



TOXIC WARRIORS MC BOOK FOUR

# GRIMM

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

E.C. LAND

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## GRIMM

This book is a work of fiction. The names, characters, places, and incidents are all products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblances to persons, organizations, events, or locales are entirely coincidental.

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*To those who need a Grimm of their own.*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Next, I have to shout out to all my readers for sticking with me and enjoying the world I've created.

Then there's my team, everyone who works alongside me to ensure that each book I release is ready to go when the time comes. I couldn't ask for better.



# TRIGGER WARNING

This content is intended for mature audiences only. It contains material that may be viewed as offensive to some readers, including graphic language, dangerous and sexual situations, murder, rape, and extreme violence.

Proceed with caution. This book does entail several scenes that may very well be a trigger to some.

Also, tissues are a must with other scenes.

Not for the faint at heart.

If you don't like violence and cannot handle certain subjects, then this is not a book you'll want to read.

**Check out Grimm's playlist.**

Silent Running — Hidden Citizens

Here Without You — 3 Doors Down

Never Gonna Take My Soul — Joe Nester

Anxiety — Joe Nester

How It Feels — Rare of Breed

Hold On — Torrian Ball

All or Nothing — O-Town

Hold Her — Joe Nester

Before We Say Goodbye — Prozak

# TOXIC WARRIORS MC MEMBERS

Viking – Prez – Fawn – O

Rocco – C

Ice – VP – Peyton – O

Maverick – Sgt at Arms

War – Road Captain – Shyann – O

Grimm – Enforcer – Apricot – O

Dice – Treasurer

Rampage – Chaplain

Pirate – Hacker

Mayhem – Member

Wrath – Member

Rock – Member

Scorpion – Member – Sabrina – O

Apricot & CJ – C

Sabotage – Member

Hydra – Former Prez/Founder

Fireball – Member (Deceased)

# CHAPTER ONE

## APRICOT

Staring out into the crowd, I don't really pay attention to anything around me. It's always the same thing. Well mostly. But today is supposed to be about me and my accomplishments. Yesterday was my last day of college, and I finished getting my business degree. And after hearing for the last three years people asking me what I'm going to do with said degree, I know the answer to the question, but have I told anyone ... nope.

I haven't even told my sister, CJ.

Everyone around here has more to deal with than me and what my plans are. Sure, I know my dad and mom would be interested in hearing what I intend to do, but still, I haven't told them.

I guess I haven't told them because I'm not sure if it's exactly what I want to do. Truthfully, I feel restless inside and out. See, my life has always been strangely protected, and I didn't really understand it. Not until my sister was nearly killed, and everyone had to be open about it all with me. When I was a baby, she and I were separated. Our aunt on our mom's side kept CJ, whose real name is Citrus Jeanna, while giving me to my parents.

The whole dynamic of it all is baffling. My dad, real dad, Fireball, was a member of the club, and club brothers with my adoptive dad, Scorpion. Fireball was killed along with my biological mother when I was too young to remember and from what I hear it was a battle of custody of CJ and me. But due to events going on in Hydra, my uncle's life, he wasn't able to get it. Which means the aunt who had things together got custody and she split my sister and me apart.

This part sucked because I never got to see my sister. Not really. And I definitely didn't see her like I would have liked. Maybe we would have been allowed a bond that sisters are supposed to have. I don't know. Perhaps if our lives were

different altogether, we'd have just what we should have always had.

A mom. A dad. A bond. The chance to be a family.

Don't get me wrong, I love Scorpion, he's the best dad and to him, I've always been his princess, but that doesn't mean I haven't thought about who my real dad is and what he was like. I've heard the stories. This was the part never hidden from me. It's the darker parts that were held back from me. None of them wanted me to know the true horrors of what CJ was going through ... all in the name of protecting me.

I've wanted to say it was complete BS, but I get it. It's frustratingly sweet of them. At least for most of them. Not all. Not him. Not Grimm.

Without making it obvious, I stare at Grimm through the crowd of men and women drinking and having a good time. Not often is the club open to so many people, but Viking went along with my parents to celebrate my finishing school. Even CJ and a couple of the Devil's Riot MC came.

I didn't need all of this though and wish they didn't go all out. Truthfully, if I could, I'd leave right this minute and go home to the quaint little townhouse I found for rent. But I don't want to seem rude. I also don't want to watch as Grimm, yet again, picks up his nightly piece. If it's not one of the torpedoes, or as the ol' ladies have dubbed them torpe-da-hoes, it'll be one of the women who showed up tonight. Some of them are friends of mine. Grimm is known for fucking anything in a skirt. Anything but me.

I don't know what's up with him and why he refuses to come anywhere near me. That is unless he has no other choice. And when he does, we always get into it. Mainly because he seems to think I'm the most stupid woman in the world and can't do a damn thing by myself. A part of me hates him for seeming to think so little of me, yet a larger, much bigger part, including my heart, loves him.

Seeing the way Grimm grins at what I can assume will be his latest target, I give myself an inward shake and climb off the picnic table I'd been sitting on nursing a beer. It's funny

that I've finally finished school, and I'm back and able to drink a beer at the clubhouse. It feels like just the other day I was complaining about how everyone was able to drink besides me. Though my mom's right about me drinking with my friends. I just wasn't allowed to do it at the clubhouse. And the only reason she knows about it is because she's caught me with my friends after we'd been at parties.

I chuck the bottle into a trash barrel as I pass it, heading for my car. I haven't had but one, and I didn't even finish it. I just want out of here. I need a break, and I need to get my head straight. Maybe I should go somewhere away from here for a little while altogether. It's not like I don't have the money saved. I could easily get in my car and drive.

But I won't do that. I'm too chicken to do anything so reckless or adventurous. Maybe that's why I've never had a boyfriend.

Nope, not going to go down that route. I don't need to think about what I've been through in the heartache field of me trying to have a dating life. It's always the same, a guy either finds out I'm associated with the Toxic Warriors and wants an in using me or thinks I'm easy and will spread my legs like a whore in heat. That's not me. Then there are the ones that say I'm not hot enough for them or they claim that I'm a freak that should dye my hair, get color contacts, and maybe then they'd do me with the lights off.

Those comments always hurt because I love my long red hair. It's uniquely a mixture of what my sister says is a real red and strawberry blonde. And my eyes are an emerald green. So, I like them too considering green is my favorite color.

I make it to my car, pull the key out of my front pocket, and unlock the doors. Without looking back, I open the driver's door and climb in behind the wheel. My car's a new model where all I have to do is set the keys down, put my foot on the brake, and push the start button. This is cool and all, but I fear it one day not working for me.

I back out of the space cautious to make sure no one is around for me to hit.

Ironic that I'm leaving my own party before anyone else, but honestly, it's not what I need or want right now.

I simply want to be alone.

---

I groan in relief as I finally make it home. It was a struggle considering my phone kept ringing nonstop from the moment I left. Everyone knows I don't talk and drive. Usually, my phone is connected to the Bluetooth. For some reason, it didn't connect this time around. Regardless, I wasn't in a talking mood.

I make my way into my townhouse loving the space I've made my own. Over the past few years, I've worked to be able to afford this place without leaning on my parents for help. The only thing I did was dip marginally into the account that was set up for me to help with my down payment. The account holds the money my biological parents left behind for my sister and me. The money was divided between us to use as needed. Other than the one time being used, the money just sits there, not being touched.

Inside, I finally look at the screen to see both my parents had called twice and texted once telling me to let them know I got home, and they were not happy I took off without saying anything to them. Mainly that would be my dad. He's seriously protective. Two other calls came from Fawn and Peyton. And one from Viking. He'd even texted demanding I call him. My sister didn't call, she only messaged saying that I needed to let her know I made it home okay.

Sighing, I shake my head and set my purse on the little table I keep by the door, toeing off my shoes. I cross the short distance to my couch, plop down on the cushions, and pull up the first message I come to.

**To CJ:** I'm home safe and sound. See you later. Love ya.

I send then proceed on to the next.

**To Viking:** I'm home and going to bed.



I press send, thinking it's not exactly a lie. I'm home and I'm tired. Moving on to the next, I go down the line making sure to respond to everyone. Once I finish, I set my phone down and pick up the remote to the massive seventy-inch TV my dad gifted me with when I first moved into my place. His words ring in my head, "Gotta go big for those movies you like watching. It'll make you feel like you're in a movie theater." He wasn't wrong.

I scroll through the list of movies I'd bought on my Fire Stick and pick the *Labyrinth*. It's one of my favorite movies plus David Bowie back then ... wearing a pair of tights the way he does ... ugh yeah, talk about hot. I reach out and snag the throw blanket off the back of the couch and settle in for the rest of the night, knowing I'll most likely crash, doing it to the sounds of David's luring voice.

## CHAPTER TWO

## GRIMM

The wind whips around me, the cool air hitting my skin with a welcoming touch. After ditching the would-be prospect piece of ass for the night, I got on my bike. My thoughts are all over the place, and I needed to clear my head. With my position as the club's enforcer, I've got to stay on my toes, and it's not easy when all I want to think about is a certain girl who's grown into a beautiful woman. One that has driven me nuts from the moment I realized she's not a girl any longer.

Fuck.

When it comes to Apricot, I do everything I can to stay the fuck away from her. She's not just Scorpion's daughter, but Hydra's niece making her not just a daughter to one of the members. She *is* the club princess. She and her sister, CJ, though CJ didn't grow up here.

I hit the throttle and shake my head slightly. I need to not be thinking of Apricot. Not just because she's a club princess, she's too fucking good for me. When you look into her eyes you can see the purity ... the innocence that should never be tainted. Not by anyone.

Especially not by me.

Growing up, I lived in the dredges of shit. My folks could get two shits about me. They much preferred the booze, pills, and whatever else they could get their hands on. The only time I existed to them is when they got that check from the state for food and whatnot. I learned quickly that it's every man for himself out there.

I ended up going down a path that would have eventually led to me being locked up or rotting dead in a ditch somewhere one day if not for Hydra and Rock. They saved me when I needed it most. They got me away from the crew I'd been a part of and brought me to the clubhouse. It took a bit for me to take to it and come to terms with the fact my life had changed. Changed in such a way that I never look back. Hell, I

don't even know if my folks are still alive or not, and I couldn't care less if they were.

But it's because of my past, I know I could never touch Apricot and need to stay away from her, though that shit ain't easy. She's not one for taking a hint sometimes and the last time she tried flirting with me months ago, I know I fucking hurt her.

---

*I'm sitting at the bar nursing a beer when I notice her. Dressed in a pair of tight jeans that conforms just right to her ass and an off-the-shoulder top, baring that peaches and cream skin, I swear she's got every single man in the bar rock hard. Damn but the woman is a vision, and I can only imagine what having her under me would be like.*

*On that thought I take a hefty swig of the beer, chugging it the rest of the way down. I turn away from the view of Apricot on the dance floor with the other ol' ladies and motion for the bartender to get me another one.*

*Why I thought coming to Toxicity was a good thing I don't know. Maybe because my brothers conned me into coming with them tonight. We own the joint but rarely come to the place. I think the only time we're here is if one of my brothers' women want to go or one of us wants a piece of strange and not deal with the torpedoes.*

*The bartender sets a beer in front of me, and just a small form squeezes between me and the person next to me. I bite back the groan as I realize who it is and regret instantly that I didn't sit in the VIP section.*

*"Hey, Grimm," Apricot says, giggling. Her face bright.*

*"Hey, Apricot," I return her greeting and do my best to ignore her, but she leans into me, making it hard to do so. Not when her tits are pressing into my arm. I meet her gaze and quirk a brow. "You wanna step back, babe?"*

*“I know you want me, Grimm. Why don’t you just take me?” she blurts loud enough for me to hear her, but I highly doubt anyone else would’ve.*

*My cock, already hard from watching her move, hardens to the point I wouldn’t be surprised if it burst through the zipper. It’ll sure as hell have the impressions of it. “Apricot, I’m not a man you toy with, and I don’t play with little girls.”*

*“I’m not a little girl,” she rasps, lifting a hand to trail along my chest.*

*I wrap a hand around her wrist and gently stop her, but not gentle enough. I need her to get what I’m about to say because I can’t let her push me. If she keeps up where she’s going with this, I’ll let her and I’ll fuck her.*

*“Apricot, I won’t tell you again. Now go find someone else to play with. You ain’t gettin’ it from me ‘cause I ain’t touching you.”*

*“Why?” she whispers, the smile vanishing from her lips, and those dimples I love seeing in the corners go with it. “Why won’t you touch me?”*

*“Because you ain’t my type.” I nod, knowing it’s complete bullshit. She’s got the tits, hair, ass ... fuck, she’s even got the legs. “I like a woman who knows what the fuck she’s doing. You don’t.”*

*With that said, I reach into my pocket, grab my wallet, pull out a twenty, and drop it on the bar top. I slide off the stool, ignoring the look on Apricot’s face, and put my wallet back in my pocket. I continue to keep from looking at her and head for the exit.*

---

I grimace at the fact I’d hurt her that night, and since then, she’s avoided me. That doesn’t mean I haven’t caught her watching me. She’s not as good at hiding her stares as I am.

