as she shook her head and I wiped 'em away. "No more tears, Butterfly. Never 'gain. Can't stand it."

I grabbed her elbow, layin' back on the pillow and pullin' her with me. She laid down next me, her head pillowed on my arm, her hand restin' on my stomach again and she burrowed her fingers into the light dusting of hair. Like last night, my muscles rippled under the electric current her touch brought.

My phone vibrated on the nightstand next to me and I reached for it. Seein' it was Smoke, I opened his message.

In the kitchen when ur ready. Ma got breakfast on. Pita brought clothes for Mags. Left em outside your door.

I nudged Maggie's head with my shoulder to get her to look at me. "Ya hungry? Ma's got breakfast ready." She nodded and her hand dug into my abs as she pushed herself up again. My muscles flexed 'gainst the pressure. She stood and stretched her arms above her head, bringin' the t-shirt to the tops of her thighs, and my eyes locked onto her legs. The shirt rose so far it almost exposed her to my hungry gaze. I looked away 'fore my mind could wander too far again and leave me with another hard on.

I sat up, leanin' over so that I was in her line'a sight. "My sister brought ya some clothes." I stood and opened the door, grabbin' the pile of clothes with a pair of sandals on top. I grabbed some clothes for myself 'fore handin' her the stack of borrowed clothes. "I'm'a shower, 'kay?"

She smiled at me, huggin' the clothes to her chest. I walked over to the bathroom, her eyes meetin' mine as I closed the door.

I showered and quickly changed my clothes, pullin' my cut on over a white t-shirt. I opened the bathroom door and tried to hide my smile at how Mia's clothes hung off'a her petite frame. The jeans were way too long, her bandaged feet barely pokin' out. She huffed as she sat on the bed. She leaned over to roll the jeans up but whimpered and quickly straightened, her hand goin' to her ribs as she looked up at the ceilin' with watery eyes.

I walked over and knelt in front of her, liftin' first one foot, then the other, and proppin' them on my thigh as I quickly

folded the jeans over until her feet poked out. I helped her gently slide the sandals over the bandages on her feet 'fore I pulled on my boots and stood. "You ready? There'll be more brothers down there, but you ain't gotta be scared. We may be an MC, but we don't hurt women. You're safe here, 'kay?" She bit her lip but released it immediately, the broken skin reopenin' slightly. She walked over to the dresser, grabbin' her phone and stuffin' it in her back pocket before attemptin' to tame her hair. She huffed and rolled her eyes, tossin' it over her shoulder before looking at me.

I held my hand out to her and she grabbed it with a shaky one of her own, lookin' to the bedroom door. She straightened her shoulders, standin' as tall as she could and walked out the door. I followed her down the hallway and down the stairs before pullin' her back to walk next to me instead of in front'a me. We walked through the kitchen door together, hand in hand.

Ma and Pops, Smoke, Shark and two prospects were in the kitchen sippin' coffee while Mia dug 'round in the fridge. When we walked in, all eyes turned to us and Mia's head popped out'a the fridge 'fore she resumed her rummagin'. Maggie's small hand tightened in mine, surprisin' me with the strength her tiny body held, but she didn't wither under the stares, like she would'a last night. She stood straight, meetin' everyone's gaze.

I tugged on her hand to get her to look at me. "Maggie, you remember Ma, from last night?" She nodded and smiled at Ma, puttin' her open hand to her chin and mouthing "Ma". I

pointed to Pops. “That’s Pops, Ma’s husband. You saw him in the bedroom last night. You know Smoke and Shark. And that’s my sister, Mia. I call her Pita.” Maggie looked at Mia then back at me, confusion on her face but a smile tuggin’ her lips.

She used her hands and made several signs, mouthin’ the word. I assumed she was spellin’ out Pita and laughed. “Yeah, means Pain in the Ass. I started calling her that when we were kids and she wouldn’t leave me and Smoke alone.” Pita straightened from the fridge and was practically bouncin’ in place so I jerked my head, beckonin’ her towards us.

“Hi!” she practically yelled at Maggie. “I’m Mia!” She was still bouncin’, tellin’ Maggie how excited she was to meet her but Maggie was starin’ at the table where platters of eggs, bacon, biscuits and a bowl’a gravy sat. Her stomach growled and I laughed and led her over to the table.

“Pita, Butterfly – I mean Maggie, she’s deaf. You gotta be sure she’s lookin’ at you before you talk to her.” Maggie saw me talkin’ and looked over at my sister, her face flushin’ red. If Mia was excited before, she was practically dancin’ now. Her eyes widened and a smile nearly split her face in two.

She started signin’ frantically, her hands movin’ in a bunch of elaborate movements. Maggie stared at her, her mouth dropped open, before movin’ her hands in a similar fashion. I dished out plates while she and Pita signed back and forth. I sat a plate in front of Maggie and she looked up at me, a smile beamin’ on her face and happiness shinin’ from her eyes. Her

smile hit me hard in the gut and I felt like a blind man seein' the sun for the first time. I ran a hand over her unruly curls, loving the softness of them. Smoke spoke, drawin' my attention away from Maggie.

“Pita, the fuck'd you learn sign language?” She looked up at him, still signing to Maggie.

“I took classes in high school. I thought it could be helpful in case I ever had a hearing-impaired patient.”

Maggie signed back and she answered before digging into her plate. Maggie looked at her for a moment longer, a smile lingerin', then dug into her own plate. I ate with them, listenin' to Ma and Pops chattin' quietly while Smoke and Shark whispered back and forth, smirks on their faces.

When B's food was half gone, she pushed her plate slightly 'way, slumpin' down in her chair. She tapped the table and Pita looked up at her. Maggie signed somethin' and she burst into laughter. I waited for translation with an eyebrow arched high on my forehead. Pita looked at Maggie and Maggie looked at me. “Shit, T. I like her. She says she's glad my clothes are loose on her, because she's going to get fat off Ma's cooking if she stays any longer.” Ma beamed with pride, lookin' at Maggie with all the love of a mother. Maggie made a few more signs and Pita's face grew serious.

“Uh, T? She wants to know if she can tell you guys the whole story now that I can translate. She said she told you guys part of it last night but there's more to the story now that she has a translator and her throat is too sore to tell it all.”

Smoke and Shark stopped whispering about how Maggie had tamed me, their heads whippin' in our direction. Ma cleared the table of our plates and Pops brought over a mug of coffee, offerin' it to Maggie. She accepted the mug before signin' somethin'.

Pita went to the fridge, bringin' a blue container of creamer and a bowl of sugar over to the table for B. She began to doctor her coffee and I looked at the two prospects, still sittin' in the corner and eyein' her curiously.

“Out. Now.” Both men jumped and left the room, one lookin' over his shoulder at me before the door closed.

Maggie's hands began to move and Pita translated. “Before my mom died, my dad was normal, as far as I know. He wasn't overly affectionate, but he never hurt me. I can remember him playing in the yard with me, and one year he built me a treehouse with a tire swing. When I was fourteen, my mother died in a car accident. I think my father died with her and left behind was a mean, angry shell. Or maybe, he was just always evil and my mother protected me from it. After she died, he told me that he hated me because I look so much like her. When I was fifteen, he started drinking heavily. A year later, we got evicted and he moved us here. I thought when we moved here it would get better, since we were away from everything that reminded him of my mom. It wasn't long before his friends started coming over. They would smoke pot and drink and then one night when I came home, the smell was different. It didn't smell like weed anymore. It smelled like—wait, I don't know that one. What does that mean?” Pita

repeated the sign and Maggie used one hand to spell the word out. “Oh. Um, she says it smelled like burning rubber.” They paused for a moment and I exchanged glances with Smoke and Shark. Shark mouthed, *heroin*, and I inclined my head. B’s hands drew my attention again and Pita started talking.

“After I started smelling that is when my dad started hurting me. The first time he did, he broke my arm. I was sixteen. He didn’t do anything for a while after that, but one night when I was taking him his dinner, his friend Pete was staring at me like a- wait slow down and spell that one again.” Maggie spelled something out again and Pita’s lip curled in anger and disgust, her eyes flicking to mine and back. “She says Pete was staring at her like a pervert.” My Butterfly nodded before moving her hands again. “I was watching Pete out of the corner of my eye and tripped and spilled my dad’s plate in his lap. That was the worst time. He followed me into the kitchen and told me I would pay for spilling his dinner and grabbed the pot of- oh my God, no.” Maggie’s hands stopped and Pita’s voice broke. My Butterfly was fighting tears, her gritted jaw tellin’ me she was trying to be strong again, but her body curled in on itself, head bowed and shoulders hunched, fear beatin’ her desire to be strong and brave in front’a everyone present. She absently laid a protective hand against her belly, right where the expanse of scarred skin was. My sister was tearin’ up, which was unusual. Mia’d seen some real shit since she spent most’a her free time patchin’ us up after fights, or carin’ for patients in the ER. Plus, she’d been kickin’ my ass

since she turned eight, but whatever Maggie'd told her had her snifflin'.

The muscles in my neck clenched, my gut rollin' and nausea fightin' its way up my throat. It was bad. I grabbed B's chair and pulled it between my thighs, wrappin' her cold fingers in my warm palms. Pita took a deep, shaky breath and continued talkin'.

“She says her dad told her that she would pay for spilling the hot spaghetti on him and grabbed the pot of boiling sauce and threw it at her.” The silence in the room was heavy. B's watery eyes focused on the coffee cup in front'a her. Without conscious thought on my behalf, my hand brushed her scarred belly and side. She twitched, as if the feelin' of bein' touched there was more than she could bear, her stomach suckin' in away from my hand. Her eyes findin' mine, she grabbed my hand and pulled it away from her torso, clenchin' it tight between both'a hers.

Ma came over, tears in her eyes as well, and wrapped Maggie in a hug. When Ma let her go, Pops came over and laid a hand on Maggie's wild curls. He gently rubbed her hair, causin' her to look up at him. “Baby girl, you never gotta go back to that. Not ever, you hear me? You can stay here.” He paused, looking at Ma and somethin' in my gut told me I knew what was comin' next. Smoke stood up, his muscles clenchin' and unclenchin'. He felt it, too. Ma gave Pops a slight nod as fresh tears fell, but she busied herself by braidin' B's wild curls. “Mia, tell her this for me.” She looked away from Pops, raisin' an eyebrow at Mia, pickin' up on the tension in the

room, knowin' that whatever Pops was about to say was important. Her fingers tightened further on mine.

“She can have Stella’s apartment, if she don’t want’a stay here. We never took nothin’ out of it, but we can have it cleaned for her, and we can pack away Stella’s clothes.” Pops’ voice cracked with emotion, but he laid a hand on Maggie’s shoulder, the other wrapped around Ma’s waist.

Chapter Eight



Maggie

The room was thick with tension. Mia was still sniffing, Knight (or ‘T’, as Mia called him) sat rigid next to me, his thighs like pillars of steel caging me in. Ma and Pops were both emotional, Smoke standing behind them, staring at the back of Pops’ head with a bewildered, possibly angry, look on his face. Shark was staring at me in confusion. I cleared my throat, looking at Knight then back at Mia.

“Um-uh-thank you.” I looked at Mia and cleared my throat again. I signed to her, my eyes flickering to Pops and back.

Who’s Stella?

She gave a subtle shake of her head, signing back that I should ask ‘T’ later, when Smoke isn’t around. I made a mental note to also ask what T stood for. Her eyes flashed to Knight and I looked up at him. He squeezed my knee reassuringly. “That the whole story, B? That what you wanted to tell us?” My face flamed and my gut burned with regret.

I looked back at Mia and began to sign.

No. That wasn't even really part of what I originally wanted to tell you. I just got carried away with the story. I don't even like to think about that night and I don't know why I told you about it.

Mia watched my hands intently, her mouth moving quickly. I paused and took a deep breath. I’d been keeping this secret for almost four years. It had been a weight on my shoulders for years, oppressive and crushing. With the weight lifted, and Knight’s strength surrounding me, I found the courage to keep telling them about my worst nightmares come true.

I wasn't born deaf. I've only been deaf a little while. Only almost two years now. One night my class ran late. I was trying to hurry home, but traffic was bad. I knew I was going to be late and he'd be mad that I wasn't there to make his dinner. I was trying so hard to get home. As soon as I walked in his house, I knew I was in trouble.

My eyes unfocused and I was caught up in the memories of the night that changed my life forever. I wasn’t even sure if Mia was following me, my hands moving robotically as I relived that night.

I could smell their drugs and the air was already thick and heavy. I knew he'd be drunk or high, and angry, too. I tried to be quiet and sneak into the kitchen but my dad was already in there. He started yelling at me about how worthless I am and all I do is mooch off him.

Mia asked for clarification and I spelled out M-O-O-C-H again. She nodded and kept talking.

I don't remember everything that happened. I remember that he was yelling about how ungrateful I am and then he raised his fist. I remember turning my head and the pain and running out the door. One of his friends was leaving and I was running away from the house and I guess he hit me. The next thing I remember is waking up on the living room floor the next morning and not being able to hear anything. There was blood in my right ear, where he had hit me, and a deep gash on my forehead and the back of my head had a huge knot on it. I haven't heard much since. I had hearing aids for a little while, and they helped some, but I still couldn't hear very well. My dad sold them on E-Bay, to pay off his drug dealer, I guess.

I took a deep breath and looked around the room. Mia's face was red, her chest heaving. Knight was tense next to me again, his thighs like stone and his hand clenched on my thigh. Smoke and Shark were both standing closer than they were before and Ma was shaking her head as she tied off the braid she had styled my hair into. Pops was still standing right next to me, his hand on my shoulder.

Without them, I can only hear loud sounds, like yelling, or the bass of loud music or-

I stopped abruptly and blushed, my eyes flicking to Knight.

“What, B? What were you gonna say?” He brushed a loose, frizzy curl behind my ear, his other hand squeezing mine reassuringly.

I glanced back at Mia, then ducked my head, studiously ignoring the other gazes in the room.

Their bikes. I can hear them. But Knight’s bike is the only sound that I can actually identify on my own.

Knight pulled me onto one of his thighs, his hand settling on my hip. I risked a surprised glance at him and my embarrassment melted away. His eyes were clear and full of some emotion I couldn’t place. Happiness, definitely, but maybe pride, too?

“Y’know what my bike sounds like?” His mouth quirked into half a lopsided grin when I nodded mutely. “You been intentionally duckin’ out when you heard me comin’, Butterfly?” If I was blushing before, I was positively flushed now as the meaning behind his nickname for me clicked in my brain. My face and ears burned. Even my chest felt hot. He chuckled, bouncing me on his lap as he adjusted his leg. I smiled at the amusement on his face, but it quickly faded.

I looked back to Mia and shrugged. *And now you guys know. I’ve never told anyone before. I was –* I shook my head. *I am afraid he’ll kill me if he finds out I told anyone.*

Mia jumped up from her seat, her hands moving almost too fast for even me to follow. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Smoke and Shark talking to me as well. I ignored them, figuring they were probably saying the same things Mia was.

Absolutely not! T will keep you safe. You're safe here. Shark and Smoke and everyone will watch out for you. They've accepted you. You're club now and no one can touch you without T's permission. If anyone harms you, they'll probably end up buried in the desert somewhere. And I did not tell you that.

I huffed a half laugh and looked back to Knight. He ran a gentle hand over my hair. “What d’you say I take you to your house. You can grab whatever you want’a bring. After that, we’ll go shoppin’ and pick up some stuff I need, ‘kay?” Just as he finished talking, my phone vibrated between my butt cheek and his thigh, reminding me of my dad’s text messages the night before. I pulled it out and checked the incoming text from an automated system reminding me of a class cancellation before swiping it away to ignore it, completely disinterested in college now that I didn’t need an excuse to avoid home. I opened my dad’s messages and pointed to his threat to burn all my belongings. Knight’s jaw clenched and his nose twitched again, but he made a visible effort to relax.

“It’s okay, B. We can replace anything he burns.”

Mia shrieked so loud, I actually heard her and turned my head to gape at her.

He's going to burn your stuff? She spoke along with her hands this time, her face red and angry. I shrugged then nodded.

Probably. It wouldn't surprise me, after I broke Pete's nose. Especially if he thinks I told you guys anything.

My hands began to shake, and Shark walked over to me, shaking a cigarette out of his pack. I took it and Knight fished his Zippo out and held it in front of me, lighting the cigarette. I took a steadying breath, followed by a sip of coffee. The nicotine and coffee, my favorite combination of anything in the world save my new-found obsession of leather, smoke and woods, calmed me and I relaxed, leaning into Knight's chest just a little. His arm came around my waist, careful of my ribs, and tugged me more fully onto his lap and into his chest.

Mia smiled, her knowing eyes watching us. I averted my gaze, not sure I wanted to know what she saw when she looked at us. I had been avoiding Knight for years, and now he knew it. My stomach dropped and my spine went straight, the twinge in my ribs ripping a harsh, ragged gasp from my throat.

You been intentionally duckin' out when you heard me comin', Butterfly?

I turned my head slowly, my eyes wide, and looked at Knight. His forehead creased with concern and urgency, his nose twitching several times as he ran a gentle hand down my back, his other gently braced on my injured ribs. "What, Maggie? What's wrong?"

I swallowed and spoke, instead of using Mia as a translator. “You know me. I mean, before. You knew of me before. You said that I was avoiding you...which means you knew me.”

He smiled, his concern melting away and he petted my hair again. He seemed to like touching my hair, because he did it a lot. “Nah, Butterfly, I didn’t know you. I knew *of* you. C’mon, let’s go and I’ll tell you ‘bout it in the truck, yeah?” He raised his eyebrows. I hesitated, my breathing harsh in my abused throat, before nodding. He helped me stand and then stood behind me. I turned and waved at everyone in the room.

Mia, tell Ma thank you for the breakfast and coffee. She relayed the message. Hey, what does T stand for?

She smirked and looked at Knight, not saying a word while she signed to me.

He hates his name. He’ll probably ground me if he knows I told you. T-H-E-O-D-O-R-E. I call him T, but he hates it. People used to call him Theo, before he started going by Knight.

My eyes slid to Knight’s, trying to fit the name to the man in front of me. *Theo*. It was a strong name. He was a strong man. I thought it fitting. I signed *thank you* again and allowed him to tug me out of the kitchen.

He led me out to the truck we rode in last night and opened my door for me. I placed a foot on the running board, but his hand under my elbow gave me the big boost I needed to make it up into the massive beast of a truck. He closed the door and walked around the front, climbing in the driver’s side. As soon

as he started the truck, I rolled the window down for the smoke from my cigarette to escape.

The cool autumn air made me shiver a little, the day still too new for the sun to have warmed away the chill of the night. Knight twisted, rummaging around in the miniscule back seat before he produced a worn and stained pull-over style sweatshirt.

“It ain’t clean, and it probably smells, but it’ll work for now.” I shoved my arms through but didn’t pull it over my head. Only my arms were cold anyway. I took a cautious breath, and he was right. The thing stank to high heaven, but I could still identify traces of *him*. I giggled quietly at that, but I’m not sure why.

He backed out of the space he had parked in last night and I heard the quiet rumble of a motorcycle start up beside us. I turned to look and paled. The big, bald guy with the chain and barbed wire tattoos from last night pulled out behind us. I didn’t know why, but the man scared me.

I turned to Knight. He smirked. “No one’s stupid enough to piss off Chains. He’s coming with, case your father decides to cause a scene.” He laid a hand on my denim clad knee. “You don’t need’a be ‘fraid of him, sweetheart. He’d chew off his own arm ‘fore he hurt you.” He gave my knee a reassuring squeeze.

I cleared my throat. “So...you knew me before?” I asked, ignoring his comments on the behemoth man behind us.

Even though he was driving, he made sure to angle his head so that I could read his lips. “Yeah, I did. I first saw you three years ago. Watched you for a few weeks and then you came into the shop for maintenance. Saw your ID and knew you were too young for me. I waited for three years, watchin’ you from afar.” He stopped speaking and looked at me out of the corner of his eye. “That sounds creepy, but I swear it wasn’t nothin’ like that in my head. Just needed to make sure you were okay. And after you turned eighteen, every time I’d try to approach you, you disappeared, like a butterfly in the wind. There one second, gone the next. That’s why I call you Butterfly.” I pointed to a turn and he took it, following my directions to my father’s house. “I suspected you were avoidin’ me, but then I found out you’re deaf and thought—wait, do you prefer ‘hearing impaired’?” I rolled my eyes and he chuckled. “Okay. Then I found out you’re deaf and thought it was just a coincidence that you always disappeared on me. Until now.”

I blushed again, quietly admitting, “I saw you my first day here, when I was exploring main street. You were in the mechanic shop and I stared at you from across the street until my legs went numb. Since that day, I’ve always watched you, too.” He gave my knee another squeeze while taking another turn I pointed out. My heart leapt into my throat. “It’s that one, with the red car.”

He stopped on the curb, by the mailbox. I looked over my shoulder and saw Chains lowering his kickstand behind us, the barely-there rumble of his bike dying a moment later, sending

my world into silence once again. Knight helped me out of the truck and I noticed thin smoke billowing up into the sky from the backyard. My limbs went numb and my eyes tingled.

I pushed past Knight and ran for the backyard. Just as I threw open the gate, a hand closed around my arm. I looked up, expecting to see Knight, but Chains was there. My stomach flipped a little before I remembered Knight's words in the truck. Chains gave me a slight shake of his head and went through the gate before me. I followed slowly behind him, Knight behind me.

Knight's warm fingers wrapped around mine, and I drew strength from them. Chains rounded the back of the house and held out a hand to stop me. I easily ducked below it, because he was even taller than Knight, and walked around him.

My feet stopped so fast they slipped in the dirt. The backyard was littered with smoldering items. What was left of my mattress, what looked like my clothes, my TV hung from a tree by its power cord, like some kind of morbid piñata. My heart jumped even further into my throat and I bolted for the back door. Chains reached for me, his fingers brushing the back of my shirt before closing around air.

I threw the door open and sprinted to my bedroom. The bedroom door bounced off the wall and I rushed to the closet. I pushed up on my toes, feeling my healing cuts pull open again, and reached into the dark corner of the top shelf. Relief sloshed in my chest as my fingers brushed the corner of the box I kept hidden up there. I reached as far as I could, my ribs

screaming at me to lower my arms, but my fingers only barely brushed the box.

Chains and Knight came skidding into the bedroom a few seconds behind me, the two large men making the small bedroom seem miniscule. Knight came over and placed a hand on my shoulder, gently moving me aside before pulling the box down. I snatched it and cradled it against my chest, my knees going weak. I sank onto the floor, pulling the lid off to peak inside. It was still there. Everything I had left of my mom - pictures, birthday cards, jewelry and one small vial of her ashes. I sighed and looked up at Knight, tears in my eyes. He knelt in front of me, knuckling away the ones that escaped. Suddenly he stood straight, spinning towards the door. I glanced around his legs to see Chains blocking the doorway, his massive arms crossed over his chest. I noticed for the first time that, although he was packed with muscle, he also carried extra weight, like a linebacker or professional heavyweight wrestler.

My errant thoughts scattered as I saw my dad's face, purple, pinched and angry. It looked like Knight was yelling at him, his arms flailing and pointing towards the backyard and the smoldering remains of my belongings. I didn't care about that stuff. The things that truly mattered were in this box. I clutched it to my chest and hid behind Knight's legs again, one hand clutching the denim behind his knee in a death grip, my cheek resting against his thigh as I peeked around him. He laid a hand on my head, holding my head to his thigh protectively.

My dad took a step towards Knight and I. Even though he was still outside the room, Chains still blocking his entry, I jerked away from him violently and fell on my ass, scooting away from him before I realized I had moved. But Chains threw a hand out, planting it on my dad's forehead, stopping his progress. He gave it a slight shove, sending my dad back a few steps. Without a word, Chains pointed down the hallway. My dad yelled something and tried to advance another step. Chains shoved him hard in the chest and my dad stumbled and lost his balance, sliding down the wall on the opposite side of the hallway. He scrambled to his feet and threw me a nasty glare.

“They can't protect you, bitch. They're still going to find you.” Then he disappeared down the hall. I felt the slam of his bedroom door reverberate through the floor of the house. Knight bent down and lifted me, cradling me against his chest again, the box cradled against mine. Although being carried like this so often made me feel a little bit like a child, I didn't care at that moment because it felt good to be safe in his arms. Chains led the way through the house and out the front door, Knight and I following. Chains climbed on his bike while Knight settled me into the front seat of the truck. Chains' bike rumbled to a start and he pulled away from the curb while Knight climbed in the driver's seat. I ran my hand along the lid of the box, thanking whatever deity was listening that my father hadn't found it.

Knight passed me his pack of cigarettes. “Figured you might want one'a these.” Then he put the truck in gear and

pulled away, leaving my dad's house behind us.

Chapter Nine



Maggie

I thought Knight would take me back to the clubhouse but he turned the opposite direction, headed to the highway. I sent him a questioning look.

“Told you, I need’a grab a few things from Walmart. Now, so do you.”

I sighed. “I can’t. I don’t have any money. I left my purse there. He probably stole my money and cards and burned the rest.”

“It’s okay, B. I got it.” He placed his hand on my knee again, seemingly unable to go any length of time without touching me. His touch brought comfort but it wasn’t enough.

I pushed his hand off and he sent me a confused, almost hurt look. I flipped up the console in the middle seat and slid all the way over, pulling my legs up and curling into a small ball against his side, tucking my toes under the edge of his thigh so that my knees were practically shoved into his armpit. His arm was trapped between my knees and my chest, his hand still resting on the shifter. His face relaxed and he leaned over and pressed a quick kiss to my hair, wrapping his arm tightly around my thighs and gripping my shins. I closed my eyes and let his warm, smokey forest smell comfort me, my head resting on his bicep.

A half hour later, we exited the highway into the nearest town with a department store. He pulled into a Walmart not far from the exit and helped me out. When we walked in, he grabbed a basket and steered it towards me. I took it, and he grabbed another.

“I’m goin’a go grab the stuff I need. You go get whatever girly shit you need and I’ll meet you in the clothes, ‘kay?” I bit my lip but nodded anyway. He walked off in one direction and I headed towards the makeup section. I grabbed a mascara, a few cheap eyeshadows, a pale rose lip gloss and a deep plum lipstick. Two shades of blushes went in the basket next. Then I grabbed a box of tampons, my favorite shampoo and conditioner, body wash and a razor and shaving gel. I looked at the blow dryers and settled for the cheapest one they had that came with a diffuser, then I grabbed some curl defining, anti-frizz goop and headed to the clothes. He wasn’t there yet, so I walked around, grabbing a few things.