It’s why tonight I ended up ditching the piece of ass I’d been thinking of fucking. But even I’ll admit in my head it

wasn't the bitch I would've been sinking into but Apricot.

I don't know what it is about the woman but she's under my skin and has been for a long while now.

I rev the throttle more, speeding down the highway, going faster, wondering what the hell I should do. Maybe a trip to Indiana is what I need. Get away for a while.

Yeah, that's exactly what I need. Hopefully, when I come back, I'll be able to forget about the woman who haunts my every thought.

# CHAPTER THREE

## APRICOT

“A flower shop? Are you serious?” Kasey, my best friend in the whole world asks. I just finished telling her what I’d finally planned to do while we take the time to enjoy our coffees.

In the last two weeks since the party, I’d done a lot of thinking.

And I mean a lot.

I’ve done my research and know this is the right course for me. I love flowers, so why not? I have a business degree and want to do something I love, so working with flowers is always a great way to spend my time. Bonus with Fawn being an event planner, I’d easily have clientele coming in through her.

“Yep, I’ve got it all lined up and found the perfect location.” I grin, lifting the mug to my lips and my gaze drifts. My grin grows at the sight of Sutherland and the guy standing with him.

“I don’t know if you’re being nuts about this,” Kasey mutters, but I ignore her and wave to Sutherland.

He’s one of Viking’s friends. He’s close with the other guys at the club as well but he’s tighter with my cousin and Ice.

“Apricot,” he greets, coming to stand by our table with a to-go cup in his hand. His grin moves from me to Kasey. “Kasey.”

“Roman.” Kasey rolls her eyes and looks at the guy standing beside Sutherland. Considering Kasey and Sutherland are cousins, I get her eye roll. She’s always thinking he or one of her two brothers is checking up on her and butting their noses in her business. “This your new partner?” she asks, and my eyes go to the guy.



Talk about hottie. I don't think anyone else could be as hot as him. Well, I take that back ... Grimm would be number one, but he's not here, so he doesn't count. Not really.

I shove all thoughts of Grimm to the back of my mind and smile. I don't need to think of him. Thinking of him always makes me confused about my feelings for him. It also doesn't help that I'd heard he'd left town to go up and check in on things with Rampage at the Indiana charter right after the party. But regardless I've kept my distance still from the clubhouse not knowing when he's coming back. In order to get over him and what I wish we could have, I can't see him. Not when he holds my heart still and I need to break that grasp.

"Yeah, this is Tripp Sanchez. You probably don't remember him," Sutherland says, introducing us to his partner. "Tripp, you know Konner and Kamden's little sister, Kasey, my cousin, and this is Viking's cousin, Apricot."

"Yeah, I remember the little sister Konner and Kamden used to always bitch about." Tripp chuckles, and damn if it isn't a great sound. His eyes come to mine, and he reaches out to take my hand. "Nice to meet you. Knew your cousin back in school before I moved away for college."

"Nice to meet you as well." I smile and pull away, indicating the extra chairs at our table. "Would you two like to join us?"

"No, they wouldn't," Kasey snaps.

"Love too," Sutherland says at the same time.

"We were having a conversation here." Kasey huffs, leaning back in her chair.

"It's done, Kasey. I've already started the process," I say, putting an end to the conversation. There's no way she's gonna talk me out of it.

"Started what process?" Sutherland asks as he and Tripp take a seat.

"I'm opening a flower shop in town," I announce, sitting straight in my chair, smiling.

“A flower shop?” Tripp repeats Kasey’s earlier question, quirking a brow as he gives me a half grin.

“Yes, a flower shop. Is there something wrong with me wanting to open a shop filled with flowers?”

“Not at all.” Tripp’s lips tilt farther upward into a full-on grin. “Got to admire a woman wanting to get her hands dirty with running a business and working with plants.”

“Well ... thank you.” I don’t know what else to say considering he surprised me with his answer.

Conversation easily flows after that and the four of us chat the rest of the time while we finish our coffees. By the end of it, Kasey and I are both laughing, and she’s lost the look in her eye that says she’s highly annoyed with her cousin. I also know that she’ll leave me alone about the shop.

My phone beeps getting my attention. I see a message from Fawn asking me to the house for dinner tonight. I answer and lift my gaze, feeling eyes on me. I smile at Tripp and then get a sexy grin back in return.

“We gotta get back to the station,” Sutherland announces, pushing up to his feet. He leans, presses a kiss to my cheek, and follows suit with Kasey. “You two don’t go causing any mayhem.”

“Who me?” Kasey gives him a look of shock. “Never.”

“Don’t be a smart ass.” Sutherland chuckles.

I giggle and stand. “I’ve got to get going myself.”

Nodding, Kasey also comes to her feet, and the four of us make our way out of the coffee shop. Tripp stops me by my car, his hand resting on my upper arm.

“How about I take you to dinner?” he asks, shocking me further.

“Um, I can’t tonight,” I answer, biting my lower lip.

“What about tomorrow night?” he suggests.

“Tomorrow night, um ...” God, what is up with me mumbling? Tripp asked me out on a date, and I can’t seem to

answer him. This is all Grimm's fault. At the notion, I nod. "I'd love that." I smile, hoping he doesn't see the inner turmoil racing through me.

"Great. Let me get your number, and I'll text you. You can send me your address, and I'll pick you up at six. How's that sound?"

"Perfect."

The two of us exchange numbers and Tripp gives me another one of his grins before reaching up to tuck a loose strand of hair behind my ear.

"I'll see you tomorrow evening," he says before pivoting on his heel and walking away. I stand there in the open door to my car and watch him as he does so.

If there's one thing I'm sure of about Tripp, it's that the way he walks in them jeans is one hell of a sight. I mean he gives Grimm a good run for his money, and I've watched that man walk around for years now. The difference between the two, though, is that it seems Tripp's actually interested in me where Grimm isn't, and it's time for me to move on.

I just hope it's as easy as just thinking it to make it happen.

---

Sitting at the dinner table next to Fawn, I toy with the food on my plate. After leaving the coffee shop, I went to the building I was going to be leasing and got more of an idea of where to begin. Figuring out what I needed to do once everything was ready to roll. By the end of the week, I should be all set and papers will be signed with the i's dotted and the t's crossed.

When I finally made it home, I noticed a text from Tripp saying he enjoyed meeting me today and was looking forward to getting to know me. This commenced us texting back and forth until it was time for me to leave for Viking and Fawn's house.

"Apricot, you okay?" my mom asks, getting my attention.

I nod, giving her a smile. Upon arriving five minutes late, I realized it wasn't just me over for dinner. But my parents, Ice and Peyton, Hydra, Rock, and Sabotage were all here. "I'm fine." It's a total lie and I'm not about to sit here and talk about it with anyone right now. Because the more I think about it the more I find myself confused.

I've always been in love with Grimm. From the first time I realized what I was feeling until this very day. I can't help it. But I get the feeling if I would just open myself up, I could really like Tripp too. Throughout our texting earlier I kept comparing the two and wondering if Grimm would ever be so easygoing with me.

I swear I'm a glutton for punishment.

My mom eyes me closely, her brows creasing in the middle in a way I know she's got something on her mind. Mom and I are close, and we don't keep secrets from each other. Well, not many. She tells me things she can, and I tell her what's been going on with me for practically my whole life. Except for how I feel for Grimm, but she's not a stupid woman. No one can say that Sabrina is anything of the sort. She's the most intellectual woman I know.

"Why don't I believe you?" she finally asks.

"I don't know, but there's nothing to worry about. Honestly." I fork up a bit of the vegetables and lift them to my mouth, hoping my mom will drop the subject.

"Now, we all know that isn't true," my dad speaks up, entering the conversation as everyone looks at me.

"Truth. Haven't had you around the clubhouse in weeks now, and that ain't you." Viking grunts leaning back in his chair, arm stretched forward in front of him, the palm of his hand flat to the table. "What's going on with you?"

"Okay, someone want to fill me in on the whole third degree tonight?" I snap, straightening in my seat and narrowing my gaze on each of them.

"You took off in the middle of your own party," Dad starts, but Mom stops him with a hand on her forearm.

“Apricot, we just want to make sure where your head’s at. Find out where you are and what it is you want to do. You’ve been somewhat distant with us all in the past couple of weeks, and it worries us.”

“I’m perfectly fine. I’ve just been busy. I just haven’t wanted to talk about it much until I had everything in order.”

“Everything in order?” Hydra interrupts me by asking.

“Yeah, I’m opening a flower shop in town,” I inform them.

“You’re what?” This comes from Rock.

“That’s awesome,” Fawn says at the same time.

“Everything goes great, I’ll have the keys, and all will be set to start preparing for business at the end of the week,” I say, glancing around the table. “Oh, and I have a date tomorrow evening.” I threw that last part in there for the women at the table.

“Who the fuck with?”

“Come again?”

“Who?”

“Excuse me?”

Question after question is hurled at me, all of them sounding pissed and put out at the idea of me dating. I don’t know why though, and I hate that they’d seem this way. I figured they’d all be happy for me.

“That’s great, do we know who?” Fawn asks as Peyton and Mom smile.

“Um, well, he’s ... well, he’s Sutherland’s partner, Tripp Sanchez.”

“Hold the hell on. You’re going on a date with Tripp?” Viking demands, seeming shocked by this.

“Yeah.” I nod.

“How the hell did you meet Tripp?”

Sighing, I quickly tell them about having coffee with Kasey and that we ran into Tripp and Sutherland and we ended

up talking for a bit. “I liked talking to him, so I agreed when he asked me.”

“What about Gr—” A loud thud from under the table follows Viking grunting, and I can only assume Fawn kicked him.

Sighing, I ignore the would-be question and go about eating. I don’t want to think about what he was going to ask me. And honestly, it’s none of their business. It’s time to move on and that’s what I’m doing. No matter how much I wish it were with Grimm. He’s made it pretty clear where he stands about me, and I’m not going to be subjugated to him.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## GRIMM

I pull into the club's parking lot, finally back from spending nearly a month up in Indiana helping out Rampage. Not that he needed help. Rampage is a born leader and is getting that club back in shape in ways I didn't realize he had in him. From the last time I was there to this time, I could see a huge difference.

But I couldn't stay there any longer. Well, I could have if I really wanted to. Viking all but ordered me back home. I didn't mind coming home though, to be honest. While in Indiana, I did a lot of thinking. A fucking lot of it. Trying to get my head straight. The more I tried to push Apricot out of my head, the harder it was to think of anything else. Rampage called me out on it during one of the first nights and told me I just needed to man the fuck up and claim her ass. Since then, I've thought long and hard about it. I can have her. Make her mine while keeping the past locked tight.

I shake my head, park my bike in the line of other bikes, and kick the stand down. As I remove my helmet, I swing a leg over and climb off. I hang the helmet from the handlebars and reach in one side of the saddlebags for my bag as I scan the rest of the lot to get a feel of who all is here. Seeing the usual vehicles, I make my way into the clubhouse.

Viking didn't tell me what the hell was going on when he called two days ago demanding I get my ass back to Alabama. Just that I needed to do so, I figured it had to do something with Peyton's now-dead sister. That bitch caused a lot of bullshit headaches for us. We still don't know who killed her ass.

It shocked the hell out of us all when Sutherland called to inform Viking and the rest of the club that Veronica's body was at the morgue. None of us gave a damn about her, Veronica was an enemy and wanted to cause nothing but trouble. Fuck, the bitch sold her own damn sister to a sick fucker and then wanted to try again when she found that she



wasn't with the piece of shit. The kicker of it all is what Sutherland reported to us. She had a note in her hand saying, 'The Devil's a busy bishop in his own diocese.'

Regardless, in my opinion, it's a damn good thing she's dead. The bitch deserves to rot in hell for the bullshit she's done to those she should have cared about more.

Making it to the door, I yank it open and step inside. I blink to allow my eyes to adjust to the change in lighting from the outside. I glance around and jerk my chin up in acknowledgment to a few of my brothers as they look in my direction. I spot Viking sitting with Ice, War, Pirate, Hydra, Sabotage, and Scorpion.

Get the hell over here."

I frown as it's not Viking who gives the command but Scorpion. What the fuck?

Brows furrowed, I make my way to their table. "What's going on?"

"That's my question for you," Hydra remarks.

Confused even more, I glance at each of the men sitting around the table before settling on Hydra. "You want to explain what you mean by that?"

"You been gone for a month, boy," Hydra notes.