One black, long sleeve and a couple colorful short sleeve t-shirts, a few tank tops in varying colors, a plain black hoodie that was way too big for me but looked comfy as hell and was very soft on the inside, a loose-knit, cold shoulder style sweater, a few pairs of leggings, a pair of frayed, artfully torn jean shorts, and two pairs of jeans. That was more than I wanted him to spend, but it would get me through about a week before needing to do laundry. I stopped by the underwear section and threw in a package of boy shorts. I grabbed two plain white bras but put one back and grabbed a pretty black lace one with matching, high-cut bikini style underwear. I buried them under the clothes. A pale pink, satin and lace sleep set caught my eye. I ran my fingers over it and pulled it off the rack, admiring it. It came with a tiny pair of satin and lace shorts. It was so pretty and shimmery. I glanced at the price tag and quickly put it back on the rack, running my fingers over the slippery bodice one more time before turning and grabbing a package of multicolored socks instead.

Just as I dropped the socks into the basket, Knight walked over, pulling his cart behind him. I glanced at mine and cleared my throat. "I hope I didn't get too much stuff. I can put stuff back. I wasn't sure how much you wanted me to get. I got enough for about a week." He rolled his eyes.

"I told you to get clothes, not a few outfits. C'mon." He grabbed my cart, pulling them both behind him. On his way past me, he grabbed the pink sleep set I had been admiring and dropped it into his basket. I blushed, knowing he had seen me admiring it and cared enough to get it for me. I mumbled a

quiet “Thank you,” trailing behind him. He looked at some of the clothes I had stashed in my cart before ambling through the ladies’ section, pulling things off the racks, putting some in our carts, putting others back on the rack. Some things, he held up to me. Most of what he held up was cute. I only shook my head at one or two things. He even threw in a bikini. It was plain, pale pink and *tiny*.

In the end, both our carts were overflowing by the time he guided us towards the back of the store, into the shoe section. He held up a few pairs of shoes, and I studied them, before settling on the black tennis shoes that looked like they were splattered with neon paints, the tan, lace up boots that looked like they would hold up against rain and snow, and a pair of brown knee-high boots that would be perfect for the fall. As we turned the aisle to head to the front and the cashiers, another pair of shoes caught my eye. I told myself to keep moving, that he was spending way too much money on me already, but I just couldn’t walk away from them. They were black, combat style boots with a chunky, three-inch heel. They could be laced all the way up or folded halfway down into a stylish cuff. They reminded me of his own biker boots, except these were decorated with silver studs and chains. Knight reached over and grabbed my size.

“Wait, maybe I can put the other ones back. You know, trade one pair for these.” The words sounded like a question but he smirked at me, dropping the boots on top of the mound of clothes in my basket.

In the check out line, the young blonde in front of us openly stared at Knight, blushing furiously, while the elderly lady behind the register shot him nervous glances. He seemed oblivious, studying the trash news magazines. After about the tenth glance, I was getting irritated and felt my face heat. The next time she glanced over, she looked at me and her eyes widened before shifting to him furiously. My hands began to shake and I took a step towards her. Knight placed a hand on my hip, pulling me close by my belt loop and kissing the top of my head. I glanced up at him, a frown marking my brow.

“Simmer down, badass. Let her come to her own conclusions.” I started to speak, but he leaned down- way, way down- and pressed a gentle, chaste kiss to my bruised cheekbone, barely a flutter of his lips and gentle as hell.

But fire licked across my skin, tingles following behind it, my body flushing for an entirely different reason. He began to unload the massive wardrobe onto the conveyor belt and topped it with two candy bars, both with peanuts.

I brushed my fingers against his to grab his attention. “I’m allergic to peanuts,” I whispered. He grabbed my hand that was still close to his and put the candy back, grabbing a different brand without nuts.

I watched the total climb, and climb, *and climb*. Knight noticed my gaze and turned the display away from my view. I tried to distract myself by looking at the display beside the register. *Who knew there were so many flavors of lip balm?* One was in a round ball-like container and flavored like

vanilla bean. I pulled it off the rack and turned to Knight, who snatched it and handed it to the clerk without a word.

He swiped his card while I loaded the bags into the carts. I tried really hard not to think about how much this almost-stranger had just spent on me, or what he would want in return. He pushed the cart to the truck and I followed behind, my gut churning. He started the truck and turned on the seat heater on my side before he began stuffing bags into the backseat. He grabbed the oversized hoodie out of the bag and helped me remove his old, stinky one, before helping me into my new one. I removed the sticker and tags while he walked the cart to the cart return a few spaces away. The hoodie completely swallowed me, hanging to the tops of my thighs and down below my fingers. I bunched the material in my fingers and looked at him nervously while he opened the truck's door for me.

“Thank you,” I whispered quietly. “Nobody has ever done something so nice for me before. I can't pay you back until I'm able to get back on my feet, but...I can work around the clubhouse? Maybe I can clean the rooms or something?” I squinted up at him, the sun right over his shoulder. He moved slightly, shading my eyes, and the considerate move made my stomach flip.

“You ain't got'a pay me back. It wasn't my money. It's club money. This is what we do, y'know. We help people that need help. We got other...occupations, as well, but our main focus is helpin' people who need it.” He brushed a gentle thumb against my cheek, trailing it down to my lips. “I want'a help

you, Maggie. Not 'cause I want anythin' in return. Just 'cause I want'a do it. Is that okay?"

My breath caught in my throat at his kindness and my lips tingled wildly, but I managed a weak nod. "Good. C'mon, let's go get some lunch." He helped me up into the truck and the warm seat immediately relaxed my tense shoulders. I leaned back, putting my feet on the dashboard and nervously bit at my thumbnail through the sleeve bunched in my fist.

I was thankful for his help, the club's help. But I didn't like the idea of not being able to pay them back. It just wasn't in my nature. I had been on my own, taking care of myself, since my mom died. I wasn't used to the help of others.

I was so lost in my thoughts, trying to come up with some way I could pay the club back without insulting Knight, that I didn't realize we'd pulled up to a small diner. From the outside, it looked like any other diner. Bright colors, lots of windows and a small awning over the door.

The day had warmed and I briefly considered taking off my hoodie, but left it on, in case the diner was cold.

Knight took my hand after helping me out of the truck and my gut clenched at the easy way he did it, like it was second nature. I adjusted our grip, threading my fingers through his loosely. Although he was ahead of me a step, I saw the lifting of his cheek in a small smile. I suspected he liked it when I touched him.

He had already admitted to watching me for years. He touched me all the time. He said he wants to take care of me.

My gut clenched again, followed by a hoard of butterflies.

Does Knight have feelings for me? My eyes widened as I stared at the back of his head, loose strands of his wavy hair blowing in the slight breeze.

Knight opened the door and released my hand to place it lightly on my lower back and usher me through ahead of him. A pretty bottle blonde behind the diner counter smiled and greeted him, but I missed her words. He responded as he led us toward a booth in the corner. My feet were beginning to ache again and I trailed behind him a few steps, limping slightly and admiring the décor of the diner.

It was classic Fifties theme, the floor checked with white and black tiles, black and white pictures of classic cars and old Hollywood movie stars adorning the walls.

We sat at the booth, across from each other and he grabbed two menus from behind the napkin holder and handed one to me. I opened it, glancing over at the woman behind the counter who was staring at me with curiosity and thinly veiled hostility. Embarrassment and shyness clung to my ribs and I tried to hide behind the menu, nervously bunching my sleeve in my free hand again.

My skin prickled with awareness as I felt Knight's gaze on me. It felt like a physical caress against my skin, like warm, silk sheets on a summer night. I tried to sink deeper into the booth and the menu, suddenly overwhelmed with the intensity of my feelings for this man that I just met.

Knight reached over to pull the menu down so he could see my face. If he noticed my flush, he didn't comment on it. "What d'you want? You want me to order for you? I know you're not used to speakin' so much. Your throat sore?"

I nodded wordlessly, gently clearing the ache, which was slowly crawling toward full-on pain. I had spoken more in the last 12 hours than I had in years and it had really put a strain on my previously unused vocal cords. They ached with an itchy pain I was unaccustomed to.

I laid my menu on the table and pointed to a picture of an omelet that looked really good. I read the description next to it, then pointed to the word *mushrooms*, glancing up to be sure he was looking. Of course, he was. He watched intently, his body leaning towards me as if I had his entire attention. I pointed to *mushrooms* again and shook my head, then pointed to *bacon* and nodded my head.

"You want extra bacon?" I twisted my mouth to the side and frowned, a small look of frustration.

I gently cleared my throat again and whispered, "Extra crispy, please. With extra cheese."

He smirked and said, "You got it, Butterfly. No mushrooms, crispy bacon, extra cheese. Coffee?" I thought about the hot drink and my cold toes and nodded. "Creamer?" Again, I nodded. "Flavored?"

I huffed a laugh at our one-sided conversation and nodded again, whispering, "French Vanilla, please."

He set his menu aside, taking mine from my hands when I tried to hide behind it again. An elderly woman with expertly styled brown hair was staring at Knight's back, the leather cut he wore, and barely managed to hide her frown, her mouth pinched in displeasure. I stared at her until she finally glanced up at me. I flattened my mouth and narrowed my eyes, nostrils flaring in my best *fuck off* look.

Knight caught my expression and glanced over his shoulder at the woman, who's expression was now semi-shock. Her eyes flew to his, then widened further as his attractiveness registered. His mouth split into a grin as he looked back at me. "Such a badass. Y'know, 'tween the two of us, most would think I'm the one to fear at this table."

I smirked, my cheeks warming at how his words felt strangely like praise, the same as when he'd called me a badass back in the checkout line at the store.

The bottle blonde came over, again barely hiding her interest in me. Her eyes flicked back and forth between me and Knight briefly before she leaned down to greet him, kissing his cheek. She never broke eye contact with me, despite the fact that his whole body tensed, flinching away from her mouth. I had the sudden, irrational urge to piss on Knight's leg and mark him as mine. Instead, I unconsciously pulled my braid over my shoulder, trying instinctively to hide in my hair, and dropped my eyes to my hands resting in my lap, fingers plucking at the overly long sleeves.

When she straightened, I raised my eyes again, expecting to find Knight looking at the pretty waitress leaning against his booth, but his eyes were on me, a soft smile playing with the short beard around his mouth. My skin tingled everywhere he looked, his intense stare making it seem like he was trying to memorize every detail about me.

“D’you want anything with your omelet, B?” My eyes flicked to the woman and back to him, my eyes dropping again as I shook my head in one small, jerky movement.

His hand suddenly appeared in front of my face and even though I knew he wouldn’t hurt me, I *knew* it deep in my bones, I still flinched away from his fingers. He ignored the flinch and gently lifted my face with a knuckle under my chin. My eyes met his, and instead of concern or pity or anything else I might’ve been able to imagine seeing in his eyes, I saw anger. I flinched again, trying to escape the hold on my chin and the anger in his eyes.

“Where’s my badass that was ready to fight two old ladies?” The way his mouth moved in his beard had my thighs clenching together. My eyes flicked up to the waitress, who now looked severely annoyed, borderline angry, at being ignored. When I looked back to Knight, he smirked. “B, this,” he jerked his head in the waitress’s direction, “is Amy. She hangs around the club sometimes.”

Amy’s mouth was pursed in annoyance and anger, although her eyes were still shining with that vicious look of a woman with a new piece of gossip. I smiled shyly at her but didn’t

greet her verbally. She seemed a bit like a bitch and if she was going to be one, it wasn't going to be because of how I talk.

Amy made a show of checking me out with a smirk that clearly said she found me lacking. I looked back at my sleeve-covered hands. Knight's foot gently pressed down on the top of mine and I glanced back up at him. He was ordering, but his eyes were on me. Once my eyes were raised, he looked back at Amy. "And a coffee, leave room for creamer please."

As soon as he was done speaking, his body language dismissed her, his whole focus back on me. She stared at him a moment longer, nostrils flared and jaw clenched, before sliding her glare to me, allowing her anger to show more forcefully now that he wasn't looking at her. She turned and flounced away.

"She likes you," I whispered. He shrugged, but something in his face told me there was a history there, whether romantic or physical, I didn't know. I pulled my foot out from under his and folded my legs criss-cross applesauce style in the seat, leaning back heavily in the booth. I thought about saying something like *You can tell me* but decided to just wait and see what he'd do.

He watched me for a beat then shrugged. He didn't seem particularly bothered that I knew he had a past with Amy, but he didn't seem happy to talk about it either, though I wasn't sure why. Knight was not the type of man to be embarrassed or ashamed of his actions. His next words settled like lead in my stomach, though.

“She’s a club slut. She hangs ‘round and makes herself available to the brothers.” He seemed to watch me for a reaction, so I kept my face blank, despite the blush creeping up my neck. My eyes slid to Amy, not surprised to see her staring at me again.

I softly cleared my throat, trying to make the achy itch in my vocal cords go away. “*All* the brothers?” I raised an eyebrow.

He shrugged. “Whoever claims her that time. Could be one a night, could be more. She’s there willingly and there’s a reason she keeps comin’ back.” He raised an eyebrow back at me, but before I could respond, Amy came over with our drinks on a tray. She set Knight’s drink in front of him then practically dropped mine on the table, sloshing coffee over the rim before sliding a bowl of creamer to me with more force than necessary.

Knight frowned at her but I just looked at him and signed, *Your friend is a bitch.*

Amy sneered at me and I could see the laughter in her eyes, the enjoyment she found in seeing the justification of her earlier assessment of me, but she left the table without another word.

“What’s that mean, B?” Knight tried to repeat the signs. The only one he got right was *bitch* which sent me into a fit of giggles.

I repeated the signs, mouthing the words with them. He smiled, his straight, white teeth flashing in the early afternoon

sunlight streaming through the windows. He repeated the signs and I nodded encouragingly.

“You should sign more often when you speak. Maybe I’ll catch some of it.”

My brows knit in confusion. “You want to learn sign language?”

He shrugged. “Why not? It’d make communication easier on you, right?”

I nodded. “I can speak, but I don’t like to. And I can read lips, when I can see the person. But it’s kind of awkward to just be staring at someone’s mouth during conversation.” His attention was on my hands and only then did I realize I was signing.

He started to respond, but Amy shoved a plate in front of him. I glanced up at her smiling face. “Here ya go, sugar. I added some extra potatoes for you.” She winked at Knight and I had that urge to piss on his leg again. I struggled to hold in a laugh. Again, she practically threw my plate at me and my omelet ended up half on the table. I signed *bitch* again and Knight’s Adam’s apple bobbed with laughter. Amy stomped off.

Knight didn’t try to speak to me while he ate and I was grateful. People that talk to me with their mouth full are disgusting. I took the time to watch him, the way his throat moved when he swallowed, the way he took bites that would be too big for me to chew, how he held his mug, using only two fingers and his thumb, instead of using the handle. We

were half through our meal when he pulled his phone out and brought it to his ear.

“Hey, Smoke. Yeah.” He looked at me briefly then dropped his eyes to his suddenly interesting coffee, a wrinkle in his brow. “Look into it. I want’a know where they got the shit from.” He listened for another minute. “A cookout? The ol’ ladies comin’? ‘Kay. I’ll let her know.” He ended the call then put his phone back in his pocket. “The boys want’a throw you a welcome party.”

Party? I signed, figuring he’d understand.

“Yeah, we usually throw parties for newcomers and Smoke, Chains and Shark have taken a likin’ to you.” Something dangerously close to pride swelled in my chest.

They like me? I mouthed the words this time.

“Yeah, B, they like you. C’mon, let’s get back. The ol’ ladies and hang-arounds’ll be getting shit set up. You got lots to unpack when we get back.”

He made to get up but I stopped him with gentle fingers on his hand, resting them against the butterfly tattoo. *Old ladies? That’s not very nice Knight,* I signed with a raised eyebrow and scrunched nose.

“That my name?” He repeated the sign, both hands shaped like the sign for K, left hand to his right hip and his right to the right shoulder.

I nodded, pointing to him, signing his name, then spelling it out and repeating the sign.

I cleared my throat. “Why do you call them old ladies? Will I be stuck with a bunch of sixty-year-olds all evening?”

He laughed, his Adam’s apple bobbing. “No, an ol’ lady’s a biker’s wife, kind’a. Some marry, but for others the title’s enough. Ol’ ladies get cuts, like mine, ‘cept theirs have property patches on ‘em. You’ll see back at the clubhouse.” He got up and held his hand out to me, leading us out into the warm afternoon. I took off my sweatshirt on the way to the truck, limping slightly on my injured feet.

When he pulled out of the lot, nerves hit my belly again. *I hope they like me.*

CHAPTER TEN



I had two prospects bring her bags into the room while I tended to her feet. Her bandages were stained with blood, even though she hadn't complained. She'd put her feet on the dash again, somethin' I noticed she did often, and I saw the blood. I'd carried her into the bathroom and set her on the counter, kneelin' in front of her to gently pry the bandages off. I washed her feet gently, then medicated and bandaged them 'gain.

"Doc left you some pain killers, for your ribs, if you want 'em."

No, thank you. I'm okay right now.

Since I mentioned she should sign more often, she'd stopped talkin' and had taken to signin', but she still mouthed the words for my benefit, whisperin' so softly every now and then. I tried to follow her hands, takin' notes. The guys'd give me shit if they knew I wanted to learn sign for my woman, but I didn't care. She was mine, and this is how she spoke. I'd learn Spanish, Italian, hell, I'd learn fuckin' Latin, if it was the language she spoke. I'd do it for her, 'cause she's mine. Simple as that.

"You let me know if they start buggin' you, 'kay?" She nodded. I helped her off the counter. "I had the prospects bring your bags in here, but we can move them to a different room, if you don't want'a stay with me." My heart thumped in my chest as I watched a blush spread across her pale skin.

She was quiet and still for a moment and I'd've traded my left nut to know what she was thinkin', makin' her blush that hard. I'd let her have her own room if she wanted, but I hoped like hell she wanted to stay with me.

I want to stay with you, if that's okay. I was noticin' that sign language seemed rudimentary in grammar, but a few signs were startin' to look familiar.

"Yeah, B, you can stay here. I'd like that." She let out a breath, like she'd been nervous I'd turn her away. *If only you knew, Maggie. If only you knew.*

By the time we finished unpackin' her things, and I'd cleared two drawers in the dresser for her, Smoke was bangin' on my door. "C'mon Prez! The party's startin'!"

I opened the door while she picked through her clothes. Lookin' for somethin' to change into, to get out of Pita's baggy clothes, I assumed. Smoke and I pounded knuckles. "We'll be down in a few minutes. B's gonna change and I gotta throw on my trunks." Smoke sent me a chin lift and then looked at Maggie, who was watchin' us.

"Hey, Maggie. How you feelin'?"

She opened her mouth to respond but her eyes cut to me and she blushed lightly. *God, I love her skin.* Usually, the thought of *loving* anythin' on a woman would'a sent me runnin' for the hills, but I felt a peace around Maggie that I hadn't felt in a long, long time. Whatever this was 'tween us, it just felt natural, like this was always goin'a happen, no matter what I'd done in the past. I was just inexplicably drawn to her, like she was the gravity that held me to Earth, drawin' me into her orbit.

I'm alright. My feet are sore, but I'm okay.

He looked at me out of the corner of his eye but smiled at my Butterfly. "Good. I'll see you down there, 'kay? We're goin'a show you a real biker welcome." He winked then turned and walked away.

"I'm goin'a throw on my trunks, 'kay? Put your suit on and we'll head down." She nodded, pullin' the bikini I had picked out of one of her drawers. I eyed it again, jealousy sittin' in my stomach like lead. I'd picked it out thinkin' about how small it was and how much skin it'd show me, but now I realized all the brothers would see just as much. Anger burned in my gut,

but I hid it, flexin' my nostrils so that damn twitch wouldn't give me 'way.

She was skittish 'round anger, even mine, though she seemed to trust me more than anyone else. I brushed her cheek as I walked by her, snaggin' my trunks out of the dresser as I passed.

When I came out of the bathroom, she was wearin' a pair of tight daisy dukes with a frayed hem and a black tank top. The shorts barely covered her ass and the tank hugged her like a second skin, showin' how her shoulder blades and hip bones protruded from her tiny frame. I could see the strings'a her bikini stickin' out'a the waist'a her shorts and tied 'round her neck. She was puttin' her hair into a tighter braid, wincin' as her ribs protested the position'a her arms. She tied the braid off with the elastic band Ma'd used earlier and flicked it over her shoulder. Even braided, it hung nearly to her ass. I walked over and put one hand on the side of her neck, holdin' onto the end'a her braid and givin' it a gentle tug. "Love your hair. Never, ever cut it off." She blushed but nodded, her eyes shyly meetin' mine in the mirror over the dresser. I took her hand and led her down to the main room then out the back door.

She stopped followin' me as she took in the scene. Music pumped loudly through the speakers, booze was flowin' freely, and the grills were packed with food. Brothers were everywhere, some wearin' swim trunks, some wearin' jeans, but all'a them wearin' cuts. Some women wore bikinis, some wore one-piece suits, some were fully clothed, and then there were the club sluts, most'a them half naked already. I glanced

over my shoulder at her pale face, eyes shinin' with fear. It was fucked up, but that fear kind'a turned me on.

"C'mon, Butterfly. You're safe here, 'member?" She trembled a little, her wide eyes meetin' mine.

What if they don't like me?

The vulnerability in those words made my chest feel too small and the tips of my ears burn. "They'll like you, B. But if you're worried, just stay by me, 'kay? Or Smoke, or Shark or Chains. We'll be with you the whole time, yeah?" She took a deep breath, her small tits pushin' 'gainst the hem of her tank top. But her eyes hardened and she took my hand 'gain.

I led her into the yard, stoppin' to greet brothers and ol' ladies and takin' the time to introduce her to all'a them. I knew she wouldn't 'member the names, but she smiled at each'a them, though she did stay quiet, her hand either grippin' mine tightly, or wrapped snugly 'round the edge'a my cut. I led her over to a table near the pool where Smoke and Shark were loungin', Jessie and Kylie on their laps. Shark sent us a chin lift with a smile for B while Smoke stood to kiss her cheek. I growled at him but he just rolled his eyes. The girls at the table eyed her with open curiosity 'fore Jessie spoke up.

"Hey, you're the new girl, right?" B was lookin' 'round the yard and didn't notice that she'd spoken. I gently tugged her hand and when she looked at me, I gestured with my eyes and a small nod that Jessamine'd spoken. Her cheeks colored but she looked at Jessie, waitin' for her to speak again. Jessie took

a moment to assess her, then spoke again. “I’m Jessamine, but everyone calls me Jessie. This is Kylie. You’re new right?”

Jessie held her hand out for a shake. Maggie accepted the proffered hand, softly from the looks’ a it, and then looked to me. I read the question in her eyes and released the hand that was still wrapped in mine, lettin’ her make the decision.

She spoke, but signed as well. “I’m Maggie. It’s nice to meet you.” She spoke almost too softly to hear over the music, but of course, she wouldn’t’a known that.

Jessie quickly covered her shock with a gentle smile. “Would you like something to drink? We have beers, margaritas or spiked ciders and lemonades.” Jessie was attentive and caught on quickly that Maggie would need to read her lips, so she stayed turned towards Maggie as she spoke, even though she pointed to a row of large, ice filled horse troughs behind her.

My Butterfly asked for a spiked cider and Jessie got off Smoke’s lap to go to one of the coolers nearby, returnin’ with a cider for B, a spiked lemonade for herself and Buds for me and Smoke.

I opened Maggie’s before handin’ it to her then settled into one of the chairs in the shade of the umbrella. She shifted her weight and I glanced down, worried ‘bout her feet, but noticed she’d removed one flip flop. I glanced back up at her, an eyebrow quirked in question. Her ever-present flush deepened a shade.

I can feel the beat of the music. I can hear it a little, but I'm used to feeling it. Her eyes cut to Jessie and Kylie anxiously, relaxin' when she didn't see any sign'a hostility or humor.

Kylie was a quiet, kind person. She ain't much for talkin', but she was sweet as could be. The guys didn't mess with her much, mostly just waitin' 'til she made her move, but she always seemed partial to Shark. I knew they were good friends, and I knew he took care of her- sexually and otherwise. If I didn't know better, I'd suspect there was more to it, but I was pretty sure there wasn't. As far as Kylie was concerned, they were just good friends.

I tugged B to me, settlin' her on my knee in the shade. Her pale skin had already pinkened a shade. Kylie pushed a tube of sunscreen at me with her elbow. She might be quiet and kind, but she was bossy as shit, too. I took the sunscreen with an amused smirk. Maggie flinched away from me when I began to rub it into her exposed skin, but quickly relaxed. I made a note to make sure my movements were more noticeable to her from now on. She only flinched when she wasn't expectin' the touch.

She took the tube and rubbed sunscreen into her arms while I did her shoulders, then she rubbed it into her legs. She had freckles on her shoulders and back extending up her neck into her hairline. I leaned in and kissed the sprinkle of cinnamon-colored spots on her shoulder while she rubbed sunscreen on her face and neck. She didn't flinch at my touch, but I felt the twitch in her muscles, her shoulder pressin' into my mouth a little.

She relaxed into me, my hand restin' on her hip, and took a swig'a her beer. I listened to Jessie and Kylie quietly chatter about B's injuries, though from the sound of it they didn't know the extent of what'd happened, while I watched her take in the scene 'round us.

Bash, an older, fat, brother with a long beard came out of the clubhouse in a way-too-small black speedo. He strutted, shakin' his hairy beer belly, then flexed by the side'a the pool before belly floppin' in. The water sprayed us and she squealed at the cold temperature, laughin' loudly, but holdin' her ribs, which must've twinged when she jumped away from the water. Her laughter brought a smile to my face but I placed a gentle hand over hers on her ribs.

"Holy shit! Do you see that?" I looked over to see what Jessie was talkin' 'bout, but she was lookin' at me with a shit-eatin' grin on her face. Kylie wore a soft smile, her eyes flickin' between B and me. "Holy shit. Is that a smile?" Jessie stood and leaned over the table while squintin' at me dramatically and the lingerin' smile on my face died. "It was! It was a smile!" She poked my cheek.

Smoke smacked her on the ass. "Leave it alone, woman. Don't piss him off. This party's for Maggie." Jess seemed only slightly chastised, her smile remainin' but slightly dimmed, her eyes still bright.

Maggie tensed 'gainst me, and I squeezed my hand on her hip, followin' her gaze. Amy was headed our way, wearin' a bright red bikini with a thong bottom stretched high on her

hips and ridiculously tall black stripper heels. I felt B tuck her own feet behind one'a my legs and gave her hip another squeeze, rubbin' my thumb back and forth just as Amy reached us.

“Hey, girls. I see you met the new girl. I'd ask her name, but it wouldn't do me any good.” She sighed dramatically. “I can't understand the way those deaf people talk.” Amy laughed, but the rest'a us didn't. My Butterfly ducked her head, pulling her hair over her shoulder. I realized it as the safety blanket it was - tryin' to hide 'hind her hair, even if it was in a braid.

“God, would you shut up? You're always so nasty, Amy. Honestly, guys, why do y'all keep her around?” Kylie spoke quietly, but with strength in her voice, her pretty lips twisted into annoyance and disgust.

Amy glared at her, 'fore sliding a sweet smile my way. 'Fore I registered what was happenin', Amy was straddlin' the thigh not occupied by B, who jumped out of my lap faster than she would've if I'd been on fire. I snagged her by the back pocket'a her tiny shorts at the same time I pushed Amy off me and stood.

“You disrespect Maggie like that 'gain and I'll ban your ass. Apologize to her.” When she looked at B with distaste, I took a threatening step toward her. “Now, Amy!” Maggie backed 'way from us, her fear of confrontation reflected harshly in her face and body language. Chains appeared 'hind her, placin' an arm softly around her shoulders. My jealousy spiked, but I knew he was only comfortin' her while I dealt with Amy.

“Why should I apologize to her? She just got here last night. I’ve been part of the club for a decade. I don’t owe her anything,” Amy said, as if she had any authority here, flicking her fake blond hair over her shoulder. “Besides,” she smirked, “it’s not like she could hear me, even if I did apologize. C’mon, baby. We both know she can’t give it to you like I can. I bet she even sounds like that when she moans.” Amy laughed throatily and ran her hand down the front of my torso, which was bare beneath my cut.

Maggie shrank further into Chains’ side. Jessie jumped so fast, Shark didn’t have a chance to grab her and I didn’t see it comin’. She grabbed Amy’s wrist, yankin’ her hand off my bare chest ‘fore I even had the chance to step away from it, then used her hold on her arm, and one hand planted between Amy’s fake tits and *shoved* her backward, into the deep end of the pool.

A group surrounded us, ready to protect the newest member of our club. Jessie stalked to the edge of the pool just as Amy surfaced, gaspin’ and coughin’ up water. She leaned down to fist Amy’s hair in her left hand and drew back her right, landin’ a vicious blow to Amy’s right cheek. “I know you can understand *me*, bitch, so listen close. You touch Knight again and you’ll draw back a God damned stump. Maggie may be scared of everything including her own shadow, but I ain’t and I will chop your hands off if you ever touch what don’t belong to you again.” When Amy didn’t respond, Jessie dunked her and then yanked her closer by the fistful of hair. “You get me, bitch? You disrespect Prez or his woman again, and I’ll hold

you under ‘til the bubbles stop.” Amy glared at her, and Jessie shoved her back under the water again, usin’ the momentum to push herself into a standin’ position.

I walked over to Maggie and wrapped an arm around her, pullin’ her ‘way from Chains and into my chest. When Amy surfaced again, lookin’ remarkably similar to a naked mole rat wearin’ clown makeup, I spoke up. “Show yourself out, Amy. You can come to the next party and try again to show B the respect she deserves.” Amy gasped then huffed as she ungracefully made her way out of the pool.

Jessie and Kylie came over to a shakin’, scared Maggie. I refused to let go of her, even as Jessie tried to embrace her. Maggie shrank ‘way, curlin’ further into my side ‘neath my cut and I laid my hand on the back’a her head, hopin’ to offer her security, as I spoke to Jessie. “Maggie don’t do well with confrontation, Jess. Y’scared her. You got’a give her time to calm down.”

Kylie came closer, layin’ a gentle, small hand on Maggie’s arm. Maggie flinched and peaked up at her, because even though Kylie *was* small, she was still bigger than Maggie. “It’s okay, Maggie. We won’t hurt you, and we won’t allow anyone else to, either. Jessie is vicious when she’s protecting people she cares about, but she would cut her fingers off before she hurt you, okay?” She gently pulled Maggie into a hug. Maggie went reluctantly, her fingers wrapped tightly ‘round my cut still, so that I was forced to take the step with her. When Kylie released her, Jessie took a tentative step forward, her hands held up placatingly. Instead of hugging Maggie, she gave her

space, but did squeeze her hand, gently runnin' her fingers over a small bruise on Maggie's arm.

"This," she said as she gently fingered the bruise, "will never happen again, if I can help it. I promise. I'm sorry I made you nervous, Maggie. I didn't think."

B was pale, eyes wide as she looked 'round at the group'a people gathered for the cat fight. She took a step back into my side, her fingers cold and her palms sweaty with nerves where her hand gripped mine. I pulled her back to the table and settled her on my lap as Pita appeared by our side, huggin' her tightly and signin' somethin' that made B's eyes shine with wetness.

She looked over at Jessie and Kylie, her flush deepenin'. *I'm sorry. I guess I just don't cope well with outward displays of anger.* Pita translated the words as Maggie's hand fell unconsciously to the yellowed bruising covering half her face before resting on the marred skin of her lower belly. Jessie and Kylie softened further while Smoke and Shark shared a look that promised retribution for my B's pain. I stalled Maggie's hand, pullin' it away from her belly and holdin' it in mine as I ran my other hand over her hip, onto the curve of her ass, testin' how much she'd let me get away with. She tensed for only a second before settlin' more fully into my lap, leanin' 'gainst my chest, so I tucked two fingers into the tiny back pocket of her shorts.

"Girl, you have no idea how long I've wanted to do that! I would *pay* to watch that scene again! Oh my God! Knight!

Aren't there cameras around here? *Please* tell me one of them caught that!" Jessie slapped a hand on the table 'tween us, her adrenaline obviously still spikin'.

I chuckled and nodded and B smiled slightly. I ran a finger over her bruised cheek, anxious to see that look'a happiness without the purple hidin' most of it. "Want'a go for a swim, Butterfly?"

She huffed a laugh through her nose. *I would, but who knows if that pool is sanitary now.*

We all burst into laughter 'gain but I urged her to stand, followin' suit and removin' my cut. She slipped her shirt over her head and my mouth went dry. Kylie and Jessie gasped loudly but only shared a look'a horror 'tween themselves as Kylie's eyes shimmered with immediate tears. She turned her face away, I suspected 'cause she thought the pity might make B uncomfortable.

When Maggie shimmied her shorts down her pale legs, I almost swallowed my tongue. The bikini was smaller than I'd thought it'd be, nearly indecently small on the bottom, barin' the bottom half'a her ass cheeks and barely coverin' her pussy. The top was no better, and even though she had way smaller tits than I was used to seein' on a woman, the bikini strings tied 'hind her neck plumped them together in a way that made me want'a fall on my knees and bury my face 'tween them.

She glanced at me and saw my reaction, then quickly scanned the others near us, probably only now thinkin' 'bout people seein' her bruises and scars. She flushed bright red

from hairline to tits and shyly reached for her shirt again but I snatched it and threw it over my shoulder to the chair with my cut.

“Holy damn, look at that prime piece! I call dibs! I’m fuckin’ that tonight!” Before I even had the chance to turn and see who Brave was talkin’ ‘bout, a ruckus came from behind us and I turned to see what was happenin’. Chains was on top’a Brave, pummelin’ his pretty-boy face.

B whimpered harshly and made herself impossibly small, shrinkin’ into my side, hidin’ her face in my ribs again. She was already plastered to my side but somehow wiggled closer, tremblin’, and I’m pretty sure if she could’a, she would’a climbed under my skin to hide. I ran a hand over her hair before cuppin’ the back’a her head while leadin’ us over to the scene’a the fight. She resisted, but I thought it was a good moment for her to learn that not all men were willin’ to hurt women. Pita trailed ‘hind us as I practically dragged Maggie over to the fight.

Brave was holding his own - kind’a - but Chains was rapidly gainin’ the upper hand. A vicious punch landed to Chains’ chin and Maggie gasped harshly, tremblin’ like a leaf. Curses and shouts punctuated the sound of flesh poundin’ flesh. B peaked out of my ribs to peer at Pita, who was signin’ frantically, her eyes on the fight. B shook harder and, somehow, plastered herself to me more tightly, liftin’ my cut to hide under it. Despite the situation, my body registered the fact that she fit ‘gainst me perfectly, her small tits squished against my side.

“That’s Prez’s woman you son of a whore!” Chains grunted the last word when a well-placed jab landed to his ribs. B’s whole body flinched and she covered her own bruised side with a hand.

B looked away from Pita’s signin’, up at me and pointed to the fight then pointed to herself. *They’re fighting because of me?*

I chuckled. “Yeah. That there’s Brave. He said somethin’ ‘bout you that Chains took offense to.” Her eyes slid back to the fight, a slight frown on her face.

She signed to Pita again, but I caught her mouthing the words. *What did he say?*

Pita responded and B trembled again, her nails digging into my side. *Stop them! Why are you just letting them fight?*

I shrugged, but she seemed worried so I ran a hand over her hair ‘gain and said, “Alright, that’s enough.” When Chains landed another blow to Brave’s pretty-boy face, I shouted, “STOP! Chains, you’re scarin’ Maggie.”

He stopped immediately, his eyes findin’ B’s pale, terrified face. He climbed off Brave and held out a hand to help him up, causin’ surprise to flicker across B’s face. Brave accepted the help up, cradlin’ his ribs in the same place that B was cradlin’ hers – with the hand that wasn’t currently trying to claw my liver out.

She released my side and looked up at me, then to Jessie, her face changin’ through a range of emotions, from fear to

determination. She signed somethin' to Pita, who frowned and emphatically shook her head. B pulled 'way from me just a little bit and walked us over to the men who were lookin' at me, waitin' for the shit to hit the fan. Instead, they probably should'a been worried 'bout the little badass standin' in front of them with one hand on her hip and one still tightly grippin' my waist. As we got close to the guys, she took a half a step behind me but looked over at Pita, who stepped forward as she began to sign.

“Brave, would you like to repeat what it is you said before?” Pita translated.

Brave paled a little but shook his head emphatically. “I meant no disrespect, ma'am. I didn't know. It won't happen again, promise.” He ducked his head in apology.

B regarded him carefully then stepped forward. I followed when she reached a hand back and grabbed mine, squeezin' with all the strength her tiny body could muster, her body still tremblin' with fear. She glanced at Jessie again, then to me and her shoulders squared, her tiny jaw gritted in defiance'a that fear. I recognized the body language as her tryin'a be brave and I wondered if she thought bein' here, with me and the club, meant she had to be brave. I thought she meant to tell Brave somethin', but she just looked at him, waitin' for him to meet her eyes.

As soon as he did, though, she raised an arm and slapped him hard 'cross the face, a handprint bloomin' red immediately. She ruined her moment of badassery by rushin'

back and disappearin' into my side a half a second after, apparently 'fraid she might face some backlash. She didn't look away from him though, even as her stubborn resolve to be fearless and strong disappeared, swallowed up by tremors and nerves as her body curled in on itself. I expected her to say somethin' again, but instead she just turned around, tuggin' my arm back 'round her shoulder, keepin' her fingers locked together with mine as she headed back to the table. Guys teased Brave as he rubbed his red cheek. We were almost back to the table when she turned 'round and looked Chains directly in the eyes, no fear this time. She settled back on my lap just as he reached us.

She took a swig'a her cider 'fore grabbin' his hand to look at his knuckles. She gave his hand a sharp tug and he dropped to his knees in front of her. Smoke's and Shark's jaws dropped in surprise, to see Chains kneelin' in front'a her like the queen she was. She grabbed a shirt off the table, no idea who's, and dabbed at his bleedin' knuckles 'fore dabbin' at his drippin' brow and I swear to God I saw the massive, silent, broodin' man blush.

"Thank you," she whispered, and the red in his cheeks deepened. He nodded at her before lumberin' to his feet and walkin' off in search'a more booze.

She looked at me with a small smile, unwrapped the bandages from her feet and chugged the rest of her cider, jumped up, jerked her head at the pool and dove in gracefully. I dove in after her and grabbed her ankle as she tried to swim

away, pullin' her to me. "Such a badass," I whispered, kissin' the tip'a her nose.

Chapter Eleven



Maggie

The rest of the party was fun. I swam with Knight, flirting with intimate touches and small kisses, until my muscles were weak and my skin wrinkled. He pulled me into him, lifting me by the thighs to wrap my legs around his torso. I thought for sure he'd kiss me for real, like I really wanted him to, but he just carried me over to the ladder in the deep end, letting me use him as a boost up so I had a hope and prayer of reaching it.

We drank with Jessie and Kylie, who I liked immensely, and Smoke and Shark, who I no longer feared, but still watched carefully. Shark and Kylie seemed to have something going

on, but Knight told me it was nothing more than a friends-with-benefits situation. But when Kylie thought no one was watching, she looked at Shark the way I looked at Knight. I was pretty sure I had caught Shark giving her the same look a few times, and I seriously doubted they would remain ‘just friends’ for much longer. Smoke and Jessie flirted shamelessly, but she kind of flirted with everyone, including other women, which took some getting used to.

Knight kept me close, constantly touching me, mostly innocent touches - brushing my hair back, helping me fix it into a braid when we got out of the pool, running his hand over my back, or resting it on my hip or thigh. But every now and then, he would let his hand dip lower and possessively cup my ass or hold my ribs with his big hand, his thumbs brushing the underside of my breasts. Something deep inside my belly clenched every time he did that.

The sun had started to go down, throwing the backyard into the shade of the house. Someone lit a massive bonfire while a fat guy in a speedo manned the grills again. Every hour or so, Chains came up to me. He’d give me a chin lift and quirk a brow at me. He never spoke, but I got the feeling he was asking if I was doing okay so I always smiled and gave him a nod. He’d nod back and walk away.

I had asked Knight about that and he just chuckled and said, “Chains don’t talk much, but he’s protective’a you. He had a sister that we don’t talk about much, but ‘cause’a her, he’s probably goin’a follow you ‘round like a shadow.” I assumed

the sister was Stella that I had heard about in the kitchen, but he said they don't talk about her so I didn't pry.

After his last check in, he grabbed one of the mostly naked women as he walked away from me, tossing her over his shoulder and carrying her into the house. Mia had dropped her head, her eyes focusing intently on her feet. When Chains disappeared into the house with the woman - *club sluts* Knight had called them - Mia said she had to work in the morning and needed to go home to get some sleep. Suspicion bubbled in my gut and Knight's eyes darted between Mia and the door where Chains had disappeared. Mia's face burned red and she quickly left, avoiding the same door. He looked to me with a raised eyebrow and I shrugged my shoulders.

When the sun was completely gone, Knight dragged a lounge chair to the edge of the patio, closer to the bonfire but not so close we would sweat. I sat on the chair between his spread thighs, curled into his chest, enjoying his warmth, the alcohol coursing through my system and watching people. They really were like a family here. They joked, laughed, teased, poked and prodded at and traded stories with each other.

Chains came over with two platefuls of food, offering them both to me. One held a burger and a hot dog, the other held a couple ribs and some potato salad.

I smiled at him, straightening up between Knight's legs and folding my legs beneath me. I took the plate with the burger on it. Knight climbed to his feet behind me and pointed to the

tables where all the food was set up. I nodded and picked off a piece of my hamburger bun and shoved it in my mouth. I expected Chains to walk away, but he shocked me by sitting on the ground at my feet.

We ate in companionable silence until Knight returned. A couple of the brothers started dancing with women (obscenely, I admit), some of them heading inside, some of them not bothering and just finding a sturdy surface around the yard. I tried not to watch, tracing the lines of tattoos on Chains and Knight with my eyes instead.

I had always wanted a tattoo but had never really thought much about what I'd want. With all the ink surrounding me, an idea had formed and I was positive I wanted to go through with it.

“Knight,” I questioned softly. He looked up at me in surprise since I had taken to signing instead of speaking. “I think I want a tattoo. Do you think I could do some work around here for some cash so I could get one? Are they very expensive?”

Knight smirked and glanced at Chains. “Chains is our tattoo artist. He'd do it for you.”

I slid my eyes to Chains, but before I even asked he nodded. “Whenever you're ready, Queen.”

It was the first time he'd spoken to me all day, and the first time anyone had called me that. I looked to Knight and signed, *Queen?*

He just smirked and shrugged. I put my plate on the end of the lounge chair and pulled my legs up, curling into Knight's chest again. The food, alcohol and swimming made my eyes grow heavy. Chains stood, gathering our plates before placing a hand on my hair as he walked away. I cuddled closer to Knight, who wrapped his arms around me.



I woke and opened my eyes as Knight leaned down to open the door to the bedroom. He set me gently on my feet when he realized I'd woken.

I need to shower. I smell like pool water. He nodded towards the bathroom and I took that as a go ahead. I showered quickly, using the supplies Knight had bought me, doing a half-ass shave of my legs, then a less half-ass shave of more important bits, before practically stumbling out. I wrapped myself in a towel and realized I didn't bring anything to change into. Again. *Dammit.*

I cracked open the door but Knight wasn't in the room so I slipped out and grabbed my pink sleep set and some underwear out of my drawer in the dresser. I dressed quickly, not wanting to be naked when he came back. I had just finished braiding my hair back when he came back in. He stopped and stared at me, eyes lingering on my body, his gaze like a physical caress and I felt my chest flush in response.

He jerked his eyes to mine and licked his lips before he began to empty his pockets onto the dresser. "I'm goin'a shower too. Make yourself at home, 'kay?" I nodded and he disappeared into the bathroom. I snagged his cigarettes and walked over to the bed. I chose the side away from the door, closer to the wall. I opened the window there and stood by it to smoke. Knight came out a few minutes later, a pair of gym shorts slung low on his hips and my belly clenched hard at the sight of his bare torso, a shivering, electric sensation running over my skin. He ran a towel over his head and tossed the towel on top of the hamper in the corner. I made a mental note to find out where I could wash laundry tomorrow.

He came over to me, plucking the cigarette from my fingers and taking a drag before handing it back. He had taken to sharing my cigarettes at some point during the day but when I tried to think back to when, I couldn't pinpoint it. It just felt... natural.

We finished the cigarette and he flicked it out the window before sliding it shut and taking my hand to lead me to the bed.

We settled in and he flipped the light off. I laid on my side, stiff and trying to convince myself not to cuddle into his side like I had last night. I compromised by rolling over to face him. He laid on his back, one arm behind his head. I slid my cold feet across the bed and pressed my toes to his leg. He looked over at me, rolling onto his side and grabbing me around the waist. He pulled me to him, arranging us so that my face was pressed into his chest, both of his arms securely around my body. One of my legs ended up between his.

His warmth and the security I always felt in his arms dragged me into sleep quickly.

CHAPTER TWELVE



Wakin' with my woman curled up on my chest was somethin' I never wanted to end. I'd always thought that when I found the woman I was meant to be with, I'd fight it and try to act like a tough, badass biker. But it never occurred to me to try to fight whatever was happenin' with Maggie.

Someone told me once that accordin' to Greek mythology, humans were originally created with four arms, four legs and a head with two faces. Fearin' their power, Zeus split them into two separate parts, condemnin' them to spend their lives in search'a their other halves. Layin' in bed with my Butterfly in

my arms, I was certain I'd found mine. I'd never, ever admit that to my brothers, though.

I held her, rubbin' a curl 'tween my fingers and starin' up at the ceilin'. A glance at the alarm clock told me I'd need'a get up soon for Church but I couldn't bring myself to move yet. She sighed, her leg slippin' down mine as she eased into wakefulness. Her nose rubbed in the hairs on my chest as she stretched 'gainst me and my arm tightened 'round her shoulders.

Her face tipped up to mine and her eyes opened, soft with sleep. Her smile was even softer and I found myself returnin' it.

"Mornin', Butterfly. Sleep well?" She nodded, her eyes focused on my mouth.

There'd been many times yesterday I'd wanted to kiss her, really kiss her, but she was still skittish 'bout touch so I was bein' patient and givin' her the time she needed to trust and heal. So, it shocked me when she went up on an elbow, half spread on top'a my chest, half hoverin' over me. The hand restin' on my chest came up and her nails hesitantly scraped through the scruff on my face 'fore the soft pad'a her index finger traced my bottom lip. I risked a gentle kiss to the finger and felt the digit twitch 'gainst my lips 'fore she cupped my cheek, her hand feelin' delicately tiny 'gainst my face.

Her tiny, pink tongue poked out to wet her bottom lip 'fore she swallowed heavily. Then she leaned down and placed a soft, closed-lipped kiss 'gainst my mouth. It was the first kiss

she'd initiated, and the first time she'd touched me when she wasn't seekin' comfort, tryin' to get my attention or hidin'.

She pulled back and looked down at me, her cheeks flushed. I cupped the side'a her neck, notin' again how small she was when my hand wrapped nearly all the way 'round it, and pulled her back down to me. My kiss was harder than hers had been and when I ran my tongue 'long her bottom lip, I felt her hesitation 'fore she opened her mouth, just a little bit. I patiently showed her the way'a the kiss, nippin' at her lips and urgin' her tongue out to play with mine.

When she grew bold and sucked on my tongue, I wrapped an arm 'round her torso, rollin' us so quickly that she let out a surprised squeak. I hovered over her, my hands planted in the sheets on either side'a her shoulders. I let some'a my urgency into the kiss, resistin' the urge to grind my hard-on into her.

We kissed 'til she began to squirm under me, one leg wrappin' shyly 'round the back'a my thigh. I let her have a little'a my weight, not grindin' against her but lettin' her feel how hard I was for her. She gasped, turnin' her head to the side, but her hands tightly gripped my wrists on both sides'a her shoulders . I dropped to one elbow and moved my lips over her cheek, gently bitin' the softly squared corner'a her jawline 'fore moving down the soft column'a her throat. I buried my nose in the sensitive skin under her ear and inhaled. She smelled like midnight on a damp spring night, slightly earthy with a hint'a that *it's gonna rain soon* smell.

I groaned at her scent and my hips ground into her a little harder 'fore I could stop them. A breathy moan 'scaped her lips, her own hips risin' a fraction to meet mine, her head tiltin' to give me more access. Sparks went off 'hind my eyelids and I bit her a little harder, right where her neck and shoulder met. Her gasp ruffled my hair where she pressed her cheek to my head, her hips risin' more confidently, grindin' her warm pussy 'gainst my thigh. My Butterfly liked it a little rough, then. I decided to test how rough I could get.

I dropped to both forearms and fisted one hand in the hair at the base'a her skull, pullin' her head back to cover the column'a her throat in love bites and kisses. Every few kisses, I'd test her flesh with my teeth, see how far she'd let me go. One particularly rough bite that I knew would, at the very least, leave a vivid red mark, made her cry out and push her hips 'gainst mine more forcefully, her nails diggin' into my skin where she held my shoulders. I worked my way to the other ear 'fore catchin' the lobe 'tween my teeth and tuggin' gently. One hand fisted in my hair while the other dug into my shoulder, holdin' me tightly to her, her nails diggin' in with a stingin' pain that made my dick twitch. I dropped my free hand to the thigh huggin' my hip and slid it up, catchin' the hem'a her sleep shirt as I reached her side. I slid my hand up further, pushin' the shirt up as I slid my fingertips over the rough, scarred skin of her belly. Though I wanted to lavish her scars with kisses and licks 'til they never pained her 'gain, I only grazed over them 'fore movin' further up her rib cage. Gasps and sighs fell from her lips and she tugged my hair

harder as I kissed ‘cross her collarbone and licked down to the freckles coverin’ her sternum. Just as my fingers brushed the underside’a her tit, someone banged on the bedroom door.

“Prez!” I growled and lifted my head from B’s chest. She was flushed, pantin’ lightly and her eyes were glazed with half-lidded lust, her hips grindin’ against me restlessly. Shark pounded again. “Prez! You called for Church at nine! You’re late!” He banged again.

Maggie looked at me with confusion ‘til I turned my head in the direction’a the door and shouted, “Five minutes, dammit!”

I turned back to her and pressed my forehead to her sternum, rubbin’ my face there and revelin’ in the way she smelled, lickin’ at the light sheen’a sweat coatin’ her skin. She pulled me back to her mouth by the roots’a my hair and I kissed her roughly ‘fore resting my forehead ‘gainst hers and rubbed our noses together, kissin’ her one more time. I pulled back and said, “I got Church this mornin’, Butterfly. You’ll be okay for a while?” She nodded mutely and I rose up to my knees over her, lookin’ down at the sight she made spread out on my bed, her barely-there sleep shirt pushed up, barin’ the underside’a the small swell’a her tits. Not even the bruises and scars that marked her body could take ‘way from her beauty. Her neck was covered in love bites, her pale flesh markin’ much easier than I’d anticipated, and my beard left her red and stubble-burned. A caveman-like satisfaction swelled in my chest, knowin’ she’d wear my marks all day.

I dropped down and grabbed her gently ‘round the ribcage, liftin’ her slightly to press a kiss to the boot print there. She ran her fingers through my hair as I ran my tongue gently over the bruisin’ ‘fore lickin’ a path up to the exposed skin’a her tits. She shivered harshly, goosebumps raisin’ on her skin as she arched towards my mouth.

And then her stomach growled. I huffed a laugh through my nose and leaned up again. She was still flushed but smilin’ now. I got off the bed and pulled her with me.

We dressed in companionable silence, her back turned my way. She handed me a black t-shirt and I passed her the tiny jean shorts that she’d tossed on the bed. They reminded me more of underwear with ambitions. She added a pink long-sleeved shirt and pulled that ridiculously oversized hoodie over her head. She rubbed some creamy shit in her hair, fixin’ it into a braid ‘gain, and I frowned at her.

What?

“I like it down. You got gorgeous hair, babe.” She flushed but raked the braid out’a her hair, leavin’ it down, the friz contained by whatever she’d smeared through it, leavin’ the curls perfectly spiraled and reachin’ the bottom’a her ass. right where the end’a that stupid hoodie sat. The thing hung so loosely on her, you couldn’t even tell she was wearin’ shorts, her hands hidden by her sleeves. We sat on the bed next to each other, me pullin’ on my boots and her slidin’ her bandaged and socked feet into the sneakers she picked out.

I grabbed her hand and led her downstairs to the main room. I stopped halfway 'tween Church and the kitchen, wrappin' an arm 'round her waist and settlin' my hand over her perfectly rounded ass, bunchin' the hoodie up at her waist so I could slide my thumb into her back pocket and palm her small cheek fully.

"Just in that room, you need me, 'kay?" She nodded and signed *O-K*. "Go see Ma, in the kitchen. She'll get you some coffee and breakfast, yeah?" She nodded again and I bent down to kiss her.