"Yeah, you all know I was helping Rampage out."

"More like running the fuck away," Rock mutters.

"Can you all just get to the fuckin' point?" I snap, not wanting to get into this.

"Since you were gone," Viking grunts, getting my attention. He leans forward, bracing his elbows on the table in front of him with his fingers clasped together. "Something's happened, and none of us are thrilled about it."

"What?" I demand, my gut tightening at the thought of what it could be.

"Apricot is dating someone," Scorpion announces, leveling a glare at me.

“Apricot is dating someone?” I repeat. My stomach feels as if the other man has landed a punch directly to it.

“Yeah,” Viking confirms. “But it’s not just anyone. She’s seeing Sutherland’s partner.”

“What the fuck?”

“You heard me,” Viking remarks, his eyes narrowing. “Now, what the hell are you gonna do about it?”

“You’re asking me?” I grind out, unsure of what he wants me to say, and at the same time, my mind is reeling with the news of Apricot dating. Even more that it’s a cop. I’ve got nothing against law enforcement, especially Sutherland. Maybe it’s the whole deal with Apricot being with some altogether that’s setting me on edge. I guess I never thought of the fact that I didn’t think through what would happen when she finally did start going out with someone.

Fucking hell.

I told her she wasn’t my type, and I hurt her to get her to move on, but damn, if this shit doesn’t burn something inside me like a hot poker to the gut.

“Boy, I know you,” Hydra remarks. “You been watching Apricot for a long fuckin’ time. We’ve all seen the dance between the two of you.”

“She doesn’t need a man like me,” I protest, dropping my head to glare at the floor and crossing my arms over my chest, it’s something I used to do as a teen, and I never stopped doing it. Whenever something bothers me, I always cross my arms across my chest, almost in a protective manner.

“My opinion,” Scorpion says, his voice graded, “that’s exactly what she needs. Not someone we don’t know. No matter the fact, we know him.”

“Who is he?” I can’t stop myself from asking. He’s already said it was Sutherland’s partner but that doesn’t tell me who the fuckwad is.

“Tripp Sanchez,” Viking answers.

“Why’s that name sound familiar?” I frown, rolling the name over in my head several times trying to place it.

“Because he left town around the same time we got your ass away from the same fuckers who were trying to lure you both into their gang,” Rock informs, tapping his knuckles on the table. “He was a good kid and had his folks where you didn’t. They got him out of the area, and I guess he made something of himself.”

I nod as it comes back to me. We didn’t call him Tripp or Sanchez. The gang that was recruiting, or as Rock says luring us in, called Tripp, Mex, for his mixed heritage. I remember that shit. They gave him a hard time making him work hard and sometimes beating him nearly as much as they did me, making me prove myself as they said.

Fuck.

And now Apricot is out on a date with him.

I can’t let that shit fly.

Not that I’ve got issues with the man. Hell, I ain’t see him in years, but Apricot, I’d decided while in Indiana that she’s mine, and I’m not about to lose her to anyone.

Finished with this conversation, I head to the stairs and take them two at a time heading for my room. After being on the road, I need a shower. I also gotta put a game plan together on what I’m gonna do with Apricot and this shit about her dating Tripp.

Regardless, I’ll be showing her she’s mine, one way or the other. I don’t give a damn if I have to interrupt her date with the man in order to do it.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## APRICOT

“This place is looking great,” Fawn says, taking in all the work I’d put into my shop so far. “I’m proud of you for doing this.” She smiles, bringing her gaze back to mine. “I can’t wait to send clients your way who need flowers for weddings and birthdays. You’ll be busy for sure, especially being the only florist shop in town, and no one will have to go anywhere else.”

“Thanks.” I grin and look at the clock for the umpteenth time. It’s not that I want to get rid of Fawn, but I’m just anxious and I don’t know why.

Over the past several weeks, I’ve been seeing Tripp. We’d gone out a couple of times to see movies and have dinner. One night, he even took me dancing. But he also knows my heart is not in it. I guess you can say it’s been more like friends going out on the town. I know this because he and I talked about it a few times. Especially when he’d tried to kiss me, and I turned to give him my cheek. I explained I wasn’t ready for that just yet.

I also know he’s not looking for anything serious. At least not for the time being. This was fine with me since I’m not either. We have fun when we go out and Tripp makes me laugh. I find myself questioning why I can’t just jump in with two feet and let loose. It’s not like he hasn’t made it known he’d be down with it if I wanted. I just can’t and that plain old sucks.

Every time I think about kissing him, I imagine Grimm and feel a tinge of guilt. I don’t get it. It’s not like he and I are anything.

I inwardly shake the thought of Grimm away. There’s no point in thinking of a man who doesn’t want me. I should just bite the bullet and finally give myself completely to Tripp. Maybe then we’d go from something that’s supposed to be just friends to something serious.

“So, when will you officially open?” Fawn asks, bringing me back to the conversation at hand.

“Probably next week,” I answer. “I’m waiting on the last order to come in. I’ve already had people calling to place orders.”

“That’s great,” she says, a smile beaming in my direction.

I glance at the time again and smile at her. “It is. I’ve got to get ready and head home. Tripp and I are going out this evening.”

“How’s that going between you two?” she asks, cocking her head slightly.

“Good.” I nod, gathering my things together. “We’re getting to know each other.”

“That’s good,” she agrees, and I can feel her eyes on me, almost like she’s examining me. “So, you’ve given up on Grimm?”

It’s all I can do to keep from giving myself away and meet her gaze head-on. “There was nothing to give up on in the first place.”

“Right. Well, heads up, he’s back in town.”

My breath seizes in my lungs, and I shake my head. “None of my business if he’s back or not.” I shrug, hoping to hide the panic that wants to take over. “I’ve gotta get going, so I’ll see you later,” I say, heading for the front doors, keys in hand, more than ready to get away from this conversation. I knew Grimm had gone to go help out Rampage, but I also knew he’d come back sooner or later. I just didn’t know when he’d do it.

Fawn doesn’t push the conversation further, thankfully dropping it as we step out into bright sunlight. I blink, letting my eyes adjust to the difference, and turn to make sure I secure the door. I give Fawn a hug and head for my car, and it’s time to get home and get ready. And while I do that, I need to make a choice, one that can make or break me on where I go next with my relationship with Tripp.

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I park in front of my place and sigh nervously. Mainly because the whole drive home I kept playing different scenarios in my head. The kicker of those scenarios is they all switch to being Grimm and me instead of Tripp and me. Something seriously must be wrong with me. I mean, Tripp is hot, funny, and sweet. He also understands where I'm at in my head where the two of us are concerned.

Turning the key, I shut off my car and get out. I quickly make my way up to my door and unlock it. I barely twist the knob before it's yanked from my hands, and I'm dragged inside.

"What the ..." I don't get to finish my sentence as I realize who had hold of me. I swallow back the nerves threatening to take over out of fear. There's nothing to fear now. Well, not physically. I know he won't do anything to hurt me. "What are you doing here, Grimm?" My voice is barely a whisper as I meet his gaze, noting that I'm still in his arms.

"Hear you're dating a cop," he growls, turning us until he's pressing me into the entryway wall.

I stiffen and blink up at him at his comment. Is that all he's worried about? Me dating a cop? I shake my head, plant my hands against his chest, and push. "Back away, Grimm," I demand. But he doesn't budge.

"No," he simply says.

Narrowing my gaze, I push more as a question pops into my head, and of course, the said question comes out on a blurt. "What are you doing here anyway? How did you get in here?" I mean, it's simple enough, and I do deserve an answer. I didn't even know he knew where I lived. "Did you break in?"

"Dimples, I don't have to break into this place," he answers, and I'll note still not moving out of my space.

I ignore his calling me Dimples. It's something he and only he ever called me. Though those times were always special,

few and far apart. I don't think he's called me that since I was eighteen.

"What do you mean? I know you don't have a key, Grimm. My parents don't even have one," I inform him and shove against him, needing him out of my space. "And get back."

"I'm not gonna step away, Apricot," Grimm states. Sliding the fingers of a hand up until he's curling them in my hair, holding me in place with my head tilted back enough to meet his gaze. "You should really look into where you move before doing it."

"I don't understand," I mutter, confused by his comment.

That's when Grimm grins devilishly. "I own the place, Dimples."

At those simple words, it's like the air went out of my in a matter of seconds. "No," I breathe.

"Oh yeah." That devilish grin grows bigger, and he presses me tighter against the wall, his body pinning me in place, my hands still between us. "Now, you wanna tell me what you're doing dating a cop?"

"It's none of your business," I state, holding my ground on the subject.

"That's where you're wrong, Apricot."

"No, it's you that's in the wrong, Grimm," I lie. Well, not really. He doesn't get to come in here and demand anything from me. "You're the one who didn't want anything to do with me. I moved on, and now you want to act like you have the right to know about me and what I do."

"Guess you can say I changed my mind," he says, leaning in to press his forehead against my own.

He ... he changed his mind? "Are you insane?" The question is out before I can stop it and I shake my head. I don't even want to hear his answer. "Get off me, Grimm, I need to get ready. Tripp and I have plans to ..."

"Your plans with Tripp have been canceled," he states matter-of-factly. "You ain't going anywhere with him."



“You can’t tell me what to do or cancel my plans,” I snap, glaring at him.

“Oh baby, I’ll tell you what you’ll be doing, and it ain’t gonna be datin’ some cop,” Grimm growls, seeming to lose his patience.

“I swear to God, Grimm, if you don’t back away and leave, I’m gonna kick you somewhere it’ll really hurt.”

“You do it, and I’ll make you kiss it better.” He chuckles, though he does step back. Marginally. He opens his mouth to say something, but there’s a knock on the door, drawing him up short.

“That would be Tripp,” I inform him in a whisper of relief.

Grimm’s eyes darken and a flare of anger flickers within them for the moment before that grin of his is back in place making him seem like the devil himself. I know he’d never do anything to me—not intentionally and definitely not physically—but that doesn’t mean he wasn’t in the danger zone at the moment. Tripp knocks again, and Grimm yanks me into his arms, wrapping one around my waist as he turns us both to the door and opens it.

Mortified by his actions, I stand in his arms frozen, completely baffled by what he’s just done and not knowing what to do.

“What the fuck?” Tripp demands, his gaze zeroing in on Grimm and the way he’s got his arm wrapped securely around me.

“Long time no see,” Grimm acknowledges Tripp speaking through clenched teeth.

“You wanna let Apricot go?” I don’t miss the warning in Tripp’s voice.

“No.” Is all Grimm says.

Tripp brings his eyes to mine and stares at me with that assessing look he gets when he’s thinking. “He the one?”

I blink at his question confused as to what he’s referring to at first. But only for a second. He’s talking about Grimm. I nod

and whisper truthfully, “Yes.”

Tripp nods as well and levels a glare on Grimm for a moment then brings his gaze back to mine. “You gonna let him keep up these games with you? Fuckin’ with your head? Your heart?”

I flinch at the questions because I was foolish to think I was able to hide all of this from him. From everyone.

This just proves how much of an idiot I truly am.

“I’ve already told him to leave, Tripp,” I murmur, wanting to go find the biggest hole to climb in and hide from the world.

“Is that so?” Tripp says, turning his attention to Grimm. “The lady tells you to leave, you best be doing what she says.”

“That won’t be happening,” Grimm declares, steely. “And you can go. The date you two had has been canceled. I’m sure you already figured that one out for yourself.”

“Don’t think so, Blaine Kingston, or should I call you Kings?” Tripp asks, surprising me.

“No one calls me by that name anymore,” Grimm states, releasing me to step forward.

“It’s your name.” Tripp holds his ground.

“Maybe on paper, but we both know I’m not Kings. That was a long fuckin’ time ago.”

“Um ... does someone want to fill me in? I don’t know what you two are talking about,” I say, attempting to intervene.

“Don’t worry about it, Apricot,” Grimm says.

“I think she should worry about it. She should know who she’s gonna have in her bed if she chooses you. Don’t you think?”

Whoa, what does Tripp mean by that?

“Sanchez, I suggest you fuckin’ get the hell out of here and stay the hell away from Apricot and me,” Grimm snarls, getting directly in Tripp’s face, the two of them nose to nose.

Oh boy.

This isn't good. If they come to blows, not only will it be my fault, but it could end up with both of them in trouble. Feeling sick to my stomach, I do the one thing I hope will work. "How about both of you leave? Or at least take your toe-toe outside. I don't want or need to deal with it." I point to the still-open door. "Close the door on your way out," I order and spin on my heel, heading to the back of my townhouse and out the back door.

I don't care right now if they leave or not. They can deal with whatever is happening between the two of them. Me, I'm not about to stick around and listen, let alone watch. I make my way through the alleyways that lead between the few townhomes. I walk until I get to the park that sits on the edge of the complex. I find a spot under an old cedar tree and sit with my knees pulled up enough to wrap my arms around them.

I lean my head against the trunk and sigh, wondering when my life got to be complicated. Never before has it been like this, even at what I would have thought was the worst of it. Now, just as I finally decided to move past it all and hopefully find someone I could be with, Grimm is declaring I'm his, and I don't know what to do with that.

# CHAPTER SIX

## GRIMM

“You gonna let her get away?” Tripp asks, the both of us hearing the door slam closed behind Apricot.

“I know where she’s going.” I shrug, speaking the truth. Since she moved in, she’s been known to go for walks and always ends up at the park. I don’t need to go looking for her.

“If that’s so, why not go after her?” Tripp snarks.

“Because I fuckin’ know *my woman* and I know she’ll be back.” I make sure to point out the fact Apricot is my woman.

“If she was yours, she wouldn’t have been going out with me,” he points out.

“Slight misjudgment on her part,” I retort. “And it’s one that won’t happen again.”

“Bullshit.”

“You wanna leave?” I invite, more than ready to be done with this shit.

“I think I’ll stick around,” Tripp says darkly.

“I suggest you don’t,” I say, leveling a glare at him. “I also suggest you not bring up the past again. That shit’s not me.”

“Not you?” Tripp snorts. “Yeah, right. Last time I saw you, asshole, Point was talking about grooming you to be his second in command.”

“Things change. Just as they seem to have done for you,” I point out. “Life works out in strange ways, and I’ve never looked back.”

“Right.” Tripp grunts. “You got a chance to make something of yourself, and you joined a motorcycle club.”

“Damn right. If you fuckin’ must know, they’re the ones who pulled my ass out of the fire. Gave me a place to belong. Now, I’ve got that shit.”

Tripp shakes his head and lets out a breath before taking a step closer, getting directly in my face. “You hurt her, be warned, I’ll be the first to step in and make sure she forgets you altogether.”

“Not gonna happen,” I tell him, anger nearly boiling to the surface that he’d brought up not just the past but called me a name I hate more than anything. The asshole’s lucky I don’t beat the shit out of him for that alone. However, I’ve got bigger fish to fry. I need to go after Apricot and get shit right with her.

Before she got home and well before I’d gotten to her place, I’d take the time to come up with a plan and that plan starts today. I’m not going to fuck her just yet, though she’ll know how much I want her and what I intend for us to be doing in the near future.

“You fuck up, just remember, Kingston, I’ll be here,” Tripp says, eyes narrowed. Slowly he takes a step back, spins on a heel, and stomps out the door.

I close the door, making sure to lock it. I turn back to the room and take in the homey feeling Apricot’s given the place. On the entertainment center, she’s got pictures of her and her sister. Her with her parents. Another of her with members of the club. Fuck, there’s even one with the members where I’m standing directly next to her, my arm around her waist, Pirate’s arm around her shoulders. If I’m not mistaken that was her eighteenth birthday.

Moving through the place, I head to the stairs leading upstairs to her room. She’s got it designed with natural colors that suit her in every way there is. Earthy browns, light grays, nothing over obnoxious, and nothing boring. On the walls, she’s got silhouette photos that catch my eye. One thing I’m learning is she’s got an eye for imagery. Especially what she displays throughout the house, but these are sensual. A man embracing a woman, the touch they share, you can see it, but mostly you can feel the pleasure the couple hold for each other. The erotic silhouette brings questions to my mind, and I wonder if she’s into similar sexual acts I figured she’d never want to try.

I make my way deeper into the room, shoving the thought of the ways I want to fuck Apricot and to the bag I'd tossed up here earlier when I first arrived. I didn't get a chance to do anything before she got home, and I'd rushed back down to greet her. More like bombarding her into knowing that I'm not playing around where she's concerned. Too much time has passed between us as it is, and I know it's my own damn fault.

Having already showered, I change into a pair of sweatpants that ride low on my hips, place my clothes next to the bag, and hang my cut on the back of a high-back chair Apricot has next to the window.

Once done upstairs, I head back downstairs to wait on the couch for Apricot. I could easily go find her, but I'm sure she'll be back soon and what I have to say to her, I highly doubt she'll want anyone else to hear it.

I sprawl out and nab the remote to the TV and pull up a show at random to wait. Finding a game on, I drop the remote, reach into my sweatpants, snag my phone, and yank it out. I order a pizza from the local Italian joint in town that has the best pies you can get. I also order a thing of honey BBQ wings, knowing they're Apricot's favorites along with two slices of homemade cheesecake with the chocolate-caramel topping.

Once I finish, I place my phone next to the remote and settle in for when Apricot gets back. A grin slips into place at the mere thought of the fun it'll be when she realizes I'm still here.

Ten minutes go by before the back doors open and I don't bother moving from my spot. I'll let her find me and see what her reaction is. Then figure out what the next course of action is where she's concerned. When I came up with my plan, I was sure to come up with different levels of it in order to take her on. Apricot isn't just anyone to me and never has been. I still don't think I'm what she deserves, but that doesn't mean I'm not taking what's mine. Especially now after this shit.

“What are you still doing here?”

I tilt my head back on the cushions to stare at her as she makes her way fully into the room. I hide my satisfaction at her cheeks blushing when she sees me. It's fucking cute as hell. The pure innocence shines through her in moments like this.

"Relaxin'," I answer and go back to watching what's on the TV, not that I'm really paying attention to it. My focus is on Apricot.

Out of the corner of my eye, I follow her movements until she's entirely in my sight. I give her my eyes when she's in front of the TV. She surprises me when she steps closer, then closer, until she's right in front of me and leans in about to snatch the remote from where it sits. Before she can, I make my move, gripping her wrist and yanking her to me. I flip us until I have her on the couch, her back pressing into the seat and I'm next to her with my upper body over hers.

"Now, this is more like it."



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## APRICOT

I knew the moment I stepped into my home that I wasn't alone, and I knew who was still here. Why I didn't just turn around and leave is beyond me. I should have. Seeing him stretched out and relaxed on the couch is something I've always dreamed of, but more, it was the sight of him in only sweatpants riding low on his hips.

Oh my.

Talk about soaking my panties at the sight. I've seen the man in swim trunks, I know what he looks like. However, this is different. Totally and completely different. I mean, the man is absolutely a walking advertisement for sex. Grimm doesn't just have a six-pack of abs, nope, he's got eight. And that's nothing to the tattoo that runs along his right side of the Grimm Reaper standing in a mass of souls swirling around him.

It's hot.

Way hotter than anything I've ever seen. And that doesn't include the other tattoos he's got. The one on his back matches the other members of the club. Then the ones that sit on his arms. They're awesome. I could spend hours trailing my tongue along his skin, tracing art.

God, if he knew that I'd stolen one of his tattoos and placed it on my lower back, I'm not sure what he'd do. I'd gotten it done a couple of months ago. No one knows I have it. I didn't even go to the usual artist the club uses. I went to the one owned by the Devil's Riot MC up in South Carolina. I didn't trust anyone else to do it, and I know they're good at what they do from what my sister told me. There's no way I'd have been able to go to anyone else for this. I didn't figure I'd be one to get a tattoo, but I do have a couple. One my mom took me to get when I suggested we both do it. Then I went with Kasey to get another. The last one was by myself. I don't even think my sister knew I was in town when I did it.

Now here I am, pinned to my own couch, staring into the eyes of the man I've always wanted. Even after spending time alone in the park I don't know what I'm gonna do with him. I'm confused by the way he's acting. He says one thing and then changes everything on me. I can barely keep up without my head spinning.

"Now, this is more like it," he says, brushing a strand of hair from my face.

"What are you doing?" The words are nothing more than a whisper in the air. Mostly it's having to do with him being over me and my need to savor the whole experience.

"You know why I'm here, Dimples, and don't even try to think you can ask me to leave. It ain't happening," Grimm states, stroking my cheek where he'd slide the hair away from.

"Why now? What's changed?" I blurt without meaning to.

"I guess you can say I got my head outta my ass." He shrugs. "We'll talk about it more later. For the time being, you're gonna kiss me, then we're havin' dinner and watching a movie. Not no chick flick."

Oh my. Um, this can't be happening. In all my dreams, all I've ever wanted is this and now it's happening, and I don't know what to do with it.

Grimm doesn't give me the chance to respond in any way, instead his lips meet mine and everything goes up in flames. A spark, unlike any other, shoots straight through me, down my spine and to my sweet haven. It's a feeling I've never experienced before. But I've seen movies and read books. Some of my favorite books are erotica. I don't know why, it's just something so sensual in the touch.

I find myself giving into Grimm. His mouth opens and I part mine. He takes the opportunity to slip his tongue in to twirl around my own. A moan slips out and he deepens the kiss. The entire experience lights a fire within me like no other. It's as if the world around us will go up in flames and the two of us are the only ones who'll survive it. Just barely.

The sound of knocking on the front door is all that keeps us from continuing. Grimm breaks his lips from mine, panting.

“Fuck, Dimples, you kiss like that, I look forward to what else you can do,” he says, his voice raspy, and he bolts upright, leaving me lying there on the couch.

I watch as he adjusts himself and moves to the door. I smile inwardly at the look he gives me because no matter how much he arranges himself in his sweats there’s no hiding what he’s packing. And truthfully what he’s got kind of scares me because I don’t think it’ll fit. It’s a monster of the a ...

“Do me a favor, Dimples, and get the plates or whatever while I get the food,” Grimm orders, pulling me from my thoughts.

I blink in his direction, taking all of him in for a moment longer. It takes me a second to gather the willpower not to scream in frustration at how he could make out with me. I mean, make out with me the way he did, hot and leaving me longing for more, only to act like it didn’t just happen. Well, other than the obvious hard-on he’s packing.

Getting off the couch, I make a noise of protest. Mostly because I realize, yet again, he’s surprising me by his mention of me grabbing plates. I think it’s sweet and I’m thankful to the fact he’s not going to just set the food on my coffee table. I would so not be down with that. I like my furniture to be stain free. I use coasters for drinks, they’re really cool ones a friend of mine made for me before she went back home after graduation. I also don’t eat on the couch unless it’s over a plate.

I guess you can say I’m weird, but oh well, I don’t care.

In the kitchen, I reach up in the cabinet and pull out two of my black plates that have a white rose painted in the middle. When I first saw them, I thought they were the coolest thing ever. They have matching deep bowls, little tea-sized plates, and glasses that are a transparent grayish black with the same rose design on them. I didn’t get the coffee mugs to match because I like my mugs and rotate them by the season and

holidays. I also get a new one each year. I have one cabinet that's solely dedicated to my coffee mugs.

I head back to the living room and get a whiff of the mouth-watering aroma of dinner.

Oh my.

I stare at the setup and swallow back my nerves. Grimm didn't just order food. He did it by getting it from my favorite pizza place in town. At this, I don't know what to think. More than that, I can't believe he'd do what he's done. He didn't get just pizza, but it looks like all of what I love.

This is too much.

"Ready to eat, Dimples?" he asks, straightening.

Inhaling a sharp breath, I nod. "Yes." I close the rest of the distance between the two of us and hand him one of the two plates. He takes it and reaches for the other.

"Sit down, baby, and pull up a movie." He grins and goes about loading both plates up with food.

It takes me all of a minute to think of a movie to put on. I've been wanting to see *Uncharted*, and with it on Netflix, I go straight to it. I figure this one Grimm won't have a problem watching, and I enjoy seeing both Tom Holland and Mark Wahlberg in action. Growing up, I loved watching his movies. One of my faves is him in *Daddy's Home* and an older one of him in *Fear*, though he was the bad guy. I mean, it was him and Reese Witherspoon, both of whom are freaking awesome. I don't know how many times I've watched her in *Sweet Home Alabama*. Shoot, if I could pull it off, I might've thought of cutting my hair like hers.

Grimm settles in next to me and hands me the plate. I sit with my legs crossed in front of me. Neither of us speaks up when we start eating. I want to think this is because he's just getting into the movie, but I swear I feel his eyes on me. Though I dare not look.

Halfway through the movie, I'm finished eating and set my plate on the coffee table and lean back into the cushions. I try focusing on the movie as Grimm moves, he sets his own plate

down. However, instead of leaning into the couch, he snags me around the waist and adjusts us until we're both lying on our sides facing the TV, him behind me, arm around my waist.

“What are you doing?” I ask, unable to keep quiet.

“Watching the movie,” he answers, as if this were an everyday thing for the two of us.

This is not the case, and I know I'm in trouble. Loads of it where he's concerned, and I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not. Regardless, I have to admit I do like the feel of being in Grimm's arms.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## APRICOT

I come awake in the dead of night, realizing I'd fallen asleep on the couch, and I wasn't alone.