I meant for it to just be a quick peck but she immediately opened, so that my bottom lip was sandwiched 'tween hers, her tongue barely brushin' mine. I yanked her to me more securely, squeezin' her ass and wrappin' a hand 'round the side and back'a her neck, diggin' my fingers into her hair. I shoved my tongue 'tween her lips and she whimpered, one tiny hand fistin' my t-shirt while the other grabbed a belt loop to secure my hips to her belly. She pushed up on her toes, usin' me for balance as she stretched as far as she could, tryin'a get closer to my mouth.

I tightened my hold on her ass and neck and stood to my full height, liftin' her so that I could kiss her more fully. She moaned softly and squirmed 'gainst me as she wrapped one leg 'round my hip and fisted both hands in my hair. I grunted into her mouth because it really fuckin' turned me on that she liked when I took what I wanted from her.

Someone let out a catcall and I was glad she couldn't hear it. I softened the kiss then pulled back with one last peck to the corner of her mouth 'fore I let her body slide down mine. Her eyes were dazed again and I smiled at her, squeezin' her small ass in my big hand one last time. I jerked my head toward the kitchen and she looked that way, only to flush deeply when she realized the brothers in the room were watchin' us with rapt interest and knowin' smirks.

She looked up at me through her lashes, smilin' shyly as she took a step 'way, then another 'fore turnin' 'round and headin' to the kitchen. I watched her disappear through the swingin' door before turnin' to Church.

I walked in and saw my officers and senior brothers already in their seats. Smoke passed me a steamin' mug'a coffee as I sat at the head'a the table.

"Alright, where we at? Who the fuck's this Pete asshole?" My eyes met those'a my brothers, many of 'em lookin' hungover, angry or both.

"Peter Charles McGruff," Whiz said, slidin' a folder over to me, not lookin' up from typin' on his computer. "Forty-three, five-seven, two-eighty-five, 'cordin' to his license. Divorced three times, no contact with his two daughters, twenty-one and nineteen. One A and B charge for a bar fight back in ninety-six, a petty theft for liftin' a case'a whisky from a liquor store and one four-year stent for possession, released in oh-eight, couple speedin' tickets, one drivin' with a suspended license and some other petty shit since then. Works for Don's

Wreckin', started June, last year, no steady career 'fore that. Lives over on the east side by the warehouse district."

I opened the file as Whiz spoke and a bald, fat man with a puffy, red face and too-big, bulging eyes looked up at me. "What 'bout the dad?"

"Walter Fredrick Bowen," Whiz replied, still tappin' away. "Forty-one, married once, widowed five years, three months ago. One daughter, Margaret Cassady Bowen, nineteen, born December ten, oh-three." Several pairs'a eyes slid to me, a few with quirked brows, probably 'cause'a the fifteen-year age difference 'tween us. I pretended not to notice. "Works part time at Smith's Plumbin'. One DUI, May of twenty, no time, deferred sentence."

"Where they gettin' their shit from?"

"Still lookin'," he grunted.

"Got'a be the Guns, right? They crossed us, yeah?" Smoke raised an eyebrow at me.

"Nah, Skin don't deal in heroin and he ain't dumb enough to cross us. They're too small and know we'd wipe them out if we got word of it."

"So, someone else?" I looked at Nuts and Bolts, who had a habit of sayin' the same shit at the same time.

"Guess so. But who? Ain't that the question'a the fuckin' day. Whiz, get me somethin', ASAP." He grunted at me again. "Smoke, how'd it go with Skin the other night? He give you

any reason to think we need to look into them?" I took a gulp of coffee and settled in for Church.

Chapter Thirteen



Maggie

I walked into the kitchen, immediately scanning the room for a familiar face. Ma came around the counter, smiling and engulfing me in a motherly hug. I tried not to panic as my face was smashed between her breasts, gulping for air as she released me.

“Morning, Maggie! Are you hungry?” My stomach growled as if on cue and she smiled. “Sit here, honey, and I’ll get something started. The guys will want food when they get out’a church. I’ve got a couple casseroles in the oven for them, but how about some French toast for you, hm?” I shrugged.

“You don’t like French toast?” I shrugged again. “Have you ever had it?”

No. I signed, but mouthed the word.

“You’re in luck. I make great French toast, don’t I, Chains?” I turned my head, looking for the behemoth man and nearly fell off my stool when I found him directly over my right shoulder. He steadied me with a hand on my elbow and gave me a slight smile. It was maybe a quarter of a smile, really just a softening of the edges of his mouth and eyes, but I took it for what it was.

I turned back to Ma, but she was busy at the stove, dipping bread slices into a bowl of thin-looking batter before dropping them into a pan. I glanced back at Chains.

Coffee?

He walked around the island, pecking Ma on the crown of her head as he passed her, and opened a cabinet, producing a mug for me. I got up and took the mug from him, pouring a cup and doctoring it the way I like.

Thank you, I signed.

I got the same almost-smile as before and when I took my seat at the island, he followed, standing in the same spot over my right shoulder. Ma was still at the stove, frying some bacon now, so I turned to Chains.

I thought you would be in Church?

“Watchin’ you.” My eyes scanned the few men in the room around us. They all wore vests with only *PROSPECT* across

the backs.

I thought I'm safe here?

“Yep,” was all he said.

So you don't need to be in church?

“Nope. Keepin' the queen safe's top priority.”

Again with the queen stuff. So I asked, *Queen?*

He shrugged. “Knight's king, makes you queen.”

I felt my face pale but before I had a full-on panic attack, Ma cut in.

“Don't worry too much about that, Maggie. But, if you want to be with Knight, you'll be treated like a queen. Just the way it is.” She slid plates piled with French toast and scrambled eggs in front of me and Chains, who settled on the stool next to me. “I have to run out for some errands. The boys will be out in a bit. Just point them to the food and they'll love you, 'kay?”

I nodded and she grabbed her purse off the counter and walked out of the room. I was half done with my second piece of toast when I saw the door open. I turned to see the newcomer, curious who I'd meet next.

But when biker after biker of all shapes and sizes filed in, I instinctively slid off my stool, abandoning my breakfast and trying to squeeze into the corner of the room. Chains followed my movement, seeming to sense my unease. He placed himself half in front of me as I huddled in the corner. I placed

a hand on his back, over the Devil's Vengeance emblem and drew strength from his presence. I found it ironic that the man who scared me the most upon my arrival was now my comfort.

He reached back and gave my hand a squeeze and I scanned the brothers in the room. None of them were looking at us yet and I had a feeling Chains wouldn't have done it if they were.

The men pulled the casseroles from the oven and began to fill plates, taking the stools Chains and I had vacated and filling the table in the opposite corner.

When Knight walked in, I felt my body relax and I took a half-step out of my hiding place. His eyes found me immediately and he smirked. He walked over to the stove, filled his own plate and leaned against an empty counter. He met my eyes again and jerked his head at me. I slid out from behind Chains, meeting his eyes to make sure he stayed close. He snagged my plate as we passed the bar before I stopped next to Knight.

He put his plate on the counter and lifted me onto the space next to it before Chains handed me my plate. I pulled one leg up, my knee touching Knight's hip. Chains handed me my coffee and then gave a chin lift to Knight.

"Gotta get to the shop." He gave my knee a squeeze and left. I scooted closer to Knight and I looked across all the faces in the room.

One man threw a piece of bacon at Knight and it bounced off his shoulder and landed on my plate. I looked at the man

with wide eyes and vaguely recognized him from the party yesterday.

“How come she gets French toast and we get casserole?” At first I flushed but he smiled good naturedly.

I looked at Knight to see what he'd say, but he only looked at me with a brow quirked. My face flushed again and I looked back to the man sitting at the island.

I shrugged and pretended to place a crown on my head then signed, *Queen*.

The men around him all laughed and Knight's hand landed on my knee, stroking my thigh. I set my almost-empty plate aside and leaned my head against his bicep, sipping my coffee and watching the brothers' interactions with each other. Smoke walked over to get a second helping off the stove to my right and as he passed, he pressed a kiss to my forehead, like Chains had done with Ma. I blushed and tucked my face into Knight's arm.

The men finished quickly, filing out of the kitchen. Knight explained that every patched brother works at one of the club's legit businesses. When I asked about the difference between a *prospect* and a patched brother, he explained that prospects are basically trying out for the club.

Once the kitchen was mostly empty, Knight stood next to me, talking with an older man, who had a gray beard down to his belly button, yellowed around the mouth from years of tobacco use. He had kind eyes, though, and I felt proud of myself for not thinking he was a big scary biker.

I tugged on Knight's sleeve and he immediately looked away from the man he was speaking with.

I want to do laundry today. Is there a washer here? The other man watched me intently, but with polite interest. He didn't seem judgmental about my sign language.

"There's a room with several washers and dryers on the other side'a the clubhouse. I'll show you 'fore I head out. I got'a go to one'a our businesses and look into some shit." I felt disappointment in my chest half a second before I realized what he'd said.

My eyes scanned the almost empty room. *Leaving? Am I staying?*

"Yeah, Butterfly, you're goin'a stay here. Long as you stay inside, you're safe here, 'kay?" I wrung my fingers together and dipped my head, but nodded.

He pressed a kiss to my forehead and settled one large hand over mine to still my fingers before going back to his conversation with the bearded brother.

**

Knight had left four hours ago. I had already washed and folded his laundry and towels, cleaned the bedroom and organized my new beauty products on the bathroom counter and in the little cabinet above the sink.

I moved to the desk in the corner of the room and looked through the papers on top. Mostly bills, a letter from someone named Bear, and a spiral notebook with a black cover. I didn't

want to snoop, so I opened the notebook to the last page, before pulling a pencil out of the cup on the corner of the desk.

I had always been a decent artist and I took my time on this drawing, wanting to make sure Chains would be able to make it out clearly. This tattoo was important to me. The survivor ribbon was meant to remind me that I can overcome anything.

But the butterfly? The butterfly was to remind me of Knight, who I am to Knight, and that even though I may be small, his strength is always with me – even when he's not.

I was just putting the finishing touches on it when someone's hand landed on my shoulder. I jumped and let out a startled yelp, looking over my shoulder to see Knight had returned.

“Sorry, B, didn't mean to scare you'. You draw this?” He indicated the drawing of the tattoo on the page.

I huffed a laugh through my nose and held up the pencil still in my hand before flipping to a blank page and writing, *Next time, flick the lights or something so I know you're here lol.*

“Smartass.” He rolled his eyes and reached to flip the page back to my drawing. His face softened and his mouth opened and closed several times while he tried to process the butterfly and purple survivor ribbon. His finger stroked the wing of the butterfly, smudging the drawing slightly, before he looked back at me and smiled. His hand cupped my cheek and I leaned into his palm.

“It’s really good. You got talent.” I blushed at his praise. “This the tat you want?” I nodded. “That’s permanent, B. You sure you want a butterfly on you forever?” I grabbed his hand and traced the butterfly on the back before meeting his eyes. I nodded again and his soft smile widened. “Want’a go now?” He jerked his head toward the door.

Nervous excitement hit my belly. “Now?” He nodded. “But, what if Chains has a customer?”

Knight gave me a flat look. “You think his queen ain’t his priority?” I blushed again. “C’mon. We can take the bike if you want, but you got’a put jeans on.” I jumped up and nearly fell over my own feet in my rush to get into a pair of super tight skinny jeans. I grabbed my shoes in the corner of the room and when I turned back, Knight was openly laughing at me.

“Ever ridden a bike before?” I shook my head as I pulled on my new, studded biker boots. “You’re gonna love it.” I looked out the window, trying to decide if I’d need my hoodie or not. I looked back at Knight.

Do I need a jacket?

He shook his head. “It’s pretty warm out there, and it ain’t a long trip.” I stood from the edge of the bed and braided my hair then ripped the page from the notebook.

I followed him to his bike, my drawing tucked into my back pocket. He pulled a full-headed helmet off the backseat and tucked a few strands of hair behind my ears before sliding the helmet on my head, securing it with a buckle under my chin.

He raised the visor and looked me in the eyes. “You look fuckin’ hot, B.” I blushed under the helmet. “”Kay, so wrap your arms ‘round my waist and don’t let go, got it? When we turn, you’ll feel me lean. Keep your front to my back and you’ll lean with me naturally, yeah?” I nodded my bulky head. “Got’a admit, babe, it’s got me hot as fuck, havin’ you on my bike.” As he spoke, he adjusted his crotch then pulled his loose hair into a bun at the crown of his head, revealing the shaved, tattooed sides and back of his skull. It was really fucking hot, honestly.

I pursed my lips, looking at the bike’s seat, remembering something Smoke had said yesterday at the party about not letting women ride on his bike because that spot is for his ol’ lady, whenever he finds her. I looked back to Knight.

Have many girls ridden on your bike?

He smirked. “Nope, just you babe.” I warmed from the inside out. He straddled the bike and held a hand out to steady me as I swung my leg over. He grabbed my ankle and placed my foot on a little metal peg and I repeated with the other leg before leaning in and wrapping my arms around his middle.

His flat, ribbed stomach immediately distracted me and I found myself tracing the muscles through his thin t-shirt. His hand flattened on mine, pressing it into his stomach. I took that as instruction to stop feeling him up and tightened my arms around him as he started the bike. He looked over his shoulder and gave me a questioning look. I gave him a thumbs up and

he pulled out of the spot he had parked in. My arms tightened even further.

By the time we had ridden a block or two, I realized he was right. I *did* love riding on his bike. The wind whipped my braid around, but the heat from the pipes and Knight's body kept me from getting chilled in the fall air. It was still warm this time of day, but could cool off quickly.

The bike rumbled between my legs, Knight's hard body pressed tightly against my front, and I felt my body start to tingle. By the time he pulled up to Vengeance Ink, I was practically shaking with arousal, my hands petting Knight's abs again. Knight helped me off the bike and kept a hand on me to be sure I was steady before climbing off the bike himself.

He led me into the tattoo shop and a woman with shocking purple hair and a ton of facial piercings smiled at him. "Knight! I haven't seen you in so long!" She skipped around the counter and threw her arms around his shoulders, giving him no choice but to release my hand and wrap his arms around her. But to his credit, he quickly disentangled himself and reclaimed my hand, pulling me into his side, slinging his arm around my shoulders.

"B wants to get a tat today." He jerked his head in my direction.

She pursed her lips, eyeing me up and down and clearly finding me lacking, just like Amy had. My new-found and slowly developing attitude bristled.

“Well, we’re all booked.” Her eyes slid back to Knight and she ran a hand down his front, fingering the edge of his cut. “But I can always make time for you, Knight.” She bit her pierced lip and looked up at him through her lashes.

My temper flared and I smacked her hand off his cut. I felt his laughter vibrate through his body and she shot me a look that I’m sure was meant to intimidate me, but I was unaffected. Knight wouldn’t let anyone or anything hurt me, and it made me feel fearless in the face of this angry female. I was just delusional enough to believe the false fearlessness, but not delusional enough to think my fear was gone completely. Men still terrified me. Still, I raised an eyebrow at her, and Knight palmed the back of my head, running his hand over my hair in silent support.

Suddenly, Purple Hair jumped, her head jerking towards a hallway. Chains stood there, arms crossed over his massive chest, giving her a stern look, lips turned in a half-snarl. She immediately retreated behind the counter. I smiled at him and he jerked his head, indicating we follow him.

Knight kept his arm around my shoulders until we got to the hallway, where it was too narrow for us to walk side by side. I followed Chains, Knight behind me, into a room with a black leather chair that reminded me of a masseuse’s table, a couple black plastic chairs set up on one wall, and a rolling stool. There was other artist-y type stuff, a table and tons of bottles of colorful ink, artwork hanging on the walls, stuff like that.

I looked back to Chains and he smiled, a real smile this time, even if it was still small. “Got a design in mind?”

I pulled the paper out of my back pocket and handed it to him with slightly shaky fingers. He unfolded it, surprise flickering across his face. He looked back up at me. “You draw this?” I nodded and he quirked a brow before looking to Knight. “She should apprentice..”

I wrinkled my brow and looked at Knight. *What?*

“He wants to teach you to be a tattoo artist.” Pride shown in his eyes.

I looked back to Chains, a smile spreading across my face, excitement in my belly again. *Really? You think I could do it?*

“Hm,” he grunted in affirmation, lifting his chin in something akin to a nod. “Colors?” He indicated the bottles of ink and laid the picture on the table next to them. I picked out several purples and blues, a girly pink and a pretty, grassy green, indicating where I wanted each color as I pulled it out of the line.

“Where?” I paused. I hadn’t thought of that. I shrugged and looked at Knight who just smirked and raised an eyebrow in a look that clearly said he was amused I hadn’t thought this far ahead. I pointed to my uninjured ribs. Chains raised an eyebrow. “Goin’ a hurt.” I gave him a flat look and raised my shirt, showing him the other side of my ribcage and my burn scars, before pointing to my still bruised face. Although anger shown in his eyes, he smirked. “Fair ‘nough. On the table, tat side up.”

He went about doing whatever it was he did, tracing my drawing onto a transparent sheet of paper, making some tweaks, then showing it to me for approval before setting up his needles and pouring the colors into little caps and sticking them to a blue paper towel with petroleum jelly. He snapped on some black gloves before cleaning the area and applying the stencil. He had me look in a mirror to approve the placement and I turned back and forth, admiring it. The butterfly, whose body was made up of a soon-to-be purple survivor's ribbon, took up almost my whole rib cage. It would be beautiful in full color against my milky skin.

I gave him a nod and climbed back onto the table facing Knight. He pulled a chair closer, sitting right in front of me.

“Nervous?” He ran a finger over my cheek.

A little. Will it hurt really bad?

“Ain't so bad. You go numb to it after a while.” I nodded and grabbed his hand in mine.

Chains tapped my side and I looked over at him. “Ready?” I nodded again, squeezing Knight's hand as Chains used one hand to stretch my skin tight and put the tattoo gun to my skin. I flinched, but only because I wasn't sure what to expect. It didn't actually hurt as bad as I thought it would.

I relaxed and closed my eyes, squeezing Knight's hand when Chains hit a particularly sensitive area. At one point I pulled my phone out and began to scroll social media but when I got bored of that, I turned to a show on Netflix and turned the volume up so Knight could watch too, if he wanted.

I focused on reading the subtitles to distract from the annoying, cat-scratch pain in my side.

Four hours and three cigarette breaks later, Chains used a wet paper towel and cleaned off the muddy mix of ink and blood, revealing the beautiful, brightly colored tattoo. I hopped up and looked in the mirror.

It's perfect. Thank you!

Chains lifted his chin at me and I looked to Knight, who was perusing my body with his eyes, hunger evident in his gaze. I felt my body heat and something liquid pooled in my lower belly. I bit my lower lip and his nostrils flared.

Chains touched my shoulder and I broke the crackling intensity between Knight and me to glance at him. "Like it?"

I nodded emphatically, turning back to the mirror to inspect my tattoo one more time. Even with the redness, the colors were vibrant against my pale skin, the butterfly and purple survivor's ribbon drawing my eye again and again. It stung a little, but I already wanted more artwork adorning my skin.

"When can I get another?" I glanced at Chains in the mirror and he huffed a semi-laugh through his nose.

"Whenever you want, Queen, but let's let this one heal first, 'kay?" I pouted but nodded. "Knight, you know the drill. Feed her, lots'a water, and you know how to do the aftercare so I won't go through all'a that. Just let me dress it and you can get out'a here."

He went about cleaning the tattoo again, then smothering it in petroleum jelly and clear wrap. Once the clear wrap was taped to my skin, Knight took my hand, pulling me towards him. He gently ran a hand over the clear wrap-covered tattoo and said, “This is fuckin’ hot, B.” My belly turned to liquid again and I unconsciously took a step closer.

He sent a chin lift to Chains and I stepped away to wrap my arms around Chains’ middle. “Thank you so much. This one was important to me and you did it justice.” Chains looked down at me with soft eyes that were so in contrast with the big, scary man but something caught his attention and he quickly looked toward the lobby.

Knight grabbed my wrist and pulled me into his side again. “Think that’s our cue, B. Let’s get some grub, yeah?”

I nodded in agreement and followed him back to the lobby, Chains behind us. Chains gave Knight a fist bump and gently tugged on a lock of my hair before greeting a customer, waiting on one of the black couches with his arms crossed.

I climbed on the bike behind Knight and held on tight as he pulled away from the curb.

We ate at a hole in the wall burger joint, and despite looking like a dump outside, it was surprisingly inviting inside. The booths were comfortable and the food was good. The burger patties were smashed thin, several stacked on each burger and Knight remembered to request my bacon burned, which made my stomach flutter. Having a man as powerful as Knight not only take an interest in me, but for him to be so interested that

he remembers the little details, created an intoxicating mix of feelings in my mind and body.

Chapter Fourteen



Maggie

On the ride back to the clubhouse, Knight took a longer route, allowing me to enjoy the ride, the sunset, and him. His big body was nestled between my thighs, my fingers splayed on his muscular torso. My fingers traced the lines of his defined abdominals on their own accord, occasionally straying to the V of his Adonis belt.

Whenever my fingers strayed, I felt his groan reverberate through his back, into my chest and smiled against his leather clad back. When we stopped at a stoplight, he would stroke a hand down my calf or squeeze my thigh.

We were almost back to the clubhouse, stopped at a stop sign on some scenic back road when something in the tree line caught my eye. I sat up straight from my position, cuddled into Knight's back. I squeezed Knight's arm, my eyes straining in the dim light to catch the movement again.

And there it was. I pointed to a small white streak against the green and black edge of the forest. Knight braced his feet in a more stable position on the dirt road and I climbed off, with his help. He put the kickstand down and followed me off the bike, but I was already slowly approaching whatever it was that had huddled up under the thick bush.

I knelt down and moved some branches aside, revealing a small white puppy. It had short hair and tiny, floppy ears and a black spot on its pink nose. Otherwise, it appeared to be solid white, with blue eyes. I slowly reached toward it, ready to draw back if the pup took offense to my attention, but the puppy took a slow step toward me, then another and sniffed my fingers. After some coaxing and a lot of gentle touches, the puppy let me pick it up and I quickly cuddled it to my chest, rubbing my hand over its cold ears. The sun was almost completely gone now, and it was getting chilly. He seemed thin to me, but I didn't know much about animals.

I turned to Knight with sad eyes as the pup nuzzled into my neck. Knight reached out and stroked a finger over the puppy's soft ear. He smiled at me, took off his leather jacket, the one with the club's insignia and all the patches on it, and draped it over my shoulders. His eyes burned brightly with a strange

light as he looked at me in his cut before he tilted his head toward the bike.

I gingerly climbed on behind him and cradled the pup with one hand before wrapping my other arm around his waist. Knight drove slower now, taking into account my precarious hold on him. We arrived at the clubhouse just a few minutes later and I carried the puppy inside, cradled against my chest, my fingers barely peeking out of the sleeves of Knight's cut, which I wrapped tightly around the puppy, only his head peeking out.

Several pairs of eyes widened when we walked into the main room, all of them focused on me. I fidgeted uncomfortably, wondering why they were looking at me so intently. Amy caught my eye, the jealous anger on her face making me nervously wonder if she might retaliate for the incident at the pool party, but Knight's strength cloaked me again and I felt my chin tilt defiantly. But her eyes were focused on Knight's cut, swallowing my tiny frame whole. My chest burned with something akin to pride, and I snuggled closer to Knight's side. His arm came around me automatically and he steered us toward the kitchen.

Once inside, I pulled the tiny puppy out of his hiding place inside Knight's jacket and held it up in front of my face and noticed it was a boy. He licked my nose with a wild tongue, missing several times before he made contact.

Knight touched my shoulder. "You want'a keep him?" I looked around the kitchen and bit my lip, wondering where I

would keep him.

“Can I? Where would he stay?” I whispered so quietly I wasn’t sure Knight would hear me.

“He can stay in our room for tonight. We’ll go to the store tomorrow and get him everythin’ he needs. What d’you want’a name him?”

I thought for a long minute, then smiled, stifling a laugh. “Well...he’s white...what about Cracker?” Knight guffawed, his Adam’s Apple bobbing in his throat, his head thrown back.

Smoke and Jessie came up to us and they were both laughing, too. “Did you just name a white dog Cracker, Mags?” Smoke forced out between bouts of laughter, which set me and Jessie off again as I nodded.

I handed the puppy to Knight and used my hands to talk. *We found him in the woods not far from here. Knight says I can keep him but I don’t know how to take care of a dog or where we would keep him. I want to, but I don’t know.* I shrugged helplessly.

Jessie stepped closer to me. “I can help. I’ve had dogs my whole life. It’ll be nice to have another one around. We can lay some papers down in case he needs to use the bathroom in the middle of the night, that way he can stay in y’all’s room overnight. I’ll go cut him up some chicken. He looks hungry.” She pulled some leftover chicken out of the fridge, tearing it into small pieces and putting them on a plate.

Cracker went wild in Knight's arms, licking the air in the direction of the chicken. Knight set him down and he ate wildly, scarfing the chicken down faster than I thought possible.

Smoke tapped my shoulder. "So, what'd you do today? Were you okay here while we were gone?"

I nodded. *I did laundry and then drew this.* I lifted my shirt to show them my new tattoo. *Then Knight took me to get it done. Chains did it!*

"Woah! Girl, you *drew* that?!" Jessie's eyes were glued to my side. "Holy shit! You're good! Like really good!"

Smoke nodded and pointed at my side. "She's right. That's some talent."

Knight spoke up then. "Chains wants her to apprentice." He eyed me sidelong as I nodded enthusiastically.

Cracker finished his meal and came over to attack my shoelaces. *I am excited, but I don't think Purple Hair will like it much. I don't think I'm going to do it. I don't want to make her angry.*

Knight waved a hand carelessly. "Paige is a bitch. She just wants to be with a biker, any biker. B, if you want'a do it, you should. You have the talent, even Chains agrees. Ain't no one better to learn from."

Excitement fluttered in my chest. "You really think I could do it? I wanted to study art in school but my dad wouldn't let

me so I was studying biology but I hated it. I would love to do something with art...you really think I could do it?"

All three of them nodded emphatically while Cracker jumped up to paw at my leg, begging for attention. I picked him up and nodded back to them. "Okay! I want to do it!" Just as I spoke, Chains walked in and I skipped up to him. "I want to do it! I want to learn how to do tattoos!"

He did one of those almost-but-not smiles and petted my crown and nodded, pressing a kiss to my forehead while he passed to the food piled on the counter. But then he noticed the puppy in my arms and hiked an eyebrow high on his forehead, looking to Knight.

"We found it on the way back from dinner. She wanted to keep him, so here he is. She named him-" he chuckled, trying to hold back his laugh, "-Cracker."

Chains looked like he was trying really, really hard not to smile for real, blinking rapidly several times before finally giving up and shooting me a look that clearly said *really?*

I shrugged. "Well, he's white. It seemed funny. But maybe I should change it if everyone's going to make fun of him." I trailed off biting my lip, clearing my throat of the ache that was starting to build again.

"B, he's your dog. You can name him whatever you want. And 'fore too long, he'll be so big nobody'll say shit about it."

You think he'll be big? I signed awkwardly, the puppy tucked into the crook of my elbow.

“He’s only a couple’a months and look at the size’a his paws.” Knight held up one of the paws. “He’s gonna be huge.”

Our group broke off and Knight led me back into the main area, where people were partying but keeping it low-key. Well, as low-key as a group of bikers can be. Amy was sitting on a prospect’s lap but as soon as I walked in, she glared daggers at me. I swear, if looks could kill. I glared right back, hitching Knight’s jacket back up my shoulder where it was slipping off.

Knight led me over to a group of guys by the pool tables, where Shark and Kylie were making out against one of the tables until it was his turn. Knight settled on a barstool and pulled one between his spread thighs for me. Cracker was calming down in my arms, laying his head on my chest. Knight smirked and nodded to him. “Lucky dog.” I snorted a laugh.

Kylie came over and greeted me, gushing about how adorable Cracker was and begging to hold him. I handed him over and she plopped on the floor, right in the middle of the walkway and laid him in her lap, smothering him with kisses and pats.

Knight pulled me against his chest, leaning over my shoulder so I could see him. He stroked a hand over his jacket, right where the president’s patch rested on my breast. He stroked it a few more times before reaching for my chin, pulling my mouth to his for a hungry, wet kiss. He nipped my lips, sucked on my tongue and had me panting with desire in about three seconds. He pulled back, placing a kiss on my

chin. “You look hot in my cut, B. Seein’ you in my leathers has me fuckin’ hot.” He ran a hand up my thigh, squeezing and kneading, his fingers dangerously close to where I had so badly wanted them this morning.

I reached back and touched his knee, inching my hand up his thigh slowly, watching his eyes. My fingers brushed against his hardness and his nostrils flared. My cheeks were fire hot, but I bit my lip and stretched my fingertips over him a little more, the denim of his jeans doing very little to conceal his arousal.

He abruptly stood, almost knocking me off my stool, but quickly grabbed me around my hips, throwing me over his shoulder gently. I shrieked and when I planted my hands on Knight’s flexing ass to help lift my head, Kylie and Shark were both looking at us approvingly with knowing smiles, Cracker wiggling between them for attention. Kylie held him up and nodded to me, which I took to mean she would watch him until I was less occupied.

My braid slapped at Knight’s ankles as he climbed the stairs and I gasped as my injured ribs twinged when I bounced against his shoulder. He slowed his steps but quickly pushed open the door to his bedroom. He set me on my feet and pushed my braid over my shoulder, cupping the side of my face and brushing his thumb over my bruised cheek. He leaned in and gently kissed the bruising, trailing his way down to my lips.

The kiss started slow and sweet but I wanted more. I wanted *him*. Standing on my tip toes, as high as I could get, I twined my fingers into his hair and pulled him against me harder, grinding my belly against the hardness in his pants. He lifted me by my ass and I wrapped my thighs around his waist, gasping when my back met the wall. He nipped my jaw line, sending vibrations through my chest as he groaned against me when I panted as he pulled on my earlobe.

When his eyes met mine, they were burning bright with desire. He ground against me, using his hold on my hips to increase the pressure and my head fell back as a long, breathy sigh escaped me. His chest vibrated against mine and I looked back to him with heavy eyes. He ran a finger down my neck.

“I left marks on you this mornin’ and it’s the fuckin’ hottest thing I’ve ever seen, my teeth marks on your pale skin.” He leaned in and licked the area he had just been tracing with his fingers. When his teeth met my skin again, my hips twisted against his torso and the burning in my belly flared hotter.

“Please, Knight. Please. I-“ I panted, wiggling in his grasp, pulling at his hair. “I need...I don’t know. Please, make it better.”

He stilled, pulling back so I could see him clearly. “Maggie, you sure you want this? You don’t have to do anythin’ you don’t want’a.”

I swallowed heavily. “I’m nervous, but I want you Knight. I have for three years and I’m tired of waiting. It’s torture.” I punctuated the last word with another twist of my hips.

His nostrils flared and he took a deep breath. “Have you ever?” I shook my head slowly, watching him warily and hoping it wouldn’t scare him off. Instead, he groaned deeply and attacked my mouth with renewed vigor, turning and laying me on the bed, catching himself on his elbows. We were pressed together from mouths to groins and it was the most glorious feeling I had ever experienced. I ran my hand up under his shirt, pushing it out of my way to feel his hot skin under mine.

He went up on his knees above me, shrugging out of his cut and tossing it to the foot of the bed before pulling his shirt off with one hand behind his head. My mouth went dry at the sight of his naked torso and I sat up, pressing a kiss to the soft hairs that covered his sternum. I traced gentle kisses and licks over to his flat, manly nipple and his breath caught when I nipped it between my teeth, gently catching the metal there. He wrapped my braid around his fingers and yanked my head back to kiss and bite at my neck.

Heat burned hot in all my intimate places at his rough handling and I wrapped my legs around him again. He pulled the jacket off me and slowly pulled up the hem of my shirt, giving me time to protest. Instead, I grabbed it and whipped it off, tossing it somewhere over my shoulder. His eyes shuddered and he leaned over me, gently laying me back against the bed with a hand between my shoulder blades, to lick a wet path between my breasts.

An image of Amy’s large, fake tits appeared behind my eyelids and I was assaulted by a fierce bout of shyness. I

wrapped my hand in his hair, stopping his progress towards the peak of my cotton-covered breast. He looked up at me, concern in his eyes and I covered my chest with my hands. His gaze softened and he smiled, grabbing my wrists and pulling my hands away. I resisted, but I was no match for his strength. He shook his head. “Your body’s beautiful. I can’t wait to see how much brighter you shine when your bruises fade. You take my breath away now, can’t imagine how you’ll affect me when I can see you completely.” He pressed a kiss to my belly, making the muscles twitch, but my body still burned with shyness.

He grabbed my hand, pressing my flat palm to his erection. “You feel that, B?” My eyes widened and my fingers twitched but I only nodded. “That feel like you got anythin’ to be embarrassed ‘bout? That feel like I’m not completely overcome with desire for you?” I shook my head and he leaned back over me, pulling the cup of my bra down to expose my nipple to his hungry gaze. His head descended, never breaking eye contact. As soon as his tongue met my flesh, my back arched and I gasped loudly.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN



I held her eyes and lowered my head to her small, pale nipple. Her breasts were so fuckin' small, so much smaller than any other pair I'd ever been this close to. Her nipples were so pale, I could barely tell where skin ended and areola began.

She watched me as I used the flat' a my tongue and licked her peak 'fore drawin' it into my mouth. Her breath caught heavily in her throat and the hand that was cuppin' my dick spasmed chaotically. Her other hand found my wrist by her head and held on for dear life. I lavished her tits with attention, bitin' softly and lavin' the pain away. Every time my teeth

connected with her sensitive nipples, her hand spasmed, her hips wiggled wildly and a quiet gasp escaped her throat. She was so responsive.

I moved to the soft skin 'tween her tits, rubbin' my beard 'gainst her, wallowin' in her scent like an animal. I caught the skin of her breast 'tween my teeth, lickin', suckin' and bitin' 'til I left a dark mark there. I smiled in satisfaction as she writhed underneath me. She was so much smaller than me, trapped beneath me like a butterfly pinned to a wall, and it made every protective and dominant instinct I had flare to life. I wanted to own her, body and soul, so that she forgot she'd ever been abused, forgot any other man even existed.

I kissed and licked a path down her belly, 'tween the softly toned muscles, dippin' my tongue in her belly button 'fore continuin' south, studiously ignorin' the marred, burned skin I desperately wanted to pay special attention to, as if my kisses could heal the scars, both physical and psychological. Her hip bones protruded, remindin' me again that she was too skinny, so much smaller than me, and younger, too. I caught the curve of her hip bone in my teeth gently, leavin' another soft love bite in my wake. I lowered further, 'til my face hovered over her most intimate spot. I could feel the heat emanatin' from her core and I leaned into it, drawn to it like a moth to flame. I rubbed my nose 'gainst the denim there, inhalin' strongly. Her scent hit me so hard I nearly came in my pants like a fuckin' teen.

Her hand fisted in my hair, her hips moving restlessly. I snaked my arms under her thighs so that her legs were

partially on my shoulders. I slid my hands over her scarred and bruised skin, makin' my way to the button of her jeans, waitin' for her to stop me. She panted heavily, her breasts risin' and fallin' 'tween our gazes.

I slid the button free of the catch and slowly ran my fingers 'long the waistband 'til I had a grip on the sides near her hips. She took a deep breath, met my gaze boldly and lifted her hips just 'nough for me to slip the jeans off her hips and down her legs. Once they were free, she rested her legs back over my shoulders and her thighs trembled chaotically. I ran my hands over the outside'a her thighs, rubbin' my cheek 'long the soft inside as I waited for her to calm down some. She grabbed my hands, windin' her fingers through mine and her breath steadied a little.

I held her gaze 'gain while I lowered my head and ran my nose 'long her seam, still concealed by her panties, 'fore I licked a long path over the damp cotton. Her hips thrust 'gainst my face, her thighs twitchin' again. I released one'a her hands, placin' it in my hair just 'cause I wanted the contact. She fisted the strands, but not so hard that it hurt. I used my free hand to pull the crotch of her panties to the side. I ran my finger gently over her smooth skin, a little surprised that she was shaved but enjoyin' it still, and held her eyes as I lowered my mouth to her.

I worked her gently at first, usin' my lips, teeth and tongue to pleasure her. I removed her panties, tossin' them somewhere over my shoulder 'fore fallin' on her like a starved man. I called on every memory I had'a hearin' the club sluts talk

'bout what they liked, every move I had ever learned, and her gentle fist in my hair quickly turned to a painful grip while she tried to move me where she wanted me most. I rested my free hand on her belly, feelin' the muscles and scarred skin tense and jump. Her neck and back arched high off the bed, obscurin' my view of her pretty face, but the way her thin, lithe body contorted was almost as pretty. I was again reminded'a how tiny she was when her ribs jutted harshly 'gainst her pale, freckled skin, and ran a hand up her torso to feel the rigid bumps of bone beneath her skin, fightin' the urge to collar her throat with my tattooed hand. My dark, colorful skin 'gainst her pale skin made me want'a pin her to the bed by the back'a her neck while I fucked into her from behind, dominatin' her in the way my body demanded. But I held back every instinct, determined to give her the love-makin' she deserved.

I brought my hand down and used a finger to circle her openin'. Her muscles, inside and out, twitched and pulsed and I knew she was close. I poised my finger just at her entrance and nipped her clit, pullin' as gently as I could.

A harsh cry ripped from her throat, her hands spasmed rhythmically 'gainst my own and in my hair, her legs wrapped 'round the back'a my head, thighs squeezed tightly, and her hips pumped 'gainst my face. I couldn't breathe, as tightly as her legs held me to her center, but fuck if I cared. If I died right here, I'd die a very, very happy man. Right at the height of her climax, I slipped two fingers inside, settin' off another wave of pleasure. She panted, each breath endin' on a short,

harsh moan. When she finally began to relax, I slowly pulled my fingers out and thrust them back in. Her neck arched and another moan slipped past her parted lips. I licked her thigh, claimin' every drop of her flavor 'fore I shrugged out from under her thighs and lifted myself over her. Her eyes were closed, her muscles still twitchin', and her hips worked to meet my fingers with every thrust. Her heavy lids parted, revealin' her green eyes, shiny and hazy with pleasure. She bit her lip shyly but reached up and wrapped a hand around the back of my neck, pullin' my face to hers.

Her lips reached mine feverishly but slowed almost instantly. Her tongue slowly came out and licked at her flavor on my lips and beard. I let her take it slow, explorin' me while also discoverin' her own flavor. She moaned low in her throat and grew bolder, lickin' her flavor from my mouth while her hands ran over the skin of my stomach. I lifted slightly, givin' her room to explore, but she arrowed straight for the button of my jeans.

I raised to my knees, breakin' our kiss, and allowed her to release the button and fly on my pants 'fore I stood from the bed. Standin' in front'a her, I lifted her chin with a finger. "You sure this is what you want, Maggie? We can stop here, if you don't want'a go any further."

She shook her head emphatically and tried to pry the tight denim down my hips. I helped her lower my jeans, steppin' out'a them when they pooled at my feet. She scooted forward so that she was seated on the edge of the bed and her face was

level with my cock. She gently traced the thick, long outline with one finger, her gaze meetin' mine apprehensively.

“It’ll hurt, at first. Ain’t nothin’ I can do to make it not hurt, baby. But I promise, I’ll go slow and you’ll have time to adjust.” She nodded, hookin’ her fingers into the waistband of my boxer briefs. She tugged them down and my cock jumped free, slappin’ my belly as the fabric whispered down my legs. She swallowed heavily, starin’ at my dick with somethin’ akin to wonder.

She reached with one hand, gently runnin’ her fingers over it. “It’s so hard, but the skin is so soft.” She looked up at me through her lashes. “Will you-“ she paused, clearin’ her throat before continuin’. “Will you show me how to make you feel good, too?” A fierce blush raced up her chest and pooled in her cheeks.

I grabbed her wrist, guidin’ her hand to the base. She curled her fingers ‘round my width, her eyes widenin’ at how girthy I was. I guided her hand up and down my shaft, my skin sparkin’ and pebblin’ with pleasure. My abs tightened, my heartrate picked up and my breathin’ stuttered. Never had I received such pleasure from a hand alone.

I pulled her hand away and she yanked back, a look of rejection and devastation cloudin’ her features, her arms raisin’ to cover her body. I grabbed her by the back’a the neck, haulin’ her up and liftin’ her ‘round my waist. “If you keep touching me, this’ll be over ‘fore we get started.” She blushed

prettily and leaned in, lickin' and kissin' and nibblin' on my neck.

She leaned back and met my gaze, shyness written in her body language. "You marked my skin," she stated, tracin' one'a the bite marks on her tit with one finger. She swallowed heavily and glanced at my neck. "Can I mark you, too?" I groaned heavily and fisted a hand in her braid, loosenin' the strands, and then decided I wanted to feel her hair 'round me. I yanked her mouth back to my neck, tiltin' my head to give her room while I pulled the hair tie free and ran my fingers through her braid. She latched onto my neck, nibblin' and suckin' roughly, determined to leave her mark behind. I groaned and ground my dick 'gainst her wet warmth. The feelin'a her pussy rubbin' against my cock, slatherin' me in her wetness, was too much to bear.

I laid her down on the bed, holdin' myself above her on my elbows as she pulled back to inspect her handiwork on my neck. Her hair fanned out behind her and I thought it was the most beautiful picture I'd ever seen. Her eyes flashed with satisfaction and she smirked. "Now everyone will know you are mine, just as much as I am yours." She was stakin' her claim on me just like I'd claimed her. And by the feel'a it, she was right. There'd be no mistakin' that mark. She gripped my biceps, liftin' her hips to grind against me.

"Are you on birth control, baby?" She nodded and spoke again. I worried 'bout her throat, not used to talkin' as much as she'd been tonight, but also revelin' in the fact that she was so comfortable with me.

“I get the shot every three months. I’m not due for it for another few weeks, so I’m good. I’ve never been with anyone so I’m clean. Are you-“

“I’m clean,” I interrupted her. I didn’t want her to even think about me with anyone else right now. “I’m clean,” I said again, more gently. “I’ll wear a condom if you want me to, but I got’a admit, the idea’a there bein’ nothin’ ‘tween us sounds fuckin’ fantastic.” She nodded her head frantically.

“You don’t have to. I want to feel you. Just you.” Her fingernails dug into my skin and I wrapped an arm ‘round her back, liftin’ her slightly to kiss her deeply.

I lifted my hips, rubbin’ myself against her until she was pantin’ and writhin’ again. “You ready, baby? I’ll go slow, promise.”

She nodded. “Yes, please! Please make it stop. It hurts. I feel so- so- so empty!” She whispered still, but the urgency in her voice told me she felt the same desperation I did. Her body shook with slight tremors of arousal and her thighs clenched my hips rhythmically, her heels diggin’ into my back.

I lifted myself, plantin’ my hands on the bed next to her head and tilted my hips. Her eyes were drawn to my biceps, flexing with the strain of desire and holdin’ myself above her. She lifted a leg and hooked it higher ‘round my hip, which lined my dick up with her entrance perfectly. I caught her eyes, my breath stallin’ in my chest as I slowly pushed forward. Wet, warm heat engulfed me and sweat broke out on the back of my neck at the need to drive into her. I dug my fingers into

the sheets to curb the urge. I refused to hurt her, moving in only a half an inch 'fore backin' out again. She whined, raisin' her hips, chasin' me as I retreated.

I worked slowly, so slowly I was sure I'd lose my mind 'fore she could take all'a me. She moaned, her raspy voice deepenin' the moans 'til they were almost guttural. Most women pitched their moans annoyingly high, but these were raw, real, deep moans. She gritted her teeth as I thrust in again, her thighs squeezin' me tight. I was deeply inside her and she was so tight I was afraid I would hurt her if I went any further. I paused and she opened her eyes to meet mine, shakin' her head. I began to back away, slowly pullin' out'a her, but she locked her legs 'round my waist and lifted herself, seatin' me fully inside her.

Nirvana. It was *fucking heaven*. Her muscles twitched and clenched 'round me, her head thrown back, lips parted as she panted through clenched teeth, and pure pleasure colored her face.

Chapter Sixteen



Full. I was so full. I could feel him throb inside me, my slick flesh stretched tight. It did hurt, like I had expected, but it wasn't as bad as I had thought it would be. The burning pain faded as he stayed still, seated deep inside me. I kept my eyes closed as I grew accustomed to the feel of him inside me, my breath coming fast through my clenched teeth.

My body relaxed, my back falling flat to the bed, my teeth unclenching and my inner muscles relaxing, then tightening again, just because he felt *so fucking amazing*. He wasn't even moving yet and I couldn't imagine sex getting much better than this.

But then he *did* move. He pulled out in a slow, gentle pull, and I swear to God, I felt every vein, every ridge, every inch of his hard shaft as he did so. My eyes opened and found his face. His jaw was clenched, his eyes intense on me, watching for any sign of discomfort. When he slowly thrust back in, instinct took over my body and my hips lifted to meet him halfway.

He slowly picked up his speed, making sure I was okay the whole time. His eyes never left mine. He dropped to his elbows, wrapped his arms under my back and grabbed my shoulders from beneath me as he hunched his back and pressed hot, open mouthed kisses and love bites on my chest and neck. He seemed to like to bite, but I found I liked his teeth, even when the pain was so, so close to that point of being almost too much. He found a rhythm, dragging over something inside me that caused my womb to clench tight, a ball of light glowing brightly inside, ready to burst into a supernova.

He kept that rhythm, never breaking it, kissing me, my body, any inch of me that he could reach. He gave beautiful affirmations, telling me over and over again how beautiful I was, how tight I was, how I felt like hot, wet silk around him. I assumed that was all good, if the pleasure lined in every bulging, straining muscle was any indication.

Sweat built on our bodies, causing our skin to slip and slide in the most enticing way. I don't know if I was loud or not, but if the ache in my throat was any indication, I definitely was. My thighs began to shake, my stomach muscles twitching, my

breath speeding up, that ball of light deep in my belly growing brighter, brighter, brighter, hotter, hotter, hotter. My toes curled, my neck and back arched, my teeth clenched in time with my inner muscles. This orgasm was going to be bigger than anything I had ever experienced, more life changing than the one he had given me with his mouth. I feared the way it would change me.

I dug my nails into Knight's shoulders and looked into his eyes. He nodded at me, lifting off me just enough to slither a hand between us and brush my clit with his rough, calloused thumb and my nails dug into his shoulders even deeper than before, gripping him tightly. One swipe, two, and I *exploded*.

My entire body blew apart at the seams, every muscle clenching and releasing with such power, I was sure I was literally falling apart. I was incinerated, incinerated and put back together in a way that seemed to make so more sense, with Knight somewhere in the middle of all the shattered pieces and chaos.

I screamed his name, his real name, and his dick twitched inside me, his hips picking up their pace. I moaned and twitched as wetness splashed slightly between us when he continued to pump through my orgasm. When it was finally over, I panted harshly, even the breaths burning in my abused throat. Knight rose to his knees and stroked into me just a little faster. His teeth gritted tightly, his hands gripped my hips almost harshly, his eyes glued to me, roving my face, my chest, and finally down to the area where we were connected

in the most basic, real, and most magical way two people could be.

This wasn't just sex, I realized. This was *intimacy*. Intimacy and chemistry. I felt our connection in my soul, even as he grew rougher, more harsh with his thrusts, chasing his own orgasm as he forced another to build inside me.

His sweat dripped off of his skin and onto mine, but instead of disgusting me, I found it so, so hot. I wanted his sweat, his scent, to seep into my pores. I wanted it to brand me as his and never, ever dissipate.

His upper lip curled slightly, his thrusts became errant and harsh, his hands clenching rhythmically on my hips and he watched my small tits as they bounced with the force of his thrusts. He placed a hand on my lower belly and pushed down with gentle, insistent pressure. I cursed loudly and that spot inside me clenched impossibly tight again, the pleasure of his ministrations pebbling my skin with goosebumps and making my breath stutter in my already heaving lungs.

“I can feel myself inside you, Butterfly.” A look that I could only describe as pure, male satisfaction flickered in his gaze. He grabbed my hand and placed it in the same spot, pressing down with his bigger hand so that I could feel him, too. The lust in his eyes, the sight of his deeply tanned, tattooed skin against my milky white, pale skin, and the feel of him moving inside me and under my hand, it was all too much and threw me off the ledge, into another intense, profound orgasm. I tried to scream, but my lungs seized and no sound came out. My

clenching muscles and the resulting gush of wet around him sent him over too, his fingers holding my hip so tightly I knew he left bruises. His cock pulsed inside me as he came as brilliantly as I had.

As he came down, he collapsed on top of me, catching himself on his elbows. Our sweat slicked skin slipped and then fused us together. He rolled to his side, pulling me with him so that I was tucked into his front, surrounded by him completely, his arms wound around my back tightly and his legs entwined with mine.

Our breathing slowed, the heavy *thump, thump, thump* of his heart against my forehead slowing to a more normal rhythm. I felt my own slow as well, but my mind would not.

I worried, thinking about what I was going to do now. That experience had changed me forever, the intimacy I experienced, the way I now felt like Knight was my center, the gravity keeping me here on Earth, safe, sane and grounded.

What if he hadn't felt it? What if it was just sex for him, and here I was, half in love with the man.

Love? Was I falling in love with him? Or, even worse, had I already fallen and was now sitting comfortably warm on rock bottom? The happiness that had been glowing under my skin, fizzing and popping like carbonation in my blood, died as our hearts slowed and our muscles relaxed.

Knight pressed a kiss to my forehead, sticky with drying sweat, and ran a hand through my hair until he fisted the wet hair at the back of my neck and pulled my head back so he

could see my face. I fought, at first, not ready to look him in the eyes, afraid he would see my emotions, read my thoughts, as he seemed to do sometimes. But, as I met his eyes, concern creased his forehead. He ran a finger under my eye and I felt new wetness smear. It was only then that I realized I was crying.

“What’s wrong, B? I hurt you?” He began to pull away from me and my nails dug into his skin reflexively to stop his retreat. “Why’re you cryin’, baby? What’d I do?”

I took a breath, my throat incredibly sore, and I guessed I had to have been rather loud to have caused this much pain to my vocal cords. “You didn’t hurt me, Knight. Never. You would never hurt me.” I shook my head emphatically, knowing deep in my soul that he would never willingly cause me pain.

He stroked away another tear, tracing its path down my cheek to my neck. His fingers fanned over the love bites there, the skin tender and the thin muscles beneath burning slightly, but I relished the pain. Those marks made me his, whether he wanted to keep me or not, for as long as they lasted. “Why?” he asked again.

“I just,” I cleared my throat and tried again, but my abused voice was beginning to fail me, crackling and fading. “It was just intense for me, that’s all. I just wasn’t expecting it to be so...much.” I searched for the words that would explain what I was feeling, without revealing to him that I was falling for him, deeply, quickly, and irrevocably.

He smiled softly at me and brushed sticky hair away from my face. “Fuck, yeah, it was intense. Felt that shit in my soul, B. And sorry to tell you, but you’re stuck with me now, baby. I’m not lettin’ you go, not ever. You’re mine.” I felt the growl of possessiveness roll through his big chest and into mine. But even stronger was the relief that flooded my body and mind, making me lightheaded and all my muscles uncoil, like a snake relaxing from its striking pose.

Oh, thank God, I mouthed. Because my voice wouldn’t work. A gentle sob wracked my body and I clutched him tightly, kissing the dark, round mark I had left on his neck.

He shifted away a little bit, just a movement of the head and shoulders, unwilling to let our bodies separate just yet. I looked up at him through my tears and he nodded towards the bathroom before standing and slipping his arms under me, lifting me from the slightly damp sheets and carrying me through the doorway, ducking slightly so he didn’t knock his head.

He placed me gently on the vanity before he turned and twisted on the shower, adjusting it a few times until the water was steaming. He picked me up and I swear my head felt so heavy I thought it would fall off my shoulders. I was bone tired. I wanted nothing more than a cigarette and sleep, but I knew a shower was necessary or I would be seriously stinky in the morning.

He placed me on my feet directly under the spray and the hot water immediately lulled me into an almost-slumber.

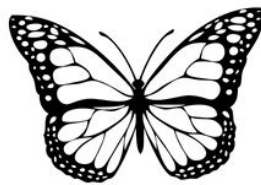
Knight washed my hair, lathering and rinsing it thoroughly before finger combing the conditioner through it and rinsing that, too. He grabbed my sponge and soaped it up before washing my body gently but just as thoroughly. He knelt in front of me, washing my legs before he leaned forward, tracing each of the bruises he had left on my hips with his fingers. I grabbed his tracing fingers and placed a hand under his chin, tilting his head back to meet my eyes. I shifted slightly, so the water wasn't spraying in his eyes and shook my head.

I will wear these bruises with pride. These bruises will stand as a reminder every single time I move tomorrow that I am yours. I fisted a hand in his hair and tugged it tightly. These bruises are a badge, a claim. I will never get tired of seeing your marks on me, and you better never get tired of leaving them.

Heat flared in his eyes, but he leaned forward and gently kissed the bruises before standing and placing a gentle hand around my throat, almost like a collar. "Mine. You are mine, just as much as I am yours," he repeated my words back to me and I grinned at him, but my eyes drooped and I swayed on my feet. He gently nudged me out from under the spray and washed himself in record time. The suds sluicing down his body, over his muscles, running in rivulets through the defined bulges of his back, tried to reawaken my body. The first small sparks of desire lighted my belly, but there was no way I could go another round.