Last night, Grimm and I watched two other movies, one he picked, which was super good and another we decided on together. Again, really good. Between movies, we'd cleaned up dinner, had dessert, which was delicious, and the two of us relaxed. It was something I never expected to feel in my entire life. This doesn't mean I didn't wish for it. I did so many times.

Now blinking away the sleep, I stare into the dark living room, the TV having turned off, I'm guessing some time ago. I debate whether I can move or not without waking Grimm up from behind me. Then I start to wonder about the confrontation between Tripp and Grimm. It's like they knew each other. Tripp had called Grimm Kings. I don't think I've ever heard anyone call him that. I mean, I know his name is Blaine Kingston, I figured that out, but still, it doesn't sit well with me the way they acted around each other. Sure, I didn't expect hearts and roses, either. Then again, I didn't expect Grimm to show up at my house or claim me the way he did.

God knows the man is confusing. Regardless of everything else, he still holds my heart in his hands. This I fear is a massive mistake that I won't be able to stop him from hurting me when he walks away from whatever game he's playing with me.

I roll over the slightest, intending to get up, but I'm unable to move farther than the inch I got before I'm tugged back in place.

“Where do you think you're going?”

Oh my. If the raspy, sleep-filled voice that belongs to Grimm doesn't go straight between my legs. It has got to be the sexiest sound I've ever heard.



“Um.” I bite my lower lip, trying to think of what to tell him. I mean, it is my house, I could just say to bed and that he can leave. Though, I highly doubt he’ll listen to me giving him his marching orders.

“Dimples,” he says, squeezing my middle.

“Bed,” I blurt out and clear my throat. “I’m going to bed, and you need to leave. I have things to do tomorrow and ...” I don’t get to finish my sentence mostly due to my head being tilted slightly to face Grimm, and he’d lifted on an arm. But it’s his mouth being on mine and his tongue slipping past my lips into my mouth that has me shutting up.

My toes curl, and I somewhat realize my body twists until I’m chest to chest with Grimm ... his hand going under my shirt at the back. I moan and arch deeper into his touch, wanting more. So, much more.

Grimm shifts us until I’m flat on my back, and he’s between my legs. I can feel the juices wetting my panties. The way he grinds himself against me has me nearly wanting to rip his lips away from mine and beg him to do more than what we’re doing. Suddenly Grimm breaks his lips from mine and stills his hips.

“What are you doing?” I pant, breathless.

He doesn’t answer my question rather, he lifts off of me, coming to his feet. Grimm looks over me with a heated look in his eyes and leans in, scooping me in his arms. “Time for bed,” he rasps and carries me through the living space and up the stairs into my bedroom. He closes the space from the entryway to the bed with long, even strides.

A gasp leaves my parted lips when Grimm dumps me on the bed with a bounce. “Do what you gotta do to get ready for bed,” he says, rounding the bed to the other side. I don’t move, transfixed by the sight of him walking around my room. His eyes come to mine, and he gives me a grin. “Dimples, bed. You gonna get ready, or you stay in what you’re wearing?”

I lick my bottom lip and come out of my stupor, climbing back out of bed. I don’t bother saying anything though there

are loads I could. However, that means I'd need to know what I was going to say in the first place. I gather my stuff together and pick out a pair of burgundy silk shorts and a matching camisole. It was either that or one of my pajama sets that have a character or whatnot on them. And there's no way I'm going to be anywhere near Grimm in anything unsexy.

I quickly change, brush my teeth and hair out, gathering my hair at the top of my head. I release a breath and step back into the bedroom, only to come to a halt. This is due to the sight of Grimm in my bed, his back to the headboard, and lordy, if it's not a sight I've wished for, for a long, long, long time. Oh, so maybe not that long, but still, from the moment I knew what sex was and how I knew I was in love with this man, I've wanted him right where he is.

"Come here," Grimm commands, eyeing my sleep clothes. The way his eyes seem to flash with desire sends a shiver of goodness straight down my spine and between my legs.

Without thinking, I move to the bed and climb in. Grimm grabs me around the waist instantly and pulls me flush against him.

"Now, what are we doing?" I blurt out.

"Sleep, baby. Come tomorrow, we're going to finish our talk, and after, we're goin' out on the bike."

My heart skips a beat, and I decide for the time being to live in the now and worry about what's to come later.

# CHAPTER NINE

## GRIMM

The feeling of having a woman in my arms as I come to is something I've never experienced. I've always been one for when I'm done, I'm gone or they gotta go. Sleeping with someone is completely different and, in my opinion, far more intimate than fucking.

Apricot's ass wiggles, pressing into my cock, and from the steady breathing, I know she's still out. Last night, watching a movie with her was again something I don't do. Not with anyone. The best part of it all is waking up on the couch and making out with her. I could feel the heat of her pussy through my jeans, and it was all I could do to keep from fucking her right then and there. I'm sure Apricot wouldn't have protested, considering those moans she whimpered into my mouth.

Fuck, it was hard as hell to keep from pulling her clothes off and taking her as I wanted. Even now, my cock is throbbing with the need to sink inside her, but I'm trying to do the right thing. Not rush this shit more than needed. I also want her to know where I'm at with all this and make sure she's good with it all. I know me giving her the brush off and now telling her she's mine is probably screwing with her head.

Either way, it's happening, and she'll get on board with it. Sooner or later.

I run my hand along her waist, trailing my fingers up the silk of her shirt. My mind drifts to the sight of her first stepping out of the bathroom and me seeing her in the pajamas. To say my already stiff cock went rock solid. There's something to be said about how beautiful she is.

Apricot wiggles some more, and I have to bite back a groan at how good she feels and how I'd like to sink inside her pussy.

To keep from doing what I know I gotta wait to do. I'm gonna have to wake my woman up so she'll stop fucking teasing me.

I slide my fingertips upward and lean in, tilting my head the smallest amount to press a kiss to the skin where her shoulder and neck meet and whisper, “Wake up, Dimples.”

“Hmm,” she moans sleepily. “I don’t wanna.”

Chuckling, I kiss her once more and shift enough to roll her to her back. “Sorry, baby, but it’s time to finish our talk that was interrupted.”

Apricot stiffens and blinks her eyes open, looking pissed and sexy at the same time. “Don’t you have somewhere else to be?”

“Nope. Today, I’m all yours, and we’re gonna talk, get dressed, and go out on the bike.”

Apricot’s head jerks back against the pillow, and she gives me this shocked expression and whispers, “You’re going to take me out on the bike?”

“Yeah, I am. But first, we’re gonna talk,” I state sternly.

“I need coffee. I can’t talk or function without coffee,” she blurts, shaking her head, and pressing her hands against my chest. “I also have to brush my teeth and hair.”

“Dimples.” I smile, seeing this as a tactic to hold off on not talking. “You can do your shit in a minute. Our talk won’t take long.”

“Grimm.”

I shake my head and tilt my head down, pressing a kiss to her lips. “Listen to me, Dimples, I know what I said yesterday was a shock to you, but it’s all true. You’re mine. Have been for a long time, and I’ll admit, I’ve been a dick about it and to you.”

“You think?” she mumbles.

“I’m gonna make things right, and we’re gonna see where this goes between us,” I declare, stroking her cheek with the side of my thumb. “We’re going to spend time together, here and at the clubhouse. I’ll take you out on the bike, whatever, but I don’t do dates. You wanna go dancing with your friends,

cool, I'll take you, but I ain't dancin'. You get what I'm sayin'?"

"Um, let me get this straight, you want me to be yours, but you won't take me out on a date?" The way she quirks her brow is cute as hell because I can tell she's getting ready to work herself up.

"Yeah, I don't date. Never have," I answer honestly.

"So, you're saying you won't take me out for dinner, to a movie, or shopping?"

"I'm saying I don't date, Dimples. You wanna see a movie and it's one I'd see, sure, we'll go. It's something I don't, get a friend to go with you. We'll go eat, but I ain't goin' to some fancy place where I gotta dress up. If I can't wear my cut or boots, you won't catch me there. As for shopping, fuck no, unless it's the grocery store. Even then, I ain't wasting time picking between brands. Now, does that answer your question?"

"Why don't you date?" She cocks a brow, tilting her head slightly.

"Dating's for high school and whatnot."

Apricot seems to take in my answer and gets this knowing look in her eyes. "If that's the way you see dating, then what would we be classified?"

"Apricot," I grumble, knowing what she's doing. "Told you already. You're mine. Means you're my woman. And I don't share."

"Does that mean you're also mine? Or do I have to share?"

"Woman. You know better than that." I growl, getting directly in her face. "I'm not a cheater. I told you, you're mine. It also means I'm yours. Now, do you fuckin' get what I'm saying?"

Apricot smiles brightly and nods. "I see, Blaine 'Grimm' Kingston."

I tense at her stating my real name. No one until Tripp said it yesterday has ever used it. Not since Rock and Hydra pulled

me out of my spiraling life. “Do me a favor, Apricot, and don’t call me that again. That man is long gone. Dead to the world.”

“Why?” she whispers, the smile vanishing from her lips.

I press a kiss to her lips, jerk away, and climb out of bed. “That’s a story for another time. Not when I need to get my woman some coffee.” There’s no way I’m telling her that shit. Not now, and if I have it my way ... not ever.

# CHAPTER TEN



## APRICOT

“Dimples, where you want this big ass pot at?” Grimm asks, holding one of the pots I’m going to use for my display.

“Can you put it over there?” I point to the window. “I’ll be using it as a display.”

“Right,” he grumbles and carries the pot over to where I told him.

Over the past week, the man has been nothing if not insufferable. I don’t understand him. Well, I do, and I love spending time with him, but he’s driving me insane. He’s kissed me ... a lot. We’ve made out so many times, but he always pulls away and never lets me touch him for long. And don’t let me get started on the fact I know he wants me. I feel him all the time, but not once has he gone further. I’m nearly to the point of begging him to have sex with me because I can’t take it anymore. There’s only so much a girl can handle.

And I want sex. Sex with Grimm. I want to feel him inside me while he kisses me. I want it all. But the damn man won’t give it to me. Maybe I should pull out my toys and use them. I could take care of myself, and he won’t be the wiser. Though it would have to be when he’s not around, which in the time since I found him in my home, hasn’t been often. He’s helped me every day in the shop, moving things around. Doing things I could do myself, but only with a hand cart.

Earlier at lunch, he told me that he’s got to be at church later on. I could do it then. I already mentioned not wanting to go to the clubhouse this evening. I love my parents and everyone, but they can be in my business, and I don’t want to deal with them all right now. I won’t be able to hold them off for long. However, I like the idea of it just being Grimm and me for the time being.

I’m still getting used to there being an us.

When we haven’t been at the shop getting it ready for tomorrow’s opening, Grimm’s taken me out on the bike.

Sometimes he rides for hours, just the two of us, the road and the wind. It's an amazing feeling being wrapped around him, holding on and savoring the feeling of the experience. Every night though, we end it at my place, where we fix dinner together. I'm surprised at how good of a cook he can be. Last night he made this fantastic honey garlic chicken. It was mouthwatering, for sure.

The best part of it, at the same time scary, is we always went to bed together.

"Babe, what else do you need done?" Grimm asks, getting my attention, taking it off my thoughts of how much I'd love for him to have sex with me.

"Um, that's it for the time being," I answer, glancing around, and pulling my lip between my teeth.

"Right, then I gotta get going. Maverick needs my help with something."

It's all I can do to contain my surprise at this. "What's going on with Maverick?" I'm also thrilled by the fact I can sneak away from here, go home, and take care of myself. I don't want to have to wait until later, that's how badly he's driven me insane.

Grimm gives me a look as if he's trying to read my mind. "He's just doing some rewiring at the house for security and needs help to get it done quicker."

"Oh."

"Yeah." Grimm closes the distance between us and wraps his arms around my waist. "I'll be back in a couple of hours."

"Okay." I nod, wondering if I'll have enough time to call an Uber or taxi or something, get home, do my thing and get back. Maybe I should call Kasey and ask her to give me a lift home. It would be quicker, but then again, she'll want to hang out, and I won't be able to do what I want to do. Drat. I could see if he'll just run me to the house, and I can get my car. "Do you think you can take me to my place? I think I'll have to run to the hardware store in a bit, and I'll need my car."

“Sure,” he says, still giving me that assessing look, but he drops his arms and steps back. “Get your shit, and we’ll go.”

I do as he says, and within minutes, I’m on the back of his bike heading home. Thankfully, my excuse wasn’t an outright lie. I have the shop opening tomorrow, and I have to finish up the last-minute things. I have to make sure all the flowers are planted where I want them and that the rest is just how I want it.

It doesn’t take us long to get to my place. Grimm doesn’t turn off his bike when he turns into the spot in front of my townhouse. Instead, he holds it upright with his powerful legs and taps me on the thigh, telling me to hop off. I climb off, using him to balance as I do so. The moment I have both feet on the cement, Grimm pulls me into his side, his eyes locked with mine.