For one, my body felt like it had been pulled taught then rung out. That, and Knight had made sure I was more than satisfied.

I leaned back against the shower wall and closed my eyes, startling when he lifted me and wrapped my legs around his waist. He stepped out of the shower, wrapped us in a huge fluffy towel, and I lost the battle with sleep.



When I woke, I was warm, wrapped in Knight's arms and legs, his front plastered to my back. Surrounded by him like this, I felt safe and cared for, like nothing and no one could hurt me. My side where my new tattoo was burned a little and I remembered that I never put the petroleum jelly on it after our shower last night. My body felt loose and limber, my muscles relaxed. But there was a distinct throb between my thighs, a slight pain that I knew would be there all day. It was my throat that really bothered me, stinging and burning with misuse.

I wiggled closer to Knight and his hard length settled against my naked backside. His arms tightened around me and he rubbed his nose in the hair over my ear.

I turned over to look at him, my smile soft. His matched, eyes warm with feeling. He ran a finger over my cheek and down my neck, his eyes darkening at what I imagined was a ring of heavily bruised bite marks, like a collar around my throat. His palm settled on the front of my throat, his fingers wrapping around one side and his thumb gently stroking my pulse on the other. He leaned in, gently nipped my bottom lip and then kissed me.

This one didn't start slow, like yesterday. This one was urgent, biting, his tongue forcing its way into my mouth and tracing the shape of my teeth. When I was breathless and wiggling against him, he pulled back to look at me.

“Are you sore?” Concern and desire warred in his eyes, his protective instincts and the real *need* to never cause me actual pain battling with his desire for me.

I was sore, but I wanted him. How I could still want him after last night, after he satisfied me with such blinding pleasure, was a mystery to me. So, I shrugged one shoulder and mouthed, *A little, but I want you.*

He kissed me again and rolled us so that I was straddling his thighs. He lifted me by the hips, effortlessly moving me so that I was positioned right where he wanted me. His eyes grazed my body like a physical caress, the desire in his eyes flaring hotter. Seeing his appreciation of my body was like gasoline to

the flame of my own desire. Wetness spread between my legs, coating me and him in the proof of how much I wanted him.

He placed his big hands on my hips, nearly surrounding the span of my small, bony frame. His thumbs brushed against the finger shaped bruises there, adding just enough pressure to sting a little, as he began to guide my hips back and forth over his length. He didn't enter me, just guided me over his length, the ridge in his head catching my clit on every pass. My head fell back, a ragged breath leaving my lungs harshly. I caught the rhythm he was building, grinding myself against him faster and with more pressure, my wetness coating him, preparing me for him. My sex tingled wildly and my nipples beaded. His neck corded, the tendons standing out as he dug his head into the pillows beneath him, his upper lip slightly curled in pleasure.

I caught sight of our reflection in the mirror over the dresser a few feet to our left. I turned my head to see us fully, my tiny, pale body straddling his much larger, tanned and colorful one. I looked so dainty next to him, his muscles dwarfing me. My red hair hung down my back in an absolute riot of frizzy curls, the ends caressing the tops of his bulging thighs beneath me. His hands on the dip of my waist, the contrast of dark and light, made my hips move faster and a tingle began in that spot inside me that I now recognized. He ran one hand up my front, his big hand splayed wide and covering more of me at one time than should've been possible. He stopped his hand between my small breasts and for the first time, I wasn't ashamed of them. They looked dainty and sexy next to his

huge, dark hand, my nipples pebbled into hard, pale little points.

He met my eyes in the mirror, watching us with as much intensity as I did, and like it usually did, his gaze felt like a silken caress to my skin. The hand at my chest gently pushed my top half backward, just a little bit, arching my back in a way that on my next thrust backward, his head caught at my entrance. Our eyes locked in the mirror, I slowly sank on to him, taking him inside me. Our eyes shuttered with pleasure but didn't close, unwilling to look away from the reflection of dark and light, two bodies writhing together in tandem.

He showed me the way of being on top, using his hold on me and his strength to move me forward and back, up and down, as his big thighs flexed and he met me thrust for thrust. His head knocked my cervix and I panted at the pain and the pleasure that followed. My thighs began to tremble, my breaths coming unevenly and my teeth grinding.

He sat up, scooting backward against the pillows and grabbed a fistful of the hair at the base of my skull. He pulled my head back, running his teeth over the sensitive skin of my neck and thrusting up into me. I ground down onto him with more force, my womb clenching tightly, painfully. Sweat rolled down my back, my hair sticking to my skin. He pulled harder on my hair, forcing my head further back to meet his eyes.

“Come. Come for me, B. Come all over me and show me what I do to you.” His words, the vibration of them against my

steeply arched torso, was the final push I needed. My mind splintered, my thoughts scattering, my eyes clenched as tightly as my teeth. He held me through it, his hands tight on my body as he held me seated fully on his lap, planted so deeply inside me that I swore I could feel him in my throat.

My hand wrapped around the back of his neck, trying to hold him to me during an orgasm I was sure was going to send me into outer space if it didn't end soon. The other hand slid up his sweaty chest, the tips of my fingers resting in the hollow of his throat, feeling the vibrations of his groans of pleasure as my sex pulsed around him. My nails dug into his skin on the back of his neck, the base of his shaved skull, in a way I was worried had to hurt him. Except, his head smacked against the wall behind him, his abs clenching and releasing as his shaft kicked inside me. I felt the warmth as his cum coated my insides, my clenching muscles drawing it out of him. His groan of pleasure rumbled against my fingers and I shivered violently, another wave of pleasure cascading from the crown of my head all the way to my toes.

When we both came down, he pressed his forehead to my chest, his breath cooling the sweat on my skin. I ran my fingers through his hair, enjoying the feel of the shaved sides against my fingertips. He looked up and smiled at me. "Mornin', sweet girl." I blushed at his name calling, never tiring of the new ones, enjoying every single one he came up with.

Good morning, giant. He cocked an eyebrow, one side of his mouth curling up. I traced the huge muscles on his arm

with one hand, his huge torso with the other. *So large, like a monster come to life. Big and brave enough to protect me from anything, strong enough to guard me from anyone. A giant, my own personal, protective giant.*

He smirked, his chuckle bouncing me, before concern flashed in his eyes again. His fingertips brushed the front of my throat, his brow creasing. “You in pain? That why you ain’t speakin’ this mornin’?” I nodded and his nostrils flared. “I’ll have Doc find somethin’ that’ll help. For now, let’s go shower and then we’ll get some breakfast. Hot coffee might help.”

But I didn’t move off him. I just smirked down at him, his soft dick still inside me, our fronts still smashed together, our arms wrapped tightly around each other. When he raised an eyebrow again, my smirk grew into a full smile. *Big, bad, biker MC prez, so worried about a tiny woman with a little discomfort in her throat.*

His eyes darkened and he moved so suddenly, I didn’t have time to brace. I didn’t need to though. He wrapped an arm around my back, placed a hand on the back of my neck, the other in the mattress beside it, his hips spreading my thighs even wider in this position. “Not just *any* tiny woman. You’re *my* woman. You’re my queen, and I’ll never sit idly by while you’re in pain without tryin’a fix it for you. If it’s within my power to take even a little pain away from you, I’ll do it a hundred times over, *always*.”

Tears burned my eyes and I reached up to run my fingernails through his beard. His eyes closed and a shiver of pleasure raced across his skin, goosebumps following behind. He leaned down and kissed me passionately before standing with me in his arms. He carted me around, moved me to just exactly where he wanted me, lifted me, as if I weighed nothing at all to him. I caught sight of my tiny body, wrapped around his torso, and I supposed that my weight probably *was* nothing to his huge muscles and strength. If I was being honest, I loved how tiny I was next to him, the juxtaposition of his large, muscular body against my thin, slight frame was hot as shit.

We showered quickly, even though I tried to distract him. Knight's eyes were dark with desire but he refused, saying he knew I had to be tender. When we got out of the shower, I stood wrapped in a towel in front of the bathroom vanity, brushing my teeth when my eyes focused on the ring of dark bite marks and beard burn on my throat. I leaned closer to the mirror, tilting my head this way and that to see better. My fingers trailed over the marks, the sensitive skin tingling and slightly burning at the gentle touch. Something in my chest, something deeply primal that I had never understood before, swelled with satisfaction at being marked and owned so publicly by Knight. The idea that every person I encountered today would see these marks and know someone had left them on me, it made my womb clench with need for him again, the desire to see how many more marks of ownership I could get him to leave on my skin flaring hot.

Knight's big body appeared behind mine, sorrow in his eyes. "I hurt you. Let myself get lost in the moment." I smirked at him, took my toothbrush out of the corner of my mouth, spat and rinsed the toothpaste away and then turned to him.

I grabbed his big hand, planting it on my neck, enjoying the way it collared my throat completely, almost all the way around, like a necklace made custom for me. I pressed my neck against his hand harder, ignoring the pain it caused. His eyes flared.

"You like it a little rough don't you, Butterfly? Like a little pain with your pleasure?" I nodded and swallowed against his palm, taking a deep breath.

After I saw you the first time, that night when I laid in bed in the dark with my hands between my thighs, I imagined what it would be like to have your big hands on me. I imagined you would be rough, taking what you wanted from my body. I imagined you pushing my face into the mattress and spanking me until my skin glowed and burned with your handprints. My breathing picked up, my cheeks flushing and my body heating. He pressed me back against the wall with the hand at my throat, crowding me with his big body, his head tilted down to see my face and his shoulders curved protectively over my body.

I came as I imagined you yanking my head back by my braid, using it like reins as you fucked into me from behind. I've imagined wearing your bruises for three years and now, I

actually get to. I'm not sorry for any mark you leave on me after our time together. I never will be. I don't understand why I feel this primal satisfaction at being marked by you, or why I like the idea of pain mixed with pleasure. But since the first time I ever saw you, every single dirty fantasy I've had has been about you and me having dirty, filthy, bruising, pain-filled sex.

He crashed his mouth over mine, kissing me brutally and passionately. Our teeth clashed together, our tongues thrashing. When he got tired of bending at the waist, he picked me up, pinning me to the wall with his hips. I thought he was going to tear the towel off of me and fuck me right there against the wall...until my stomach growled harshly.

He laughed and set me on my feet, holding my hand as we walked into the bedroom. I quickly brushed and braided my hair into two French braids like pigtails hanging down my back, smiling when Knight frowned at me as I tied off the last one. We dressed, him in his standard t-shirt and jeans, this pair somewhat baggy instead of tight. They hung on his narrow, toned hips in a way that made my mouth water. I dressed in a pair of skinny jeans, tucked them into my studded biker boots and pulled on a red long-sleeved top.

When we got to the kitchen, it was empty and there was no food sitting out. I looked at him and raised an eyebrow.

“Want’a go for a ride?” he asked. My heart jumped and adrenaline raced through my body. I nodded emphatically, my eyes sparkling. He snaked his arm around my shoulders and

pulled me into his side, leading me through the house, but not to the front door. He led me to that hidden room where he had taken me the first night. “I got you somethin’. Want you to wear it today, if you want it.” I cocked my head, my eyes sliding from him to the door and back.

He led me through the door and to the desk at the back of the room. He leaned down, collected something from the bottom drawer and stood with a bundle of leather bunched in his hands. He seemed nervous suddenly. “You don’t- uh- you ain’t got’a accept it, if you don’t want’a. The brothers’re givin’ me shit for givin’ you this already, so I get it if it’s too soon. I had Ma work on it yesterday. She finished last night. This... it’s a big deal, B. It’s really important in our lives and our culture. But if you aren’t ready, you don’t have to accept it, ‘kay?” My heart thundered and my mind raced. In my mind’s eye, I saw the women at the party the other day, wearing leathers with patches proclaiming them property of their men. I remembered Knight explaining the property patches, and how giving a woman your patch was basically an engagement, a promise that she was his woman, and his alone. I remembered him explain that, even though the patches claim the women as property, they announce who the men belong to just as much. I swallowed convulsively, my eyes falling from his serious, nervous ones to the leather in his hands.

He carefully unfolded it, turning it around so I could see the back. It had the DVMC insignia on it, and above that it said, “PROPERTY OF” and underneath, “KNIGHT” and beneath that, in smaller letters, “PREZ DVMC”. My eyes watered and

I watched blearily as he turned it around. There was a name patch on the left side that said “Butterfly” and underneath, “PROPERTY OF PREZ”. There was a patch on the other side, a rose with wings that matched the ones on the insignia wrapped around it in a pseudo-hug, that proclaimed me a “WOMAN OF THE DVMC”.

My tears spilled down my cheeks as I looked up at him. He swallowed nervously. “If you ain’t ready to accept it, s’okay. I already claimed you in front’a the club. All the brothers know you’re mine. You don’t got’a wear my patch, they know you have our protection. I know it’s big, but I don’t feel like this thing between us started only a few days ago. I wanted you for years, since ‘fore it was even legal for me to want you. If you’re not ready for-” I snatched the leather from him, hugging it to my chest, stroking the soft material and letting my tears fall onto it.

He picked me up, crushing me to him as he kissed me. It didn’t escape my notice that even in the midst of his enthusiasm and excitement, he was still careful of my injuries. He stroked my neck and said, “Wanted you for three years, B. Got’a say, ain’t another woman on this planet I’d want to wear my patch.” My heart gave an even harder thump.

He showed me how the sleeves could unzip and be detached to make it a vest, or zip on to make it a riding jacket. He helped me slide it on and led me from the room by my hand. When we came back into the main room, there were brothers everywhere and my hand clenched convulsively in Knight’s, my feet rooting to the spot and refusing to move. He came up

to my back, wrapping one arm around my torso and splaying his hand across my stomach. I looked up at him to see him grinning triumphantly at his brothers. I turned my eyes to them, shocked to see them all whooping, pumping their fists in celebration, some clapping, but all of them grinning.

My stomach rumbled under Knight's hand again and I felt his chuckle vibrate against my back. He said something and led me through the crowd. Smoke and Shark hugged me gently and then gave Knight a solid smack on the back in one of those manly hugs they do. Kylie and Ma hugged me too, and Pops planted a hand on the back of my head, kissing my forehead. Chains was by the door and as we reached it, his eyes met mine. He dipped his chin, grabbed both my cheeks in his big, meaty hands and examined my neck before sliding a look to Knight that clearly indicated he was unhappy about the extra marks on my skin. But then he smirked at me, a very small movement of his eyes and one corner of his mouth, before he looked into my eyes seriously again, his face changing infinitesimally into a serious scowl.

I don't know how I knew, but I knew in my soul that he was promising me safety and protection with that move. He stroked a hand over my hair and then, shockingly, pulled me into a gentle hug, mindful of my ribs and quickly released me.

Knight led me to his bike, where another surprise lay in wait. Cracker was tucked into one of the saddle bags, a little clip attached to a new collar so that he was tethered to the bike. On my little seat, a small back rest had been attached and a pink helmet hung there. When I got closer, I saw there was

elegant black script on the sides of the helmet, the DVMC insignia on the back. The beautiful, scrawling script said “B, Property of Knight” on both sides of the bright pink helmet with a butterfly painted behind the words.

I greeted Cracker, stroking his ears and letting him lick my cheeks. Knight lit a cigarette and I plucked it from his fingers. We smoked in silence, watching the puppy run around the bike and our feet. I leaned into his side and he immediately wrapped his arm around me and settled his hand at that spot he seemed to like so much, right where my waist flared slightly to hip.

Chapter Seventeen



Maggie

The days passed quickly. With a healthy diet of human scraps and high protein puppy food, Cracker grew into a large, muscular puppy that Knight swore was three times too big for his age and breed. It seemed like every day he was noticeably larger, even though it had only been weeks since I found him. I dropped out of college and began apprenticing with Chains at the store. My bruises faded, the ones my dad had given me and the ones Knight had graced me with. My ribs quit twinging every time I moved.

Knight and I were rarely separated. If we were, it was because he was taking care of club business, or I was at the

shop with Chains. The guys - Smoke, Shark, Nuts and Bolts and Chains - taught me how to play pool and throw darts and I found that I liked most of the brothers. Shark even taught me how to shoot a gun, which I was complete trash at. Smoke taught me about handling weapons, loading and unloading them, and even how to properly wield a knife during a fight. Chains taught me how to throw a punch that wouldn't break my wrist and Knight taught me how to escape several different holds, if I were to ever be attacked again. Whenever they taught me how to fight, I always sparred with Smoke, because he was the smallest of them all. I was weaker and smaller than him, but my size gave me speed and I usually took him down before he could get his hands on me.

The guys seemed to like me, and I loved them. Some of the older men were misogynistic and believed that women truly were property – trophies to be seen and not heard. I was trying to adjust to the fact that I could always speak my mind around these men, and most of them valued what I had to say.

Amy had nearly shit herself when she had seen Knight and I pull up one night, me in my property patch and helmet, wrapped tightly around Knight on the back of his bike.

Knight loved me every morning in the shower, every night in bed, and usually once or twice during the day when he would drag me up to the room, a bathroom, or the nearest kitchen counter, which Ma protested heavily when she found out, claiming nobody wanted to eat food a la ass. We explored more of his kinks and I found that I was way kinkier than I had ever thought before. I liked rough, brutal sex, painful pleasure

and even loved it when Knight wrapped that massive hand of his around my throat and squeezed until spots appeared in my vision. Once he'd let me breathe, I would come so fucking hard from the rush of blood and oxygen to my brain that I usually dragged him into his own orgasm. He stayed away from my neck for the most part, usually only leaving me with one or two visible marks there. But my breasts and inner thighs were now covered in hickies and bite marks of varying shades, some were days old and slightly yellowed, some vibrant and dark. The man loved to see his marks on me, but I loved wearing them, too.

I got very close to the girls, Kylie, Jessamine and Mia. We developed a fast friendship and Kylie and Jess were even trying to learn sign language from Mia and me.

It was very early three Saturdays after Knight had rescued me. He had me on my hands and knees in the middle of the bed, his fist wrapped tightly in my hair as he held my cheek pressed to the bed, landing sharp stinging spanks on my ass, his hips thrusting brutally, his weight pinning me down. I moaned and thrashed my hips back against his, forcing him to move harder and faster. The hand in my hair slid around to my face, the strands still tangled in his fingers as he hooked two fingers into my cheek and pulled me up so my front was flush to his back. The new angle assaulted my G-spot ruthlessly and his rough handling, combined with the pleasure of his body taking mine, pushed me into an orgasm so strong my legs trembled with the effort of holding my own weight. Knight's chest vibrated against my back and he fisted my hair, yanking

my head to the side so that his teeth could sink into the juncture of my neck and shoulder. My hips bucked against his as his teeth pushed my orgasm higher.

We collapsed on the bed, me sprawled half on top of him, while we panted and he twirled a curl around his finger with one hand and stroked my back and colorful ribs with the other. The weather had cooled significantly and the breeze from the open window chilled our sweaty skin, making me shiver.

My phone flashed a notification from the nightstand and he reached for it, handing it to me. There were several notifications, one from my calendar app reminding me that I needed to get my shot this coming week and had an appointment scheduled with my doctor for Tuesday. I showed him so he would be aware and he frowned slightly but nodded, distracted by the bouncy curl in his fingers.

I pushed up on an elbow and thumbed the frown that marred his brow, a question in my eyes. He shifted nervously under my weight, but one big palm came to rest on the lower part of my abdomen, that spot he liked to push on when he got irritated at me for holding my orgasms back (because I knew the longer I held it off, the more intense it would be). He didn't like to be denied my pleasure and when I tried to hold it, he would force it out of me and then punish me with two more. His fingers caressed my skin there, paying close attention to the burn scars he liked to kiss every chance he could. I sat up more fully, uneasy at his avoidance of my unspoken question.

He followed my movement, never willing to be separated from me for at least thirty minutes after we had sex. He pulled me onto his lap and adjusted me so that I could see his face. “I didn’t mean to frown about the shot, B. Ain’t nothing’a worry ‘bout, sweet girl, I’m good.” I gave him a flat look and arched an eyebrow, letting him know that answer wasn’t good enough. He chuckled and smirked. “Y’know, if the guys knew I let you boss me ‘round like this, they’d never let me hear the end’a it.” I kept the look steadied at him, unwilling to let this go, though I wasn’t even sure why it mattered. It just felt important.

“Kay, I got it.” My stern look slipped and I smiled a little before I forced the sternness back into place. “I was frownin’ ‘cause...well y’know how we’ve been explorin’ different things that you enjoy in bed? Our different kinks and shit?” I nodded. “Well...I’m a little obsessed with the idea of puttin’ a baby in you.” My heart thundered and my eyes widened. My hand landed on top of his on my belly. “I want’a see you round with my child and know what kind’a gift it is you’re blessin’ me with. Every time I see my cum leakin’ out’a you, I want’a shove it back in and force your body to hold it there.”

And that’s how we ended up back in bed, ignoring Smoke when he came knocking and fucking until both our hearts felt like they would explode.

When we got out of the shower nearly two hours later, I remembered the other notifications that had gone unread after the baby talk. I sat on the edge of the bed in my towel while Knight finished trimming his beard over the bathroom sink.

He never shaved smooth, but he would run a trimmer over it every few days to keep it at a stubble instead of a full beard.

There were several meaningless social media notifications, a message from Carly, who I hadn't spoken to in weeks and didn't miss all that much, and several unread emails. The next was a text message that had me standing up abruptly, just as Knight came into the bedroom from the bathroom. He rushed over to me, having gotten so good at reading my body language that he knew immediately something was wrong. He curved his big body around mine protectively. My hands shook as I stared at the message on the screen. It was a picture of my dad, beaten and bloody, his hands bound above his head. The message below it read *He owes us money and I was promised you as payment. They can't keep you safe forever, zorra.*

Knight began moving so quickly, I was surprised he didn't trip over his own feet. He opened the door to the bedroom, hollering something out into the hallway before stalking to the dresser and snagging some boxer briefs, yanking them up then stomping back over to me, yanking the sheet up over my towel-clad body, covering me just as the boys came running in, half dressed and bare chested. Chains had a wicked looking curved blade in one hand, a long length of heavy chain in the other. There was a heavy padlock attached to one end and I thought that must've been where he got his nickname. He came straight to me, standing in front of me, his big body shielding mine. I wrapped the sheet tighter around my body and stood up, lighting a cigarette and going to Knight, curling

my tiny body into his bigger one. Chains followed, not willing to leave my side, even if he didn't know what was happening yet.

Knight told the boys about what had happened, showed them the message on my phone, and they all formed a protective semi-circle around me. Kylie came rushing in, her hair messed, dressed in one of Shark's shirts that hung to the tops of her thighs. She rushed over to me, hugging me tightly and running a soothing hand over my hair. The commotion made Cracker anxious and he paced the room before settling his big butt on my feet. I hid in Knight's side, pulling his arm tightly around me, taking in the comfort and safety I always felt in his arms.

When I opened my eyes next, the room was empty except for us and Cracker. "Get dressed. I'm callin' Church. Want you in the kitchen with Ma and Chains." He dressed as he spoke and I followed quickly. I was scared and cold and couldn't bear to be separated from him, so I dressed in leggings and the long-sleeved Henley he wore yesterday. His smell surrounded me and I knew that it would bring me comfort while he was in Church. I knew the guys would figure out who wanted me. I knew they would keep me safe. But my body trembled and adrenaline-laced fear pumped through my veins.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



I slammed into church, the door ricochetin' off the wall and swingin' closed behind me. I didn't sit in my chair. I stood at the head'a the table, pantin', sweatin', feral with anger and the need to figure out who was threatenin' my Butterfly. My fisted hands rested on the table in front'a me and I looked 'round the room.

I opened the text on Maggie's phone and passed it 'round the table. "Maggie received this message fifteen minutes ago. I want'a know where her dad was getting his shit and I want'a know *now*." My eyes bounced 'round the room, but it was

Whiz that spoke, though he was still focused on the screen in front'a him.

“From what I can tell, her dad spent every penny he could on drugs. After we scoped his place, I tracked all the men that came and went. He's in debt to most of his friends for bummin' drugs when he didn't have any'a his own. Seems ol' Pete paid of a drug debt for him. He and Pete had an,” he cut off abruptly, his eyes flashin' to me then to Smoke. Smoke gave him a nod and Whiz shrank into his chair a little more. He cleared his throat heavily. “He and Pete had an agreement that Pete could,” another throat clearin', “um, have relations. Said he could have Maggie for three hours and they'd be even. Pete agreed.”

I growled, cursed, and threw the closest thing within reach 'cross the room. The whiskey bottle shattered and liquid soaked the wall.

Whiz cleared his throat again and slid a file folder out from under his laptop. He fingered it nervously 'fore slidin' it to me. “Fore you open that, those are messages from her father to Pete, other friends, and who appears to be a dealer. The dealer told him he was out'a time to pay his debts, and he offered Maggie as his payment. The dealer accepted. I've tried to track the number, the location, everythin' I can think of. I can't figure out who the number belongs to.

My hands trembled as I thumbed through the screenshots'a all the text messages. My rage built and built 'til my chest vibrated, my ears burned, my eyes blurred.

Suddenly, the door flew open and Maggie stood there, pale, tremblin' and lookin' even smaller than usual. My shirt swallowed her but she had it bunched tight in her fists, tears fallin' off her chin to soak the material at the neck. Her eyes locked on me for less than a second and then she launched herself at me, just as Chains appeared behind her.

She sobbed into my chest and I yanked her up my body. She clung to me, her body tremblin' and her tears soakin' my neck. When she finally took a steadyin' breath, she leaned back and loosened her legs, slidin' down my body to stand in front'a me.

I know who sent that text. Well, I don't know who. But I know what he looks like. I've met him once before, at my dad's house, during one of his parties. He's Hispanic, with a heavy accent. It was about two months before I met you. He thanked me for "servicing him," she made air quotes around his words, and called me zorra. I just assumed it was a Spanish pet name. My dad laughed and said I was an "excellent little slave." She shuddered, her little shoulders vibratin' with revulsion under my hands. He called him Enrique. I never thought about it again. I didn't even make the connection until just now.

I cupped her face, allowin' my thumbs to dig into her pulse points to comfort us both. "Listen'a me, B. No one is goin'a take you 'way from me. I'll burn Hell itself to ashes 'fore I let anythin' happen to you. You understand me?" She nodded. I grabbed her hand and put it over my heart. "You're safe here." Her fingers flexed and I knew she understood that I meant

more than just within the clubhouse. “No one’ll hurt you again. I promise.”

She shuddered again and more tears slipped down her cheeks. I brushed them away with my thumbs. “No more tears, ‘member?” She took a deep breath and stared into my eyes ‘til her breathin’ evened out and her tears stopped. “Good girl. Now go back to the kitchen with Chains and *do not* leave his side again, ‘kay?” Her fingers tightened on me for a moment ‘fore she forced them to relax and took a reluctant step away from me. She slowly returned to Chains’ side.

Just ‘fore the doors shut, she grabbed his cut and burrowed into his side. Jealousy slithered through me, but I knew she felt safe with him and forced it ‘way ‘fore lookin’ back to Whiz. He was face down in his laptop, typin’ furiously and clickin’ from window to window.

“Tell me that’s enough to get us somewhere, Whiz.” He didn’t even respond, just started typin’ faster. I looked at the other men around my table. “Her safety’s top priority. *Nothin’* happens to her. Am I understood?” They all nodded. “Good. Be smart, keep your eyes open, and consider this an attack on all’a us. We don’t know what length they’re willin’a go to in order to get what they think is their payment. Stay in pairs, ride in pairs, don’t be dumb.” They all nodded again.

I finally sat in my chair and discussions broke out ‘round the table, tryin’a figure out what our next move would be.

Three hours and zero answers later, I found Maggie curled up in bed. Chains was posted outside our bedroom door and I left him there, knowin' he wouldn't leave, even if I told him to. I crawled into bed behind my Butterfly, wrappin' my arms and legs 'round her. She burrowed deeper into my embrace, her little body still shakin'.

While I held her, I thought 'bout the words I'd said in Church and knew I'd never made a more truthful vow. I *would* burn Hell to ashes 'fore I let anythin' happen'a her. I would fight Satan himself 'fore I let her be in harm's way. Rage coiled in my bones, burnin' hate for the men that scare her settlin' in the pit'a my stomach like a writhin', livin' bein'.

She pressed her back 'gainst my front even tighter and I buried my face in her hair, breathin' in her scent. I held her tightly, 'til her tremors slowed, then rolled her to her back so she could see my face.

I took her hand and pressed it to my heart, tellin' her again, "You're safe here. I swear it."

She looked into my eyes for a long time and then said, "Thank you for saving me that night. Thank you for everything you've done for me."

I kissed her softly. "Never thank me for lovin' you, Butterfly. I don't deserve you. I done bad things, and will do more bad things tomorrow and the next day and the day after that. But someone thought I deserve you, and I'll never stop being thankful for that."

Her big eyes widened and her jaw slackened. “You-You love me?” she whispered.

“Yeah, B. I love you. I’ve loved you for years. I watched you for three years. Fell in love with your kindness, your gentleness, the way you hide in your hair like no one can see you, if you can’t see them. Fell in love with the way you hold your coffee cup with both hands and sometimes press it to your cheek so you can feel the warmth ‘gainst your face.” Fat tears began to leak from her eyes and I kissed them away. “I fell in love with the way you scrunch your nose when you study or read,” I kissed her nose, “and the way you bite your lip when you’re concentratin’.” I kissed her lip in the exact spot she always bites. “When I first saw you, it felt like gravity shifted. I’m not held here by physics anymore. I’m held here by *you*. I love you so completely, Maggie. It consumes me. *You* consume me.”

She burrowed deeper into my embrace and dug her nails into my chest, holdin’ me as closely as she could. She cleared her throat and when she spoke, her voice was barely ‘bove a whisper. “When we first had sex, I had the same thought about gravity, about you being my gravity now. You make me feel strong, Knight.” Her eyes met mine, wet and shiny “I’m not, I’m not strong.” She shook her ead. “I’m so fucking weak and I feel like I’m not enough for you. Not good enough, not strong enough, not brave or tough enough for you.” I shook my head, frownin’ vehemently, but she placed a finger against my lips. “It’s true. I’m not any of those things on my own... but you make me feel like I can be them now. With you by my

side, I feel like I can take on anything. I'm not scared anymore, Knight. I'm not scared of people or talking or of being alone. I'm not scared of anything, except losing you. I love you, too, Knight. Sometimes, I think my love for you will burn me alive."

"You'll never lose me, Maggie. I told you. You're stuck with me now. If you're goin'a burn, baby, then I'm burnin' too."

She laid her head 'gainst my chest and pressed a kiss right over my heart. She flattened her palm there, as if she could hold her kiss 'gainst my skin. We held each other in silence for a while longer, but I knew she hadn't eaten yet today and it was nearin' noon.

I nudged her and when she looked up at me, I said, "We need'a eat, Maggie." Her hold tightened on me. "I know, B. But you need'a eat. You want'a go somewhere? We can take a ride with Cracker and go to the diner?" She looked over at the dog, curled up on the foot'a the bed. It had irked me at first that he slept in the bed, but it was comfortin' to Maggie, so I didn't say anythin' 'bout it. Now, I kind'a liked havin' his weight 'gainst our legs throughout the night.

Finally, her body relaxed and she nodded. "Good. And after we eat, I got a surprise for you, baby." I helped her sit up and we dressed quickly. When she started to braid her hair, I stepped up behind her and finished the braid. Cracker followed us out'a the room, where Chains was still standin' watch.

I slapped his shoulder as we passed him. “Hey man, we’re goin’ a go eat at the diner. You comin’?” He followed silently, stickin’ close to Maggie ‘til we reached the parkin’ lot. He went over to his bike and idled while I got Cracker hooked up in his custom seat Nuts had built him, attached to the back’a the bike.

Chapter Nineteen



I sat next to Knight, Cracker and Chains across from us. When we first brought Cracker here, I'd worried they would kick us out, but Knight explained the club owned the diner, so I had nothing to worry about. He was a good dog and curled up next to Chains, laying down in the booth seat.

Amy came over to take our order and I was tempted to hide from her again, but I refused. I wanted to be the kind of woman Knight deserved, the kind worthy of his love. He wasn't afraid of anything, and I wanted to be like that. I stared her down when she smirked at me while I ordered for myself.

She laid her hand on Knight's shoulder and asked him what he wanted to order.

Her gall shocked me, but I thought, *What would Jessie do?* I quickly grabbed a menu, rolled it up and slammed it down on the hand resting on Knight's shoulder. Knight's shoulders shook with laughter as Amy gaped at me.

“Bad pussy! No pissing on what doesn't belong to you. Or did you miss the new patch?” Her eyes settled on the new addition to Knight's vest, the one that declared him *my* property. He'd said it had never been done before, but that my words from our first time kept replaying in his head and that he wanted everyone to know he was mine, just as much as I was his. My heart had melted and I'd cried. Then we'd ended up in the bathroom, me bent over the counter, him curled over my back. We still hadn't washed the handprints off the mirror.

Amy stared at the patch for a moment and then flounced off, tossing her fake blond hair over her shoulder.

So, what's my surprise?

Knight chuckled. “If I told you, it'd ruin the surprise, wouldn't it?”

I pouted at him, but he only smirked. *Is Chains coming with us?*

“Yeah, B. We're being cautious right now. All the brothers have to travel in pairs, and I want you protected. Chains'll be with you at all times, outside'a the clubhouse.”

Will I still get to work at the shop?

“Yeah, long as you stick by him and don’t leave the shop.”

I promised to stay with Chains just as Amy came up to our table with our drinks. I doctored my coffee and took a cautious sip, careful not to burn my tongue. But the second the coffee hit my tongue, I spit it out, aiming for my cup and missing partially. Knight immediately took the cup from me, snatching napkins to wipe the hot liquid off my hand, but I was glaring at Amy. Chains was fishing a cube of ice out of his water but he saw Amy’s smug smirk.

“Is the coffee not good, *Queen*?” She sneered at me as she used the nickname the guys had taken to calling me.

“You fucking salted my coffee, you bitch!” I tried to scramble over Knight, my hands reaching towards Amy. Knight held me back, which only pissed me off more. He’s supposed to be on my side, yet he’s stopping me from trying to hurt her. “Knight, let me go! I’m so tired of her shit! You guys keep her around cause she’ll fuck anything with a cock but she doesn’t need her face for that. Let me go!”

He wrapped his arms tighter around my middle while Chains stood up, towering over Amy. Cracker followed him out of the booth, placing himself between me and what he perceived to be a threat. His hackles raised and Amy shot him a nervous glance, shifting closer to Chains. Knight still refused to let me go, so I grabbed the hot mug of coffee and launched it at Amy, who shrieked when the hot liquid spilled down her front. Chains caught the mug before it fell to the floor. I couldn’t see his face, but whatever he said made her pale and

back away quickly. I slumped back in my spot and crossed my arms, glaring at Knight.

You're supposed to support me and defend me. Why did you protect her? Why did you do that? Tears of insecurity welled in my eyes.

He grabbed my hand and held it up in front of my face. My skin was red and slightly swollen from the spilled coffee. "I wasn't protectin' *her*, B. I was protectin' you. You're injured and would'a made it worse, had you gotten 'hold'a her. I don't care 'bout Amy. You can strangle her with your bare hands if it'll make you feel better, and I'll be right there to help you if you need it." He took a piece of ice from Chains and slid it over the red skin. "But not 'til after this gets better."

He continued to ice my hand while he made a phone call. I didn't pay attention to his call. I just burrowed into his side, slinging my legs over one of his.

Amy came back over with a first aid kit and a fresh mug of coffee, looking angry, but contrite. She set the coffee in front of me and the first aid kit on the table by Knight's elbow. I eyed the coffee and then raised an eyebrow in her direction. "Is this safe to drink, or would you like to wear it again?"

She gritted her teeth and stared me down as if I was a puppy trying to act scary. She wasn't too far off with that one. "It's safe," she gritted out. With that, she walked away, fluffing her coffee-dampened hair.

I doctored it and took an even more cautious sip, but it was just normal coffee this time. I looked to Chains, Cracker

panting happily next to him, his tongue lolling out to one side.
What did you say to her?

He smirked. “Said that if she didn’t learn her place and find a healthy dose’a respect, I’d hold her down while you rip her fake eyelashes out one by one then pop her fake-ass tits like balloons. Told her when you were done, I’d let Cracker have his way and bury whatever was left myself.”

I stared at him wide eyed, my pulse thumping heavily at the image he painted. Then I burst out laughing imagining her tits deflating like a cartoon balloon. Knight smirked at me and kissed my forehead.

After we ate, we smoked in the parking lot while Cracker wandered around, looking for a place to relieve himself. When he hiked his leg and pissed on a car tire, I started to run after him to reprimand him, but Knight and Chains were doubled over in laughter. When Knight finally caught his breath, after giving Cracker a generous ear scratch, he explained that Cracker had just pissed on Amy’s car.

I laughed and gave Cracker another generous scratch down both his muscular sides.

Once we were mounted onto Knight’s bike, he pulled out of the parking lot, turning the opposite direction of the club house and headed towards the highway. I loved being on his bike on the highway. The speed, the weightlessness, the freedom, the chilly fall air. I loved all of it. At first, I had been afraid, but I knew Knight would never willingly put me in danger. I knew that if he had any doubts about my safety, we would’ve taken

the truck. So, I raised my arms into the air and enjoyed the feeling of weightless flight.

About an hour later, he exited off into a large town and navigated through the busy city streets for about twenty more minutes. When he finally pulled into a large complex of shops, offices and restaurants, I looked around for any clue as to what we might be doing here. My heart rate sped up as I recognized the area. I didn't dare let myself hope, so I told myself he was probably just taking me shopping, since he liked to buy me things.

But, as he parked in front of a familiar office, my fingers tightened on his sides through his jacket, my thighs squeezing reflexively. Cracker, so attuned to me, picked up on my anxious excitement and nudged my back with his nose. We dismounted, my legs shaky after such a long ride, and as Knight helped me steady myself, Chains helped Cracker get unloaded, removing his doggie goggles. Knight fished Cracker's leash out of the saddle bag while I stared at the building in disbelief.

"You brought me to an audiologist?" I knew my quiet voice was colored with anxiety and shock.

Knight gave me a lop-sided smile. "Surprise." He grabbed my hand and led me towards the office doors.

"But-But it's Saturday! They aren't even open!"

He turned his face towards me as he pushed the door open. "They are today. C'mon, let's get you some hearin' aids!" He pulled me through the lobby and Cracker strained at his leash,

unhappy with being more than three feet away from me. Chains relented and unhooked the leash, rolling his eyes at my dog.

A young blond with hair almost as curly as mine came through an interior door, and to my surprise she wasn't alone. Mia followed behind her. I rushed to Mia, hugging her tightly because I hadn't seen her in several days.

The blonde led us to a room and Chains stayed posted outside the door. Knight sat next to me in front of her desk and Mia sat off to the side in an extra chair.

The doctor asked me question after question about my hearing loss, how well my old hearing aids worked, how the accident happened. I didn't lie this time. I told her about the abuse and the accident. Mia translated everything for Knight, but the doctor communicated mostly with sign language.

After our discussion, she led me to a sound booth and I went through the motions of the audiogram. Back in her office, she looked at my results with a grim face. *I think you will benefit minimally from hearing aids, Maggie. I think a cochlear implant is a better option in your case.*

I looked nervously to Knight, who asked, "What's that mean? What's it entail?" The doctor explained the surgical process, the wait time after, the difficulty most patients have when adjusting to the sudden influx of noise. He looked anxious, a deep frown line between his brows. He squeezed my thigh and looked to me.

“This what you want, B? Sounds pretty serious.” I thought for a moment, knowing hearing aids can help some, but a cochlear would give me nearly full-spectrum hearing back. I wasn’t sure if I was ready for that yet. My world had been mostly silent for years and the thought of hearing everything again seemed overwhelming - especially in a clubhouse full of rowdy bikers and parties.

If we start with hearing aids, we can always do a cochlear later, right?

Yes, that’s correct, the doctor signed. Some patients prefer to reintroduce sound with hearing aids before getting a cochlear so that it’s less stimulating.

I thought a moment longer, looking to Knight. *Doing hearing aids now and then a cochlear later is expensive. And I don’t have insurance, so everything would have to be out of pocket. I can’t afford this. I can’t even afford one option.*

“The club voted, B. They guys want’a pay for this for you.” My heart swelled and I looked to Chains outside the door, then back to Knight.

How long do I need to wait for the hearing aids? I asked the audiologist. Last time, I had to wait three weeks and now that I knew this was happening, I was feeling impatient.

Instead of signing, she spoke out loud, for Knight’s benefit, I expected. “We can take the ear molds right now. We switched to an in shop lab for our molds, so I can have them ready in about two hours. Knight called a couple weeks ago and set all this in motion, so I already have your Starkey Lumity L-90

pair here on site. Once your molds are ready, we can fit you and program them and I can show you how they link to your phone.”

My heart thudded with excitement as she squeezed the goop into my ears for the molds. Once she left the room with Mia following her, Knight stood and pulled me to his chest. “We can shop around a little bit while we wait, if you want.” I squeezed his hand and pulled him into a hard kiss.

We walked around the strip mall and went into a few different stores. Knight bought me a perfume I liked, I bought myself some new hair bands and a new hairbrush, and Chains got Cracker a leather harness that had metal studs and spikes on it. We fitted Cracker into his new harness and leash and gave him a treat from the leather backpack Knight had gotten me. We took him over to a grassy area where he used the bathroom and chased a squirrel up a tree. Knight handed me a cigarette and pulled me into his body, my back to his front. He leaned down and kissed the crown of my head.

Chains looked at us with a strange look in his eyes, one I never thought I’d see there. He looked almost jealous, maybe nostalgic. I looked up at Knight. *Has Chains ever had a girlfriend?*

Knight looked to Chains and then back to me, giving me a reluctant nod, but the slight tightening by his eyes told me I shouldn’t ask about it right now. I dropped it but made a mental note to ask him about it when we were alone. We

stubbed out our cigarettes and headed back towards the audiologist's office.

An hour later the doctor announced, "Okay, Maggie, I'm going to turn them on now. Please keep in mind, these are much stronger than the cheaper brand you had before. These will be able to amplify many more noises than you are used to, okay? We will test your hearing with sounds first, voices after." I nodded and she clicked a few buttons. At first, I didn't notice a difference, but then the doctor snapped a few times. My eyes widened and I looked at Knight, my face flushing. The doctor tapped her pen a few times and the noise pricked in my ears. "Can you hear these noises, Maggie?" I nodded enthusiastically.

Knight grabbed my chair and turned me to face him, pulling me between his knees. He grabbed my face in both his big palms and kissed me deeply. He pressed his forehead to mine, his fingers massaging the base of my skull. He pulled back a fraction and looked into my eyes. And then I heard his voice for the first time. "I love you, Butterfly."

A sob escaped me and I launched myself into his arms. Cracker didn't understand what was going on, but he picked up on the excitement in the room and pranced around, barking excitedly. I flinched at the loud noise.

"Do we need to turn them down a little, Maggie? Was the barking too loud?" She reached for her mouse, but I shook my head.

“No, it wasn’t too loud. It’s just a lot to get used to. I forgot how loud some things are.” She nodded her understanding and went about showing me how to connect the devices to my phone. I could control the volume within a certain spectrum, turning them up or down a few clicks. I could stream sounds to them and use them for phone calls. She gave me a case for them, which doubled as a charging dock for the rechargeable batteries and reminded me to keep them clean and dry before showing us out of the office.



Later that evening, I straddled Knight’s thighs in the chair in his room. I ground down on him, taking him as deep as I could and swiveled my hips. His fingers tightened on my waist and a groan of approval sounded in my ears. I knew that if I lost my hearing forever right in this moment, I would be happy knowing I had heard that delicious noise that sent goosebumps skittering across my skin.

His hands squeezed on my hips and controlled my movements, not allowing me to speed up when I desperately wanted more. I moaned and groaned and cried out with frustration. “Please,” I begged. “Please, baby, I need more. I want to come, Knight, please.” I rambled uselessly, tugging on his hair and digging my nails into his shoulders. When he refused to give me what I wanted, I slid my small hand up to his neck, knowing I would do absolutely zero good. But still, I tightened my hand around the front of his throat, tightened my inner muscles around him, leaned close to his face and said, “If you don’t make me come right now, I swear to everything that I will make you wait a week before you have my body again.” His eyes flashed violently and he slid his arms under my knees and stood, pressing my back to the wall.

He used his hold on my knees, pressed tightly to my chest, and his hips to hold me against the wall, but I didn’t worry about falling. I was fucking *flying*. He pounded me harshly and I exploded three minutes later. He pushed on, my orgasm forced higher and higher until my whole body was shaking, my eyes rolled back and my teeth clenched tightly against the painful pleasure. When it finally passed, Knight leaned his lips next to my ear and whispered, “My turn, baby.”

And then he went absolutely feral. I clawed at his neck, shoulders, back, chest, any inch of skin I could reach, trying to keep myself grounded. I was overcome by pleasure, my body wrung out. We were both drenched in sweat, spit and other wetness I didn’t care to identify at the moment.

“Wrap your hands ‘round my throat again, B. Fuck, that was so goddamned hot. Do it again.” When I hesitated he released one of my legs and grabbed my hand, bringing it to his throat. I wrapped my dainty hand around his thick throat and he groaned harshly. “Tell me you want’a come again, B. Tell me to make you come.” His hips faltered in their rhythm and I knew he was close. He was holding out to get one more from me.

I squeezed his throat a little and moaned, “Make me come, Knight. Give us both what we want.” I arched my hips to meet his as much as I could in this position and he turned, dropping us onto the bed. His massive biceps bulged next to my face and I arched my back in a way I knew he liked.

He planted his hand in my lower belly and thrust powerfully. Once, twice, and I was gone again. I screamed, my voice still sounding harsh and weird through my hearing aids. He growled, his breaths stuttering and catching before he held himself deep inside me. With his hand pushing so tightly into my abdomen, I felt him twitching more profoundly than I ever had before and ground my hips tighter against him, my hand spasming on his throat, legs shaking and muscles firing chaotically.

He collapsed with a gasping breath, his sweat slicked skin sliding against mine. He kissed a bite mark on my breast and then rubbed his face in the sweaty skin between them, licking and kissing right above my heart.

We didn't shower. We didn't move, other than for me to remove my hearing aids. We fell asleep in each other's arms, sweaty, sticky, stinky, and fully satisfied.

The next morning, after a shower and a lot of making out, Knight drove me to the shop with Chains, kissed me goodbye, and pulled away from the curb. Cracker followed me and Chains into the shop and settled on his bed in the corner.

A short while later, I was tracing a stencil in the back when Cracker suddenly perked his ears up, his body tensing and the hairs on his back standing up. He jumped to his feet just as a hand clamped over my mouth, a rag soaked in chemicals that burned my throat pressed tightly over my skin. I struggled, trying to remember when Knight had explained how to escape a hold like this, and ended up kicking the table and toppling a cup of pens, which clattered noisily. Cracker latched his jaws around my attacker's wrist, shaking his head violently. Blood splattered from the man's wrist, spraying my shirt and face. The man kicked at Cracker, who latched his jaws tighter, his muscular body tense and straining. The man grunted in pain and drug both me and my dog out the back door just as everything went black.

CHAPTER TWENTY



As I left Maggie at the shop, pullin' away from the curb and watchin' her get smaller in the mirror, a pit settled in my stomach. I couldn't pinpoint why, but somethin' was wrong. I hit a button on the side'a my helmet and ordered the voice command to call Chains.

He grunted when the line connected and I said, "Somethin's happenin'. Don't know what, but I got a feelin'. Keep Maggie close. Don't let her leave the shop for any reason without you. Tell her to keep Cracker close."

He grunted again and I ended the call as I pulled into the mechanic's shop on the main drag downtown. Bolts was off

today and Nuts needed help pullin' a tranny from a '93 Camaro. I parked my bike and walked into the shop.

We'd almost wrestled the tranny out'a the damn car when our phones rang at the same time. Our eyes connected, dread stenchin' the air and we both raced to answer. Chains was on the other end, talkin' a mile a minute, which in itself would normally be enough to make me panic. But the words that came out'a his mouth sent ice through my veins.

“Someone took Queen and Cracker! They were in the back, tracin' a stencil, there was a loud noise. By the time I got there, they were gone. I followed but lost 'em on the highway after they opened fire. I'm sorry, Prez. I failed her. I failed you.”

I pulled the phone 'way from my ear without respondin' just as Nuts said, “Whiz thinks he can find her,” as he took off toward his bike. Our bikes started with a roar and as we pulled out'a the parkin' lot, I called Smoke and told him to get everyone in Church immediately. He called me back a moment later. “I got everyone comin' back to the clubhouse. Didn't tell them what happened, but told them mandatory Church in thirty.”

I slammed my fist down on the solid oak table. “I don't give a flyin' shit what you do or don't know, Whiz! Figure somethin' out and *FIND MY WOMAN!*” Whiz barely acknowledged my outburst, but he did type faster, switchin' between windows and clickin' rapidly on his mouse.

Maggie'd been missin' for hours and I was on the verge of going feral. Conversations swarmed 'round me but my brain couldn't focus on much other than the Maggie-shaped rip in my soul. Smoke laid a hand on my shoulder, tryin' to reassure me that we would do everythin', burn everythin', 'til we found her. My breaths panted through my nostrils as I puffed a cigarette as if my life depended on it. Chains grunted to my right and when I spared him a glance, his face was pale and sweaty. Doc stood behind him, forceps shoved deep into the packed muscle of Chains' deltoid as he pried a bullet free. Mia, who'd never been allowed in Church before, stood next to Doc, passin' medical supplies and wipin' blood away from Chains's skin. I noticed for the first time that her touch was too gentle, too lingerin', and her face was pinched with worry, but not only for her missing friend. I wondered if there was somethin' I should know about how my sister felt about my brother. I thought that was long over, that whatever they'd had had ended when she was eighteen. The bullet pinged harshly in an ashtray when Doc finally pulled it out.

Although I was disappointed in Chains, he was bein' harsh enough on himself for both'a us, so I palmed his bald head and gave it a gentle shake as I took another drag'a my cigarette. He grunted deeply as Doc began stitchin' the open wound.

I grabbed Mia's elbow and pulled her to the corner'a the room. She immediately wrapped her arms 'round my waist, her body tremblin' 'gainst mine. She was normally so strong and brave, but Maggie's kidnappin' and Chains' wound

seemed to take a heavy toll on her. I nudged her chin up to meet my eyes.

“What’s goin’ on with you and Chains? Thought that shit was over” Her face paled and she immediately began to shake her head. I tsked once and chucked her under the chin. “He’s a good man, Pita. Risked his own life to try to save Mags. If he’s who you want, have him. I told you that years ago.” She looked at me like I’d grown a second head, which I understood since I’d spent the last two decades warnin’ her to stay away from my brothers - and then warnin’ them to stay away from her, after what’d happened ‘tween her and Chains.

She opened her mouth to say somethin’ but Whiz’s computer began to ping loudly, repeatedly. “I GOT HER!” he shouted, as he clicked furiously ‘tween browsers. “Her hearing aids are pingin’ in Western Falls, ‘bout three hours from here.”

I was headed toward my bike ‘fore he finished talkin’, but Smoke grabbed my bicep and stopped me. “We can’t just go rushin’ in there. They’ll hear us coming from a mile away. We need a plan. We need to take a cage. We don’t know who has her, or how dangerous they are. They may be armed. We need to figure out how we’re goin’a play this.”

Chains grunted his agreement and Shark nodded along. I took a deep breath and tried to think clearly. The panic was clawing at the inside’a my gut, my body beaded with sweat and my heart poundin’ hard and fast.

“”Kay.” I blew out a rough breath. ““Kay,” I said again. Smoke handed me a cigarette and Shark unlocked the safe to

pick through the weapons stored there. He checked guns and clips, grabbing extras' a both.

As a plan formed in my mind, my panic faded and adrenaline pumped through my veins. Six of us would go. We'd take the van and park a block away to approach on foot. Doc would stay in the van, case Maggie needed medical care.

"Smoke, Shark, Nuts, Bolts, Chains, you're with me. Doc, you drive." I explained my half-assed plan and they began to pass 'round weapons, tuckin' guns and clips into their waistbands. Chains left the room and returned moments later with his length of thick chain with the heavy padlock bolted to the end.

We loaded into the van and doc dialed Whiz, puttin' the phone on speaker and settin' it in the cup holder. As Doc fishtailed out of the parking lot, Whiz began to spout directions.

Once on the highway, Doc floored it, veerin' 'tween cars and takin' the shoulder when people wouldn't move out'a the way. As we sped toward the location where B's hearin' aids were pingin', lightnin' streaked 'cross the sky and rain began to pound the windshield, forcin' Doc to slow a little.