“Don’t know what you’re thinking in that head of yours, Dimples, but I’m telling you now, I find out it has to do with that sweet body of yours, I won’t be pleased.”

Oh my God. He didn’t just say that.

“How did ...”

I stop as his lips curve up into an oh so sexy knowing grin. “Baby, I can read you like a fuckin’ book. Have been able to for a while. You ain’t hiding shit from me.”

Dear lord, please save me. “Well, maybe if you’d already do something about it, I wouldn’t feel the need to do things myself,” I snap, narrowing my gaze on him. “You know I’ve all but thrown myself at you, and for what? You to ignore the signs? Do you need me to scream it out for everyone to hear what I want?” I continue my rant, not paying attention fully to Grimm, or the fact he’s shut the bike off, and put the kickstand down. “I mean, seriously, there’s only so much a girl can take before she has to handle things on her own. If you can’t do the job, then someone has to—”

I don’t get to finish my outburst due to Grimm cupping the back of my head and holding me in place as his mouth covers mine. I gasp in surprise, and he takes the opening, sinking his

tongue in, demandingly. I fist his shirt in my hands, holding on for dear life.

Grimm drops his hands to cup my rear and lift. I wrap my legs around his waist to help support myself as he moves ... all without releasing me from his devouring kiss. At the door, he stops long enough to open it. I don't know how he manages, but he does this, still kissing me. I moan into his mouth as the door slams shut behind us. Grimm keeps going, taking us across the room and up the stairs. He doesn't stop breaking his mouth from mine until he lowers me onto the bed.

"You want me to fuck you, baby, all you had to do what ask," he rasps, jerking my shirt up and over my stomach, then my head leaving me in my bra and jeans. The bra is the next thing to go, and Grimm lowers himself until he's directly at one of the tight little peaks. I shiver in anticipation as he flicks his tongue across the tip right before sucking it into his mouth.

"Grimm," I gasp, loving his touch, so much so I arch my back to get closer.

Grimm lifts his head, his eyes looking like molten lava, he moves to give my other breast the same attention, but he continues to toy with my nipple, rolling it between two fingers. I love every moment of it, and I swear I could climax with him only toying with my nipples.

"Grimm, please," I plead, wanting more.

Grimm ignores me and keeps on with his touch, driving me mad. Time seems to take on a life of its own as he torments my nipples. I'm consumed in the sensations that he's causing. I barely realize he's moved until he shifts downward and jerks my jeans down.

"Grimm?"

His eyes come to mine as he settles between my thighs. "Gonna eat this pussy," he rasps. "I've been wanting to do it a long time, and I'm a starved man, baby, brace, cause I ain't stoppin' until I get my fill."

I do as he says and brace as he does just that. But bracing wasn't enough for the earth-shattering, world-tilting on its axis orgasms he gave me one after another. Grimm doesn't relent his touch, not until he has me begging, pleading for him to be inside me. He rotates using his mouth and fingers, flicking and sucking at my clit and fucking me with his tongue and those magical digits that leave me wanting more of him.

On the last orgasm that has me screaming his name in pleasure, Grimm jerks upward and quickly strips out of his clothes, the intensity of his gaze taking all of me in.

My gaze drops to get the first glimpse of him, and I swallow at the look of how big he is.

"Is ... is that going to fit?" I blurt, making him chuckle.

Grimm wraps a hand around his shaft and tugs. "Yeah, baby, I'll fit in you," he answers. Moving back into position between my legs on his knees. His eyes stay locked with mine as he presses against my entrance.

Slowly he slips in and pulls backward, only to plunge forward a bit more. The pressure isn't as I would expect and soon, he's filling me completely. "Grimm," I pant, holding on to him, digging my nails into his shoulders.

"Fuck, you're so damn tight. Fuckin' perfection. You fit me like a damn glove, baby." he grinds out and gives me a moment to adjust to his girth.

Grimm takes his time, moves, thrusting inside me and I'm consumed again with such intense heat and pleasure unlike any other.

When my release washes over me, Grimm snarls my name and joins me. Breathing heavily, I stay wrapped around Grimm, not letting him move away from me.

"Dimples, baby," he rasps, "You gotta let go. I need to get you cleaned up."

"I don't wanna," I mumble, but reluctantly, drop my arms.

Grimm grins and withdraws from inside me, then moves away. I follow him with my eyes, watching his naked backside

as he moves around the room, heading to the bathroom. He comes back to me a moment later with a wet cloth, and I stare at him as he cleans me. I blink at the sweet, tender touch of him as he takes care of me. I glance down and blink again at the slight ting of blood on the cloth.

“It didn’t even hurt,” I mumble to myself, but Grimm responds.

“I know, baby, I took care of it when I was fuckin’ you with my mouth and fingers. I wanted you lost in the pleasure when I was in you and not the pain.”

I swallow and ignore the tears threatening to want to spill down my cheeks.

Grimm tosses the cloth to the side and climbs back in the bed, pulling me into his side, then dragging the covers over us.

“What are you doing?” I ask, uncertain of the moment.

Now that he’s had me, will he walk away?

“I’m relaxing with my woman after fuckin’ her for the first time,” he answers, pressing a kiss to the side of my head.

“But I thought you ...”

“Dimples, I ain’t going nowhere, not after what we just did. In a bit, I’m gonna run a bath and take care of you. Then later, I’m gonna ravish you some more.”

Well, okay then. I have to say I like that plan and look forward to more of the ravaging part of it. Though the bath sounds amazing too. Who knew Grimm could be so sweet? I know I didn’t, but I’m lucky I get to see him like this.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## GRIMM

“You’re not going to get in trouble, are you?” Apricot asks after opening the door to the shop.

Yesterday after we left, neither of us left her place again. We stayed in her room, where we both took time with each other’s bodies. I knew she was inexperienced, she’d been a virgin, but she’s a quick learner and has a wicked fucking tongue. She about drove me nuts with how good it felt on my cock. For dinner, we ended up having sandwiches she made while wearing my tee.

“Trouble?” I grunt, quirking a brow at her.

“Yeah, you said you needed to go help Maverick, and you had church last night.”

“I did, but I’ll let them know something came up and I couldn’t get away.” I grin.

“Something came up?” She gives me a look of confusion.

Grinning, I pull her directly in my arms and grip her chin tilting her head back as I lower mine. “Something came up,” I whisper against her lips and pull her tighter against me so she can feel that I’m already hard for her again. I don’t think I’ve ever been hard like this for anyone.

“Oh,” she murmurs and loses the tension.

“Dimples.” I release her chin and press my forehead to hers. “I’m not gonna get in trouble for being with you, but I sure as fuck won’t be telling them our festivities. I don’t think your dad or cousin and uncle want to hear that shit. I told you I don’t share, and that’s one of the things I won’t be doing.”

“Okay.” Apricot nods and closes her eyes.

“Now, do you need any help with anything this morning before I take off? You got this place opening today, and you didn’t get to finish last night. Figure I help you with what you need.”



“I just have to finish putting plants in pots, arranging a few things, and setting up the rest of my displays.”

“Right, then let’s get to it.” I give her a squeeze and kiss her open mouth before stepping away. If I don’t, I’ll fuck her again here and now. And we don’t have time for that. This shop is important to Apricot, and I want to see her succeed in what she loves most. During the last week, I saw first-hand how much this means to her.

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“What the hell happened to you yesterday?” Maverick starts in on me the instant I step foot into the clubhouse.

“Something came up.” I shrug, joining up next to the bar. “Anything important happen in church?” I ask, wanting to get a feel for what I’m looking at with Viking and Ice.

“Considering Rocco was spiking a temp, Ice pushed church back, didn’t you get the message saying Viking and Fawn took the kid to the ER?” Maverick quirks a brow at me, and I pull my phone out to check.

Here lately, I’ve been having issues with the damn thing, it’ll be good for a while, and I’ll get shit when I’m supposed to, then it’ll fuck with me. I unlock the screen and pull up messages. Nothing new. I show the screen to Maverick. “I didn’t get a message.”

“Fuck, you sure you didn’t delete it?”

“I don’t delete shit when it’s in the group text or otherwise unless it’s some bimbo bitch that won’t take the hint.”

Maverick laughs and shakes his head. “You need to get a new phone, brother. You’ve had that same one for what, five years now?”

“What the hell do I need to spend money on a phone for? This one ain’t broke yet. Just got some hiccups. Maybe Pirate can take a look and fix it.” I don’t like wasting money if I don’t have to. Growing up with nothing, I like to keep what I have. That or invest it into something that will still give me a

return, like the townhouses that I bought and renovated where Apricot lives.

The only time I splurged on anything is when I took the profits of the townhomes I'd received after the first year and bought a place out in the woods. At the time, it was a heap. I fixed it up with my brothers' help, and now it's my haven when I need to be alone. No one other than those in the club know about the place.

"Right, whatever you say." He grins and looks over my shoulder, the grin getting wider. "Incoming."

"Great," I mutter and twist to see who is joining us and groan at the sight of Toots and Wooly heading in our direction. "I'm out of here." I grunt and go in search of Pirate. I don't need one of the torpedoes or as the ol' ladies dubbed them torpe-da-hoes to cause me problems. I finally got my shit together where Apricot was involved, and I'm not about to fuck it up.

Especially after last night, the way shit fit around me was better than any other bitch I've ever been in. And because of her going to my head, I'd done something I never do, I forgot the condoms. Neither of us said anything about it yet, but I'm gonna have to ask her if she's on the pill or not. The thought of her carrying my kid pops into my head, but I shake it off just as quickly as it comes on. I'm not ready for that shit.

I knock on the door to Pirate's office, and I wait for him to call out. Lately, he's all but living in here with all he has to work on and look into.

"Yeah," Pirate yells.

I open the door, immediately regretting it. "What the fuck, man?" I growl, turning, not wanting to watch the man get his dick sucked by Dreamboat. "I don't need to see this shit, Pirate."

"You're the one who knocked on my door, now, what do you need?" He grunts. Out of the corner of my eye, I watch as he leans back in his chair and wraps his hands in Dreamboat's hair.

“Need you to have a look at my phone again. It’s acting up.”

“I told you the last time to get a new one.” Pirate snorts. “It’s old as shit in the electronic world and it’s time to upgrade.”

I released a frustrated breath and pinched the bridge of my nose. “Fine, I’ll get a new fuckin’ phone.” Spinning on my heel, I stalk out of his room and head for the main room. There’s a lot of shit to deal with, and considering it’s Apricot’s opening day, I wanna get what I have to do done and get back to her.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## APRICOT

Closing the doors, I sigh in relief. The day is over with, and I'm glad about it. The opening was a success, and I couldn't be happier. The best part of it is that Grimm showed up shortly afterward and spent the rest of the time hanging around looking incredible. I had several people come in and buy. I even had multiple orders placed for arrangements.

Fawn and a couple came in to pick out what they wanted for their wedding. This means good things for me, and I'm excited about it all.

However, the day is over, and I'm exhausted. All I want to do is fall into my bed and sleep.

"You ready to go, Dimples?" Grimm asks, coming my way.

"Yeah." I nod. "I just need to lock up and close down the drawer. If you wanna go ahead, I'll be right behind you," I offer.

"I'm good, I'll wait."

I smile at him and wrap my arms around his waist. I tilt my head back and look up at him. "You know that you're amazingly sweet?"

"Sweet?" Grimm quirks a brow, his lip curved upward on one side.

"Yeah, lately you've been nothing but sweet and gentle. It's something I'm not used to," I explain.

Grimm loses the upward curve as he frowns. "I'm not a sweet and gentle man, baby."

"You are with me."

"That's cause it's you. Anyone else, they can kiss my ass."

Giggling and shaking my head, I lean against him. "But if it's because of me, how come I wasn't able to get through to you before?"

Grimm tenses, his fingers at my waist flex. “Guess you can say I got my head outta my ass.”

“Guess so.” I pull away and do what I need to in order to get out of here. I don’t want to push him, and the way he said that, I sense something isn’t right. Hopefully, he’ll talk to me soon and open up.

For now, I’ll get the shop closed up, and the two of us can get to my place. Maybe even do more of what we did last night.

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Standing at the counter, I go through my mail, tossing the junk to the side to throw away, and neatly place what I need to keep in a pile to take care of. I get down to the last envelope and freeze as I recognize the handwriting. It’s been a while since I’d seen it. I don’t know who it is, but I’ve been getting letters from whomever it is for years now. I’ve never told anyone. I didn’t want to worry my parents or anyone else, for that matter. I figured it was just crap anyway, though I knew better in the back of my mind.

With a shaky hand, I open the seal and pull the slip of paper from within. I unfold it and start scanning over the words written so precisely.

*You’ve damned yourself, my love, and the sins of what you’ve done must be rectified. As chosen, you will be cleansed.*

That’s all it said, but it’s enough to freak me out.

“Dimples,” Grimm calls out, getting my attention.

I quickly ball the paper up, toss it on top of the junk mail, and whirl around to face him. Grimm had gotten a phone call when we’d first been walking in the door, and he stayed outside to take it . . . something to do with the club. Having grown up in the life, no matter how much it annoys me the whole no women allowed, I know not to push or pry. My mom told me that as an ol’ lady, you get told what’s needed and have to trust them.

“Everything okay?” I ask, trying to hide my fear. I pull my bottom lip in between my teeth.

“Yeah, everything’s good. Pirate told Viking about my phone, and Viking made sure to call me rather than text to let me know we’re having church in the morning.” Grimm watches me, his eyes taking in my lip, and I can’t help but fidget under his watchful stare.

“I thought they had it last night?” I was afraid he’d get in trouble because of him missing church.

“Got pushed back. Viking and Fawn had to take Rocco to the hospital. Kid had spiked a fever.”

Oh right, Fawn told me about that earlier. She’d looked tired and said Rocco had his first ear infection. Poor kid. I know what it’s like. I used to get them all the time.

Instead of saying this, since I’m sure he knows what happened, I bring up his phone. “What’s wrong with your phone?” He hadn’t said anything about it.

Sighing, Grimm shakes his head. “Had Pirate look at it. Says I need a new one.”

“Well, that depends. How old is your phone and what is it doing?” I might not know a lot about electronics, but I know something thanks to a friend from college. She was taking computer science and engineering. Swear Diya could fix anything if you give it to her. It’s a shame she moved back to Indiana, but that’s where she’s from.

“Had the same phone for five years,” he says, closing the distance between us. “Lately it seems to have a mind of its own.”

“That’s a long time. You’re lucky it lasted so long. Nowadays, phones barely seem to want to last two years without needing to be replaced. Something always goes wrong. The battery, something internal ...”

I stop rambling as Grimm gets in my space, his hands on my waist. I notice his assessing eyes take on a life of their own and I lose all thought of anything else.

“You good?” he asks.

I nod and suck in a breath. There’s no way I could answer him right now.

“Baby, you gotta use words. A nod doesn’t answer shit.” He grins, giving my waist a squeeze.

“Yes.” I barely get the word out before Grimm’s mouth is on mine.

Everything seems to go by in a blur of motion. I love his hands on me, his mouth moving over my body. And the way he slides inside me. It’s perfection the way we fit together. Even better, when the intensity of it all heightens to the point of no return, I let it take over, washing through every cell within me.



# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## GRIMM

My phone rings, waking me from a dead sleep. I jerk upright and reach for the damn thing at the same time I look to my side to see a naked Apricot sleeping soundly. I swear the woman could sleep through sirens going off without waking her.

I glance at the screen, not recognizing the number. I answer and lift to my ear, throwing the covers off me. “Yeah.”

“Grimm?” The unknown caller’s voice sounds familiar, but I can’t put my finger on who it is.

“Yeah,” I mutter, reaching down to grab a pair of sweats I’d left there. “Who’s this?” I demand, keeping my voice down.

“It’s Tripp. We need to talk.”

Fucking hell, I should have known.

“What do we gotta talk about?” I grind out, tightening my grip on my phone. This fucker calls me in the middle of the night saying we need to talk, fuck that.

“Meet me at the old factory by the cemetery.” Tripp disconnects before I have a chance to tell him to fuck off.

“Shit,” I breathe, my eyes going to Apricot. I want nothing more than to rejoin her in bed, but I need to handle this. The last thing I need is for Tripp to show up here. My woman will question it and then start asking about my past. Thankfully she’s dropped the subject, and since that one time she called me Blaine, she hasn’t used that name again.

Quickly changing from the sweatpants to a pair of jeans, I throw a tee on and grab my cut. I shove my feet into my boots, and without making much noise, I leave the room. Taking the stairs two at a time, I stride toward the door, opening and closing it, making sure it’s locked, securing Apricot safely in the house. As much as I like it here, I’m thinking it’s time to take her to my place, but we’ll see. Maybe this weekend.

I stalk toward my bike and straddle her, pulling her upright and kicking the stand-up. I start my bike and take a moment to text Viking and Ice, letting them know I'm heading to meet Tripp.

The last thing I need is for this bullshit to be a setup and for my brothers not to be to have my back.

---

Upon pulling up next to the old factory, I note Tripp right off leaning against a burgundy Mustang. I stop right next to him and shut my bike off. I don't bother climbing off the back. I don't intend to be here longer than I have to.

"What the fuck was so important you had to meet me in the middle of the night at some old factory?" I demand.

"Two of us, we got a lot in common with our past," he starts, but I interrupt him.

"Cut the bullshit and just tell me."

Sighing, Tripp lowers his head and stares at his feet, his arms crossed in front of him.

"I don't have all night, Tripp," I mutter impatiently.

"Your parents are dead," Tripp says suddenly, shocking me but not surprising.

"They've been dead to me for a lotta years. If you remember correctly, I wasn't at home if I didn't have to be." I bite out harshly. The past is just that, the past. I don't need or want to think of anything that pertains to it.

"Yeah, that's why we're here, and you aren't getting the call later from the city morgue. They overdosed, but the kicker is, they left a baby behind."

I blink at him, not sure I heard him correctly.

"You got a baby brother. Name's Justice, he can't be more than four months old. Sutherland is looking into the hospital for his birth records that the social worker didn't have on him

yet. You being next of kin, you got the option of taking the kid or putting him in the system.”

It takes me a moment to process this whole crazy situation. My parents, who were neglectful junkies, had another kid. A kid who’s young enough to be my own kid.

Fuck.

I’m thirty years older than this kid. My mom had to be in her mid to late forties, and I didn’t think you could have a kid that late in life. She had me when she was fifteen.

Now both my folks are dead, and I’m left with a baby brother. There’s no way I would put him in the system. That shit ain’t about to happen.

“Where is he?” I roll my shoulders, trying to alleviate some of the tension building.

“He’s at the station with a social worker right now,” Tripp answers.

“Right, so why couldn’t we meet at the station and had to do it out here?” He still hadn’t answered me.

“The thing about your parents’ overdose, it seems they’d gotten themselves clean. They were going to meetings. The social worker, Genesis, who’s watching the boy right now, knew them. She was their case worker. Just took over for the previous one after Justice was born. Genesis told me and Sutherland that she never thought they’d go back to drugs. Evidently, they talked about you a lot. Anyway, according to Genesis and the previous social worker, they’d been clean for five years.”

They’d been clean?

Jesus.

“Something happened to either make them shoot up or it was forced on them,” Tripp finally states, getting to it.

“You think someone could have done this?” Tripp nods, and I continue. “If that’s the case, then who would do it? And why bring me into it besides the fact I have a brother?”

“Cause my theory isn’t something I can do legally and get away with it. You and I both know there’s no getting away from the past, and you know exactly what I mean.”

“You want me to confront those bastards,” I state what he’s not saying.

“Yeah.” He jerks his chin up.

“Point ain’t in charge of them anymore. Gave control over to his cousin, Tweak, about a year ago,” I inform him and grimace. Tweak had never liked me. Hated the fact Tweak was overlooking him and taking me under his wing, grooming me. When Tweak took over things with that gang got worse. I’d heard about it, and we’ve had our run-ins with them as they’ve tried to push for our territory. That ain’t happening.

“If it was Tweak, he could have gone after you already, why wait?” Tripp asks.

“Don’t know, but I’ll find out if they’re involved and let you know. Now, I’ve got to go get my little brother.”

---

“We’ll need to set up an in-home visit to make sure everything is in order, but both Detective Sutherland and Detective Sanchez have given high recommendations that you are suitable to take care of Justice,” Genesis, the social worker who Tripp told me about, explains.

I nod, holding a sleeping Justice in my arms. He’s small, smaller than I thought. “Does he need anything special? Formula? Diapers? Medicine?”

“He was born prematurely, but he’s healthy,” she says and goes on to tell me what formula he takes and how much he eats per day.

“Grimm,” Scorpion calls my name from behind me, and I whirl around to see him and Sabrina making their way to me. Their eyes on the little boy. “You wanna tell me why we’re in a police station at four in the morning and you’re holding a kid?”

When I first got to the station, I knew I needed a way to get the kid home and considering my cage is at my place, I called Scorpion. I also wanted Sabrina with him since she's a nurse, and I can get her to look Justice over to make sure everything was solid with him.

"Long story short, this is Justice, my little brother, and my parents are dead," I state bluntly.

"Oh my God," Sabrina gasps, her hands covering her mouth, eyes wide.

"Fuck," Scorpion mutters under his breath.

"That about sums it up," I grunt and meet Sabrina's gaze. "I wanted to see if you'd check him over for me. Genesis here says he's healthy, but I don't know her. I know you and can believe you." I look at the woman and continue, "No offense to you, but I don't trust anyone I don't know."

"None taken." She smiles. "And for the record, I understand and would be the same way. Now, I'll leave you to it. Also, between us, that home visit won't be necessary after what I just witnessed." With that said, the woman steps around us and walks to the door.

I don't question what she means by that. I didn't think she could do something like that legally. Aren't they required to check in? I inwardly shake my head and refocus on Justice, Scorpion, and Sabrina.

"Let's get this little guy to the clubhouse, I'll look him over there," Sabrina says softly, eyes on Justice. "Does Apricot know yet?"

"No, I got the call and didn't want to wake her." I grimace, thinking of what I'm gonna tell her. This whole situation is fucked up. I meet Scorpion's gaze. "I'll go over the rest later. Viking called church this morning, so I'll explain all at once."

Scorpion doesn't respond with words. Instead, he jerks his chin up and wraps an arm around Sabrina. I turn away from them, gather the small number of items for Justice, and put him in the carrier.

Later today I'll get him a better one than this, it's nothing like what Fawn and Viking have for Rocco. With the kid being as small as he is, he needs the protection and considering he's my responsibility now, I got to make sure he stays safe.

I just hope that when Apricot finds out, she's not gonna be pissed. I want to think that she won't be, but this changes things for us. And it ain't a small thing, it's big. It also reminds me, she and I gotta talk, 'cause again we didn't use protection.

Fuck.

When did my life go haywire?

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN



## APRICOT

I wake up in bed alone, not liking it one bit. I hadn't gone to sleep alone and don't know what happened to Grimm.

Doubt starts to sink in, but I shake my head, shoving the thoughts away. I climb out of bed and go freshen up in the bathroom. I brush my teeth and hair, throwing it up in a messy bun on the top of my head. Sometimes having long hair can be a pain in the butt, though it has its perks ... like the way Grimm wraps his fingers around a fistful of my locks and holds it firm so he has my attention. He never hurts me when he does that, and it's hot.

Finished in the bathroom, I dress and grab my phone to find a message from my mom.

**Mom:** When you get up, come to the clubhouse. It's important.

I check the time I received it and frown. It came in almost an hour ago. Unless my mom has to go to work, she's never up earlier than she has to be.

What would be so important?

I have to be at my store in about two hours, so I guess I better get this done. I slip on a pair of flip-flops and head downstairs. I grab my keys and purse before heading out the door. My mind is reeling with the possibilities of what my mom needs me at the clubhouse for. Whatever it is, it can't be good. My heart races in my chest, and I curse myself for not taking a moment to take my medicine.

I'll have to make sure to take my purse in and sneak away to the kitchen long enough to take it before anyone sees it.

So much I'm keeping from them all, and none of them have a clue. If only I were able to tell them without the fear of what will happen, and how they'll react. All of them are already supportive enough, I don't need them to know. It's not that big of a deal, and I keep on top of it. I only ever had one

episode, and that was plentiful in the scaring me department. I surely wouldn't want to go through another one. But my doctor explained the signs to me. He told me what to keep an eye out for, and one thing I don't need is something happening that would send me into a seizure.

That's the last thing I need or want. What will happen then?

---

I pull into the clubhouse parking lot and immediately spot Grimm's bike. I swallow, my breath is shaky as I push back the doubt. He's probably here because of whatever Mom texted me about. He said he wouldn't cheat on me, that I was his and he was mine. I can't let comments in the past I've heard those torpe-da-hoes say about him and how he's never gonna settle for one woman get to me.

Shoving the thoughts to the back of my mind, I park, turn the ignition off, and climb out, taking my purse with me. As much as I want to drag my feet, I make my way into the clubhouse, almost instantly regretting it.

Standing in the middle of the room is Grimm and he's holding a baby to his chest.

His gaze comes to mine, and he gives me an assessing look before turning away and handing the baby off to my mom.

My mom.

She knows and didn't warn me. Just told me to get to the clubhouse.