I turned to Chains, watchin' him for a moment as he sulked and fisted his hands in his lap. "Yo, Chains." He looked up at me with angry eyes, but I knew the anger was self-directed. "You take a likin' to my sister again?" Everyone's eyes, even Doc's, whose should've been on the road, focused on Chains. He swallowed heavily, but maintained eye contact 'fore

gruntin' an affirmation. I started at him a moment, makin' him sweat a bit. "Good. She got a likin' fot you, too. But you hurt her again and I'll kill you this time." Shock colored his face but he dipped his chin. I took that as a thanks and turned back 'round to look out the windshield.

Two hours later, we took the exit into Western Falls. Whiz instructed us to turn left here, take the next right, like some annoyin' GPS voice. With every turn, the ball in my gut got tighter, sweat beadin' harder on my forehead, my breathin' quickenin'.

"There's an alley on your left, three hundred feet. Park there. You're 'bout three blocks 'way." Whiz's voice crackled through the phone speakers. "I got video feed'a outside the buildin', no cameras inside from what I can find. There're three people outside. Suits, so I'm thinkin' they're organized, not club. I'm thinkin' same dude that sent the text, so probably cartel." Whiz rambled as we all checked our weapons one last time.

"Kay, when we approach, everyone goes quiet. Maggie is top priority. We get her out safely, no matter what. Understood?" The men grunted and I slid the door open.

We crept down the block, keepin' an eye open for any potential threats as the rain soaked us to the bone. We approached the buildin' from the back where we split into two teams. Smoke, Chains and I came up one side while Nuts, Bolts and Shark took the other. As we approached, I tried to peek in the windows but it was too dark to make out anythin'

but shapes. I think I could see a chair in the middle'a the room, shadows movin' 'round, and I could make out Cracker's stark white fur in a corner but nothin' that'd tell me where B is.

As I reached the corner'a the buildin', I peeked 'round the corner, spottin' three men standin' by the door. I held up a fist, signalin' to the men to pause for a moment. I listened intently, tryin'a figure out who they were workin' for. I waited, listened, and just when I was 'bout to attack, a blood curdlin' scream came from inside. My heart leapt into my throat and I rushed the guards not waitin' to see if my men followed me.

Chapter Twenty-one



Maggie

Three Hours Earlier

When I came to, the first thing I registered was that my mouth felt like it'd been stuffed with cotton. My tongue was dry and stuck to my lips when I tried to wet them. My eyelids stuck together but I forced them apart, only to be met with blinding light. I slammed my lids shut and tried again. When I finally got my eyes to focus, the face that filled my vision was the same face that has haunted my nightmares for years. My dad sat in a chair across from me, his face bruised and marred with cuts that had just begun to scab over.

I was bound to my own chair with my arms behind my back, coarse ropes that were already chafing away at my skin tight around my wrists and ankles, but he was sitting loosely in his, slouched back and his legs spread casually. The men around the room conversed quietly, until my father spoke up.

“Well, Margaret, you have caused me quite the fucking headache lately. You see, I owed a lot of money to the wrong people. The night that Enrique came to collect, he saw you and decided he’d rather have you as payment than the money I owed him. Since you’ve been nothing but a pain in my ass since your bitch of a mother offed herself, I figured this was the perfect arrangement. When you rejected Pete and took off to those wannabe bikers, I had to convince Enrique not to kill me. I promised I’d figure out how to get you back for him, and when you started working at the shop with that bald moron, I knew it’d be perfect. But then you got that fucking mutt and I had to wait for the right time.” His voice grated on my nerves and I wished for a moment that Knight had never gotten me hearing aids. He continued to ramble, but I tuned him out, glancing around the warehouse where I was being held, trying to figure out where I was.

Cracker was in a cage in the corner. He looked mostly unharmed, though his fur was still stained red with the blood of the man who snatched me. He was in a wire crate and when he saw that I was alert, he immediately jumped up, trying to bite and chew his way out of the kennel. His muscular body pulled and bent the wires but they didn’t give. He growled viciously and tried to shake the wires loose.

My father was still rambling and I looked back to him, rolling my eyes in an exaggerated manner. “Knight will kill you for taking me. Did you enjoy the beating Enrique gave you? Because Knight will make that look like child’s play.”

My father’s face reddened, though shock reflected in his eyes. He recovered and then clapped mockingly. “Wow, Margaret. Two months with your gang of pussies and you’ve grown a backbone.” He stood and approached me, leaning down to whisper in my ear. “I should have fucked you and then given you to Pete after your mother died.” Goosebumps raced along my skin and fear slithered through my chest, banding around my ribs and making it hard to breathe. But I refused to be weak any longer. With Knight’s face firmly in my mind’s eye, I swallowed harshly and drew strength from the knowledge that he would come for me soon.

I turned my face slightly, whispering into my dad’s ear, mocking him again. “If you’d done that, you’d be safe now. Knight will skin you alive for even speaking to me after what you did to me.” I latched my teeth around his ear lobe, yanking my head away harshly, taking flesh and blood with it. I spit his lobe on the ground at his feet as he screamed and clutched at his torn ear.

He pulled his hand away and stared at the blood, his face paling. “You bitch!” He backhanded me violently, my head snapping to the side and fresh blood filling my mouth. Cracker began barking and growling menacingly, ramming his body against the side of his cage. I prayed he would break the

fucking thing so that I could watch as he tore my father to pieces.

I spit blood on my father's pants and smiled at him. "I will enjoy watching my boys cut your hands off for that. I will ask for each of your severed fingers as a present for the next ten years and each time one is gifted to me, I will remember the man who thought he could get away with putting his hands on DVMC property." His face colored and his lips twisted into a sneer as he drew his fist back.



The next time I came to, it was dark in the warehouse, rain pelting the roof and leaking through in some places. There were lanterns lit here and there, casting ominous shadows. My father stood with Enrique in a corner as they argued over what to do with me. I listened intently. Enrique wanted to wait for the DVMC to come for me.

"If we wait here, they will come for her," he said in his thick, Hispanic accent. "If we take them out now, then Roberto

will be free to move into the territory freely. We can move our product through here without the threat of the DVMC. We will take the zorra as payment, you will be free, and she will be sold to the highest bidder. ”

My father argued, stating that taking on the DVMC is dangerous and would result in a war. Enrique laughed.

“You think I am scared of them? Even if something were to happen to me, Roberto would avenge me and we would still win. The DVMC has no hope of winning a war with the Suarez Cartel.”

A cell phone began to ring and Enrique raised his head. He yanked a phone from his suit jacket and studied the screen. He looked at me, a cold smile spreading his mouth. “It seems we have some visitors, zorra. Your men are very loyal to you. Tell me, have you fucked them all? Are you worth all this trouble or have they already worn out your sweet coño?”

I glanced at the window, hoping to catch sight of Knight, but all I saw were flashing streaks of lightning. I whimpered involuntarily, the fear that had been bubbling under my skin feeling like a living, breathing thing that I struggled to suppress any longer. But I brought Knight’s face to mind and refused to show fear, boldly meeting Enrique’s stare. I smiled at him and said, “Go ahead, touch me and see what Knight will do to you for it. He will slice your skin into ribbons and watch it fall away from your bones while I worship him on my knees.” Breaths panted in and out of my lungs, drying my mouth further and wheezing at the end of every breath.

Enrique's eyes lit with something beyond anger and he stalked towards me with murderous intent. My body tensed, ready for whatever he may have in mind for me. Instead of striking me as I expected, he stopped and cocked his head to the side, examining me as if I were a bug of interest. He smirked as he walked behind me, laying a hand on top of my matted hair, damp with sweat. He leaned down and whispered in my ear, his breath making a static sound through my hearing aids.

“I wonder, zorra, would your little bikers be so interested in you if you weren't so pretty?” He produced a short knife from a sheath on his hip and pressed it gently to my left eyebrow. “Let's find out, shall we?”

I tried to jerk my face away from him, but he wrapped a hand over my forehead and pressed my head into his soft belly. The knife dug into my skin little by little. At first, I thought he was toying with me and I almost breathed a sigh of relief. But then, without warning, he dug the knife in deeply and pulled it slowly down my face, from my eyebrow to my jawline. I screamed and shook my body, trying to fight my way free of his hold. He laughed at my struggles and ran a thumb through the blood running down my face. “Now let's see if your Knight thinks you are worth the trouble.”

I sobbed as tears spilled and burned the wound. I fought them, trying not to let any more spill but I couldn't stop them. So instead, I stared at Enrique with a look I hoped would send him straight to hell. I might have succeeded, but gunfire

sounded outside and my heart leapt into my throat, a sob of relief breaking through my fear, panic and pain.

Blood dripped from my wound, mixing with my tears and soaking the edge of my shirt, running into my mouth and blurring the vision in my left eye. I smiled at Enrique. “You are a dead man. If you thought Knight would turn away from me because of a little cut, you’re sorely mistaken. I can’t wait to see what he does to you for this. He might even let me help. It would be so satisfying to watch you choke on your own dick.” I spit blood on his shiny dress shoe just as the door burst open.

I’m not sure if Enrique was just a cocky bastard who thought he was untouchable, or if he really did think the DVMC wasn’t a threat, but he only had four men inside the warehouse, plus my father and himself. Five of my men came through the door, their eyes scanning the room for threats before all of them landed on me. Knight, Chains, Smoke, Nuts and Bolts settled their eyes on me, rage coloring their faces. I wondered briefly where Shark was, knowing he wouldn’t have let Knight come on a rescue mission without him.

Knight let out a barely-human roar and charged the man closest to his left. Gunfire erupted all around me and my ears rang violently. My father, the coward, ran for an exit but Chains gave chase and swung his thick chain, the heavy padlock connecting with my father’s knee. He went down screaming.

The rest of my bikers dispatched Enrique's men quickly. Enrique must have realized he was on the losing end, because he grabbed me by my hair, yanking my head back and pressing the cold barrel of a gun against my temple.

He didn't shout or issue orders. He simply waited until he had the attention of the DVMC men inside the warehouse. Tears dried on my cheeks as I met Knight's eyes. My body shook violently, my teeth chattering, but I locked my muscles, refusing to give Enrique the satisfaction of knowing just how scared I was. Knight took a step forward, his gun raised, until Chains put a hand on his shoulder, stopping his progress.

I trusted these men to save me, but I wondered why Chains would be delaying Knight from getting this gun away from my head.

Scenes from movies played out in my head, the ones where the hero always negotiated for his woman's release. But that isn't what happened. It was Nuts and Bolts that began speaking. They were on opposite sides of the room, speaking in that Tweedledee and Tweedledum way they so often did.

"I can't believe," Nuts started.

"The arrogant idiot," Bolts continued.

"Only brought seven men." Nuts.

"What kind'a dumbass," Bolts.

"Only brings," Nuts.

"Seven incompetent men," both of them, at the same time.

My eyes bounced back and forth between them until Knight caught my gaze. He lowered his chin, his gaze intense, and flicked his eyes to the ground, his head tilting infinitesimally. His eyebrow twitched, and his eyes flicked again as he nonchalantly tapped his wrist, as if he were wearing a watch. I lifted my chin slightly, understanding dawning in my sluggish brain.

“This wasn’t even,” Bolts.

“Worth the fuckin’ drive.” Nuts.

“I didn’t even get-”

“-to punch anyone.”

“ENOUGH!” Enrique yelled over my ear, pulling the gun away from my temple and swinging it wildly between the two of them as if he couldn’t decide which one he should take aim at first.

“Now, B! NOW!” Knight shouted and I threw my body to the side, taking my chair with me. Enrique’s grip yanked hair from the roots and with my arms still tied behind my back, I had no way to break my fall. The moment I landed, my shoulder popped loudly and I yelped in pain. In the following second, glass shattered, followed by the wet *thwack* of a bullet meeting flesh. Enrique grunted heavily and fell to the ground, clutching his calf and cursing in Spanish.

What had felt like minutes was less than thirty seconds. The adrenaline pumping through my veins slowed time and now that it was over, my entire body felt heavy and weighted. The

next moments were a blur of pain, relief and soul-deep gratitude. Knight rushed to me and Chains ambled back over to my father, who was still in a sobbing heap on the floor. Nuts and Bolts high-fived as Shark came ambling through the open doors. Knight easily raised my chair back onto its legs, righting me and gently probed my throbbing shoulder before cutting my wrists loose. I cradled the injured arm and the shoulder made a terrible grinding noise as I moved it.

He then removed his shirt and gently dabbed at the sliced side of my face before pressing it fully to my injury, his teeth grinding, nostrils flaring. He moved hair out of my face and replaced the hearing aid that had become dislodged in my fall. He didn't need to say anything to me. His eyes said it all. He would make Enrique pay. He would face the wrath of the Suarez Cartel to get justice for me.

In that moment, I truly believed that he would burn the world if I asked him to. He loved me. He had told me so. But this was the moment where I really *knew* he loved me. I felt it in my soul, saw it burning in his eyes. He lifted me, cradling me gently to his chest and I curled into a tight ball, wrapping my uninjured arm around his neck and tucking my knees into my body as tightly as I could.

My body failed me, my mind blanking, my muscles going limp. I'm not sure if I fainted, blacked out or just plain fell asleep, but the next thing I remember is Knight passing me to Chains as he folded his frame into the front seat of a large black van before cradling me in his lap again. Doc inspected my face and prodded my shoulder.

“I have to set that shoulder. It’s dislocated. But I can’t set it until I know there’s nothing broken. We need to take her to my office for X-rays and sutures.”

Knight ran a hand over my hair as I curled back into his side. I tried to ignore the two men that were tied up in the back of the van, held at gunpoint. I knew I was safe. The guys had placed their prisoners at the very back of the van. There were six men and just as many guns between my father and Enrique and me, but fear still gripped my chest in a tight fist. I buried my nose in Knight’s hair and inhaled deeply. Calm settled into my bones and I sighed against him.

Chapter Twenty-two



Maggie

Hours later, we walked into the club house, Knight pulling me to a stop in front of a door I had never entered. My body had no real damage, other than my face, which was now wrapped in a huge gauze bandage. It took seventeen stitches to close the cut and Doc warned me that it will scar heavily, but he gave me an ointment to help keep it to a minimum.

“We have to handle Enrique and your father, B. You okay with that?” He arched an eyebrow at me.

I huffed air through my nostrils in a mirthless laugh and arched a brow right back at him. “Enrique did this to my face

because I told him I couldn't wait to watch you slice his skin into ribbons while- actually, I believe my exact words were, 'He will slice your skin into ribbons and watch it fall away from your bones while I worship him on my knees.'" My cheeks heated furiously, but I held eye contact with him, letting him see the truth behind what I had said to Enrique. I truly would watch it happen, and I would enjoy it, too.

He read the truths I allowed him to see and his eyes heated with lust. He saw that I would follow him wherever he led me. And I would. Blindly. Freely. Unconditionally. Always.



Knight led me down a dark staircase in the back of the clubhouse. On the way back, he'd explained that this was the room where Shark, as the enforcer, handled 'club justice'. I didn't ask questions, even though I knew he would tell me more, even if he wasn't supposed to.

At the end of the staircase, Knight paused in front of another door. "You sure you're ready for this, Butterfly? You

can't unsee this, and you won't ever be able to look at me the same after."

I saw fear in his eyes, but I knew that no matter what I saw down here, I wouldn't think of Knight any differently. "No, Theo," I said, using his real name to let him know how serious I was about this. "You are my whole soul. Whatever happens down here, happens because you are seeking justice for me. This is what I have prayed for, for as long as my father had been hurting me. I prayed for someone that would go to the ends of the earth for me. I didn't know it at the time, but I prayed for *you*. I fantasized about you, sure, but I didn't know that you were the someone I was praying for. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt, you would do anything for me. I could ask you to bring me every single one of my father's fingers in a gift wrapped box, and I have no doubt you would do it. There isn't a single thing you could do down here that will change the way I think of you."

He wrapped his big hand around the back of my neck and pulled me to him, kissing me fiercely, despite the slight pain in my cheek. The wound wasn't as bad as it had looked at first, and honestly, I didn't even care it was there. Knight had seemed worried I would be upset about the scar, but it was just another to add to my story. Each one told the story of a weak girl that grew into a strong woman through her abuse, the love of a strong man and the support of a whole family.

Knight's kiss was heated and passionate and by the time he pulled away, we were panting and I was rubbing my whole front against his. "When we're done down here, after I show

you exactly how far I'm willin' to go for you" he panted through gritted teeth, forehead pressed tightly to mine, "I'm goin'a take you upstairs and show you exactly how much I love you."

Liquid heat pooled in my belly and I moaned as I rubbed my nose against his, breathing in his scent. I decided right then that it was my favorite smell in the whole world, better than fresh baked cupcakes, better than Cracker's puppy breath - better, even, than fresh brewed coffee and Lucky Strike cigarette smoke in the morning. He pulled my head back and looked deep into my eyes, a slight furrow between his brows.

"Take your hearin' aids out when it starts, B. I don't want you to hear it." I frowned but nodded my consent. Then, he opened the door to what can only be described as hell.

My father was tied to a chair, much like I had been in that warehouse, but he was naked. His bindings were barbed wire, his mouth was gagged with a dirty rag, and he had bruises covering most of his body. I noticed most of his bruises coincided with the bruises that I had worn when I first got here.

Enrique was dangling in the middle of the room, also naked, and although he was sweating profusely, he looked mostly unharmed. He rambled on and on about how someone named Suarez would come for the DVMC because of this. They would pay. He would be avenged. He babbled on and on, despite the fact that everyone else in the room was ignoring him.

My eyes swept the room and I took in the other bodies. Shark, who's white shirt was spotted with blood, Smoke, Chains, Pops, Nuts and Bolts - because, of course, they were never separated -, and a couple other DVMC brothers were down here. The last person my eyes landed on surprised me. Mia, wearing a black t-shirt and dark jeans, was holding ice to her knuckles. Chains hovered right next to her, and although his eyes flitted to me when I walked in, quickly assessing that I was okay, they went right back to her.

“Pita, the fuck're you doin' down here?” Knight's voice boomed from behind me, drawing the eyes of everyone in the room and interrupting Enrique's annoying babble.

My father immediately began hollering through his tape, his shoulders jerking, obviously begging me to help him. Although it took every bit of my strength to keep my face impassive and turn away from him, I grabbed Knight's hand and did exactly that.

“C'mon, T. You didn't think I'd let you boys have all the fun did you? That asshole,” she pointed a polished finger at Enrique, “took my sister-in-law and made me cry.” She moved her pointing to my father. “And that asshole is a child beater. I needed my pound of flesh.” She held up her iced fingers. “I got it. Now, I'm just here to enjoy the show.”

Knight began to argue that she didn't need to be down here, but she interrupted him again. “Theodore, I've been kicking your ass since I was twelve years old. If you think for one second, you're going to get me to leave this room without

forcibly removing me, which I would not recommend by the way, you're dead fucking wrong.”

I arched my head back to look at Knight, who cocked a brow at his sister. Then, he looked at Chains. His next words surprised me, even though I knew he wasn't too much of an overprotective brother. “Chains, ‘member our conversation earlier?” Chains grunted. “You hurt her this time, I'll kill you. Got me?” Chains smirked and dipped his head in acknowledgement. I felt a little like a ping pong ball, eyes bouncing back and forth between the two for a moment, stuck on the ‘this time’, before Knight said, “Good. Get her out’a here.”

Chains leaned down and tossed a red-faced Mia over his shoulder before stalking out of the room. Mia cursed and fought, punching Chains in the back before she landed a solid elbow to the back of his head. He grunted and stopped on the stairs and swatted her ass, the smack resounding through the room. To my surprise, Knight chuckled as Mia gasped in outrage, just as the door closed behind them.

As Knight turned back to the two captives, his face changed from entertained to a mask of deadly hatred. “Take out your hearin’ aids now, B.”

Even though I obeyed, the next forty-five minutes were far from silent. I heard the screams, the begging. I saw the tears. I had never pegged myself as heartless, but I felt it now. I watched my dad lose his fingernails, followed by Enrique's teeth. I watched Knight carve a butterfly into Enrique's chest

with the very knife he had used on my flesh. Shark smashed my father's fingers one by one, then his tongue was removed from his mouth after Knight found out what he'd said to me. When Enrique spit in my direction and said he should've used me before Knight showed up, his ears were removed and screwdrivers were shoved into his ear drums. I didn't shed a single tear. I didn't flinch. I didn't gag. I felt nothing.

Nothing, other than fierce vengeance and satisfaction. In my mind, my father had been the biggest, baddest monster in the world for years. But here, in the presence of my man and his brothers, my new family, my father was a whimpering, crying mess that currently sat mute, naked and mutilated in a puddle of his own bodily fluids.

Before the finale, I walked up to Knight, laying a hand on the hard muscles under his t-shirt. He looked over his shoulder at me and read my thoughts in my eyes. He was so good at reading me, I feared for a moment I would never have any secrets from him. In the next moment, I realized I didn't even want to. This man was the very breath I breathed. He could know every single one of my secrets and I would never bat an eyelash.

I swallowed and wet my lips before speaking. "Take me upstairs now, Theo. I'm finished here." He frowned for a moment and I imagined he felt cheated out of taking the lives of the men who had harmed what belonged to him. But then he smirked and wiped his hands on a rag before wrapping both big palms over my butt and lifting me to his body. I wrapped

my arms and legs around him and held on as he climbed the stairs out of hell, moments before he took me to heaven itself.

EPILOGUE



Two Years Later

“**I** said sit, Butterfly. You ain’t sittin’.” I growled from below Maggie.

“I’m afraid to hurt you, Theo.” Her words trailed off on a moan as I lifted my head and latched my mouth to her pussy.

She threw her head back, her weight sinkin’ more fully into my mouth. Her long hair tickled my stomach as she rotated her hips ‘gainst my face.

I looked up the line'a her body, her slightly rounded stomach makin' pride swell in my chest. After two years of tryin', negative test after negative test, a doctor tellin' us it might never happen 'cause'a the trauma her small body'd been through, two rounds'a IVF and then two miscarriages...after all that heartbreak, seein' her stomach rounded with my child filled me with a feeling'a completeness that not even her love brought me.

She'd struggled with her infertility, tellin' me one night that it made her feel like she was lettin' me down.

Truth was, I saw how strong she was to fight through all that heartbreak. I saw the girl I'd met becomin' a woman through that fight. Now, here she was, pregnant, miserable, but more beautiful than I'd ever seen her.

I laid my hand on her stomach, feelin' our little girl kick as her mama rode my face hard, lost in her chase to orgasm. My thumb brushed 'gainst the burned skin of her lower belly, knowin' the way it stretched as our child grew caused her more pain than she let on.

Maggie's small hand tangled in my hair as her back arched and her breathin' paused. Her face and chest flushed, her pussy pulsin' 'gainst my face as I increased my suction. She came with a curse, her hips stutterin' as her breath came in gasps.

When it was over, I lifted her by the hips, movin' her to lay beside me, wrappin' my arms 'round her, which she promptly

wiggled out'a. She shimmied down my body, pushin' my hips 'til I was flat on my back.

In the next second, my cock was at the back'a her throat and my eyes rolled back in my head. I tangled my fingers in her hair, resistin' the urge to thrust into her mouth.

She worked me as deep as she could, wrappin' her hand 'round what she couldn't fit, and went to work. Even after two years, our sex was never borin', and we still discovered new things we liked every day. Two years, and she knew exactly what to do to make me come in minutes.

She slid a hand up my thigh, stoppin' when two fingers were right 'hind my balls. She massaged in small circles with firm pressure, moaned 'round my head, and I fuckin' saw stars. A grunt escaped my throat and I barely had time to growl out, "I'm comin'," 'fore I was sprayin' the back'a her throat.

She laid down 'side me, curlin' her small body into my side and sighin' against me. Her hand rested on her belly and I laid mine over it.

How do you feel? OK? She nodded, her cheek rubbin' in my chest hair.

I'm okay. I'm nervous.

She dropped her hands and took a deep breath. "I know the doctor said we're out of the danger zone...but-" she cut off with a choked sob. "What if my body lets us down again?"

I rolled us so that I was hoverin' over her. "Ain't goin'a happen, B. Doc said we're good and the heartbeat was strong. Our girl's goin'a be here in a couple'a months and she's gonna be strong, just like her ma. She's gonna run this MC 'fore she turns one, you'll see. She's goin'a have a bunch'a big bikers wrapped 'round her pinky and ain't no one gonna be stupid 'nough to fuck with her."

B smiled at me, dimples poppin' up in her round face. Tears welled in her eyes and I kissed 'em away, feelin' my little girl roll over in her belly. "We should pick a name," she whispered.

Have anything in mind? I asked, my hands moving naturally after almost a year'a classes.

Yeah, she signed. She lifted my hand and traced her fingers over the bluish-gray butterfly. "I was thinking, maybe, Holly Blue." I recognized the name from when I'd been searchin' the web for images of butterflies, 'fore I'd even met her but had been so fuckin' gone for her that I'd tatted her on my skin for everyone to see anyway.

A feelin' I couldn't describe warmed my skin and bubbled in my blood like a shaken bottle'a soda. Happiness, maybe, but that didn't seem strong 'nough. Somethin' more.

"Yeah, baby. Think that's a great name."

And four months later, Holly Blue made her appearance one month early, after a thirty-seven hour labor. Doc announced a healthy baby girl and, after a quick exam, placed a dirty, tiny, *screamin'* baby on my wife's sweaty chest. Blood and

somethin' that made me kind'a want'a vomit smeared on B's skin as she cradled our girl, lookin' up at me with tear streaked eyes.

Holly-B latched onto B's breast and I decided right then that it was the most incredible thing I'd ever seen. Watchin' B give our daughter life, watchin' her provide the substance that would keep our daughter alive, my respect for this woman grew more than I ever imagined it could'a.

I pressed my forehead to B's, my big hand cradlin' our girl's head at her breast with more gentleness than I would'a thought my killer hands could muster.

“Thank you, B. I thought you'd given me all you could when you gave me you, but this,” I rubbed my thumb over the crown'a Holly-B's head. “This is more than I could'a ever hoped for.”

She let out a watery laugh and rubbed her nose 'gainst mine.

Two hours later, we were settlin' into a room that we'd call home for the next 24 hours and soon, the room was over run with leather, chains and big men passin' 'round our girl and leanin' down to kiss B on the forehead and give her gifts.

Smoke held Holly-B up high and proclaimed, “All hail the princess of the DVMC!”

And man, that she was.

Table of Contents

1. Maggie
2. Knight
3. Maggie
4. Maggie
5. Knight
6. Maggie
7. Knight
8. Maggie
9. Maggie
10. Knight
11. Maggie
12. Knight
13. Maggie
14. Maggie
15. Knight
16. Maggie
17. Maggie
18. Knight
19. Maggie
20. Knight
21. Maggie
22. Maggie
23. Epilogue