And I find out Grimm's got a kid, a baby at that.

Oh my God.

This can't be happening.

"Dimples."

I hear his voice, I see him, but it's too much. Everything is just too much.

I feel myself going down, and I know what I fear most is about to happen.

# CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## GRIMM

“Apricot,” Sabrina screams from behind me as I jump the rest of the distance between my woman and me.

I catch her before she hits the ground and hold her to me as she starts shaking uncontrollably.

Fuck, she’s having a seizure.

“Sabrina,” I call out, not needing to, considering the woman was kneeling across from me.

Sabrina guides me through what to do with Apricot. The way she handles it, like it’s something that she deals with every day amazes me. Still, this shit is scary as fuck. Moments later, my woman’s body goes still, and it seems to have subsided.

“Come on, let’s get her off the floor and into a bed,” Sabrina mutters, picking up Apricot’s purse.

I nod and lift my woman into my arms and stand. Apricot’s head balances on my shoulder, and a part of me feels this is my fault. Maybe I should have gone to her, but I didn’t know she was gonna end up having a seizure.

Shit, she probably thought the kid was mine. Technically now he is, but that’s a whole different story.

In my room, I lay her down, and Sabrina moves in and sits next to her, examining her daughter to make sure she’s okay. Sabrina then surprises me by going through Apricot’s purse and mutters a curse as she pulls out a prescription bottle.

“Why didn’t she tell me? Damn it.” Tears roll down Sabrina’s cheeks, and if it wasn’t for Apricot being mine, I’d leave, giving her space. I also want to know what she’s talking about.

“Tell you what?” Scorpion asks from where he stands silently next to me.

Sabrina holds the bottle up and waves it. “This is a prescription for epilepsy,” she announces and I stiffen at the news. “She didn’t say anything.” The woman shakes her head and stands. “If I knew ...”

“You know now, sweetheart,” Scorpion says, moving into his woman.

“What do we do now?” I ask, my eyes glued to my woman.

Epilepsy.

She’s got a condition and never once said anything. Why? Shit, how long had she had it? She knew she had it without saying anything to those around her.

“We wait for her to come to,” Sabrina says. “Since I don’t know everything about what’s going on, I’m not sure how long it’ll take her. It’s different for everyone. She’ll probably be tired, weak, confused, and have a headache. But we’ll see.”

I nod and move to sit next to her. “I should have gone to her and talked to her instead of asking you to get her to come here.”

“You couldn’t have known this would happen.” Sabrina sighs. “I’m going to go get Justice. You stay here with her and let me know when she wakes.”

I nod, not taking my eyes off Apricot.

The door closes to my room, and I move to sit next to her on the bed. All thoughts of anything else were pushed to the side for the moment in time. A few minutes pass, and Apricot groans, coming to and her eyes flutter open. She stares at me for a moment and blinks her confusion away.

“You scared the shit out of me, Dimples,” I state gruffly before she can open her mouth to say anything. “Didn’t know what the fuck was happening. Why didn’t you say anything?”

“Because ...” She stops, clears her throat, presses her hands to bed, and pushes herself up. “I didn’t want to see the very look you have in your eyes right now.”

“What look?” I demand, doing my best not to get pissed. She just had a fucking seizure in my arms, and I don’t want something else to trigger another one. Hell, I don’t even know what set it her off. Other than she saw me holding Justice. But that can’t be what did it, could it?”

“The pity look, one where you think I’m made of glass and always needing protecting,” she says, diverting her eyes to stare across the room.

“When did you find out?” I ask.

“A while ago. I was at school. My friend was with me and got me to the hospital. I begged them to keep it a secret. I didn’t want anyone to know about it. I find out I have epilepsy. I’ve only had one episode. And I always take my meds.”

“Did you take them this morning?”

“It slipped my mind at first, and I said I was going to take it when I got here. I just didn’t get the chance.”

I nod, still not happy with her keeping this shit from everyone. “You know the looks that you’re given aren’t out of pity and all that shit. It’s because we all care. None of us, especially your folks and me don’t want anything to happen to you. I definitely don’t want to lose you when I’ve finally got you.” I reach up and stroke her cheek with the backs of my fingers.

Apricot’s breath hitches, and she finally looks at me. “Whose baby?” she asks. “Is it yours? Is that why you weren’t home when I woke up? One of the many women you’ve been through contacted you about you having a kid?”

Narrowing my eyes, I slide my fingers to cup the back of her neck. “I’m gonna let that shit slide just this once, baby, but that’s it.”

“Well, there’s only one way a baby is made, and you’ve had a lotta experience in that department.”

I stare into her eyes for a moment, seeing the emotional turmoil in her gaze, and I know she’s getting ready to work herself up again. I’m gonna have to do something I didn’t want her to know.

Fuck.



# CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## APRICOT

“The kid ain’t mine, but he is,” Grimm declares, and that simple statement screws with my head.

“How is he not, but he is?” I frown, not understanding him.

Sighing, Grimm drops his hand and stands. He runs his hands through his hair, releases a harsh breath, and pinches the bridge of his nose. When his eyes come back to me, I know he’s not actually with me, with me. “My folks had me when my mom was fifteen. Dad was seventeen. They got kicked out of their homes when the secret was out. They got married and found a place to live in, some worn-out trailer where they lived. Hell, that’s where they probably still lived.”

“Lived?”

Grimm ignores me and paces. “Growing up, neither parent gave two shits about me. They were more worried about where to get the next fix from. I don’t know how they made money to be able to keep from being put out on the streets, but they were never sober. I can’t remember a single time. I got older and started in with a gang that was in that portion. I was being groomed by the leader when Hydra and Rock pulled my ass out. I never understood why they did it, but I don’t give a fuck. I’m out of that life and never looked back. Not until I got a call in the middle of the night.”

I swallow and stare at him as he goes on. This time, his eyes focused on me.

“Tripp called me. We knew each other back in the day. Both of us able to get out of that shit. Anyway, he called and told me to meet him. Didn’t know what it was about, then he told me about Justice. Also told me about my folks being dead. Justice is my little brother, and I was given the option of washing my hands of him or taking him on as my own.”

I gasp, my hands flying up to my mouth. “You’re taking him on,” I say more to myself than anything.

Grimm nods, moves to the side of the bed, and sits next to me. “This shit don’t go further than it already has. Only a select few know my past. I’m keeping it that way, and I’m asking you to as well.” I nod and drop my hand to reach out and grab his.

“I won’t say anything,” I whisper and squeeze his hand. “I’m good at keeping secrets.”

That got a response out of Grimm. He releases my hand only to grip my wrist and yank me into his lap. “We’re not gonna joke about that shit. But I’d appreciate you not speaking of this again.”

I nod understandingly. “I promise.”

“Good, now I gotta know where you’re at with this. You and me, we’re together and now I’ve got Justice. You gonna be cool with him being at the house with us?”

“Yes, I always wanted kids, I mean ...”

“That’s something else we gotta talk about, Dimples.” His fingers flex at my waist. “Took you several times now, baby. Came in you each time. Wasn’t thinkin’ about protection.”

“I’m on the pill. Have been since I was sixteen because it helps with my period and cramps I used to get,” I blurt and blush, wanting to smack myself for blathering that snippet of information.

“Good to know, baby. Now, seriously, you gonna be okay with me having Justice at your place? If not, I’ll take him to mine. Probably better, it’s got more room in it.”

“Your place?” I cock a brow. “How come I haven’t seen it or knew anything about it?”

“Because I don’t use it much, but you still haven’t answered my question.”

“I don’t mind him being at home. I mean, I love kids. I want to have three,” I rant and realize what I said and blush, “I mean, one day.”

“Right.” Grimm’s lip twitches, and he leans in to press a kiss to my lips. “Gotta let your mom know you’re okay, and I

want you to meet Justice. I'm sure the others will want to know you're good."

I groan and tilt my head back to stare at the ceiling, willing it to open up a black hole and suck me into it. "Great."

Grimm stands, taking me with him, his hands slide down, and he cups my bottom. "It'll be okay."

---

"Dimples, you gonna be okay while we got church?" Grimm asks, getting my attention.

I lift my gaze from Justice to smile at Grimm and nod. "Yeah."

"Be back soon as we're done. We've got shit to do so we can get home finally," he says, leaning down to press a kiss to my lips.

"Okay," I murmured into his mouth before he walked away.

After Grimm brought me out into the main room, the first thing that happened was me assuring everyone I was okay. Grimm sat me down on one of the cushy couches and went to take Justice from my mom. Of course, my mom didn't waste time laying into me. She chastised me for an hour straight. My dad got in on it, and they demanded to know everything. From the first episode and how I found out, to the doctor I've been seeing. All of it.

They finally dropped it when Justice started crying, and Grimm set the baby in my lap with a bottle. "Feed him for me." The way Grimm said it, I realized he was freaked about this as much as anyone else could be.

I nodded and dropped my gaze to the bundle now in my arms. I took one look at the baby and was a goner.

Now Justice is sleeping against my chest, fist to mouth, and my mom's still hovering around. The one time I told her to back up, she snapped at me that was not happening.

At least someone remembered my store. Viking asked Fawn and Peyton to take care of the place for me. I didn't have the mental capacity right now to do it myself.

This is fine, but I need to sort through all I now have on my mind. Grimm now had Justice and being with him meant taking on a child. I don't mind this at all. I mean, I've thought about it enough over the years about how I wanted to give Grimm kids. Justice might not be his son, but he's his brother and his responsibility to raise. He can't just take care of the kid and not treat him like his own. Being adopted myself, I know I lucked out with some amazing parents.

I sigh, processing through everything else, and I come to the conclusion I have one more thing to tell Grimm. Though I don't want to. It's not like it's ever been more than it is. But with all that's happened and now with Justice in our lives, I can't take the chance. He needs to know.

And when I tell him, I know he won't be happy.

Not in the least.

# CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## GRIMM

I release a breath, exhausted and more than ready to crash. As I step inside the townhouse, I place Justice, who's out like a light in his new carrier, on the couch.

During church, I'd given my brothers everything that I found out from Tripp. Viking put Pirate on Tweak, wanting to see what we can get before I go in and deal with it in person. They didn't want me to go alone on this bullshit as I was willing to do. No matter how much I despise my folks, I still don't give a shit they're dead. They died a long time ago, but from all I'd found out from Genesis, they'd seemed to get their lives straight, and my little brother lost his parents. I have no doubt Tweak is involved. He hated me back then, and to this day, he hates me. But I won't know for sure until Pirate gets done with what he's gotta do, and then, and I get in his face to confront him.

I guess I can see Viking's reason for wanting me to hold off until we know more. I could easily be walking into a shitshow that would cause another war we don't need, not when we're at a stand-still war with whoever the fuck killed Peyton's sister and left that note. All we know on that end right now is the mayor and chief of police are a part of whatever bullshit is going on.

When we finished up, I gathered Apricot and Justice. We went to the store. I'd left my bike at the clubhouse and put both my woman, and guess, I might as well say my kid, in the small as fuck car. I'm gonna have to get a bigger vehicle for me, but also something more dependable for Apricot. If something were to come at her, she'd be dead on impact with how small the damn car is. That's something I can't let happen.

"Dimples, you get him, and I'll bring the shit inside," I say, turning to Apricot, indicating she take care of Justice while I get everything out of the car.

Since I left her to handle church earlier, she's been quiet. More than normal, and after the day we've had, I can understand, but I don't like it.

"He's fine for right now," she murmurs, looking at where I placed Justice. "I'll help you get everything in. We work on it together, and it'll go by faster, it's not much, but still, it's bulky."

"Right." I grunt, "Let's just get it done then." I step toward Apricot, intending to kiss her, but she spins on her heel and steps toward the door. I catch her wrist and turn her to face me, seeing the apprehension in the depths of her vibrant eyes. "You good?"

"I'm fine," she says softly and smiles, but even I'm not that much of a dumbass and know what it means when a woman says that shit. I've heard Viking, Ice, and War talking about the times their women say that shit to them.

"I call bullshit, Dimples, but I'll give you time," I state, leaning in, getting directly in her face. "We'll get this shit in, order food 'cause I'm fuckin' starved, and then you'll tell me before I fuck you and crash."

I let Apricot go, step around her, and head for the car to start unloading it. Still, I didn't miss the sharp intake of breath she took before following. It takes us both two trips, me bringing in the heavy and big items while she grabs the bags.

While at the store, we'd gotten two of those playpens that have the changing area and bassinet for Justice to sleep in for the time being. I'm gonna have to go pick up a crib later, but for now, this will work. With that, I'd gotten a new carrier for Justice, but I'd opened that at the store and switched him to it before putting him back in the car and asking them to throw the old one away. We'd gotten a case of diapers, wipes, bottles—the ones meant to help with them not getting colic, whatever that is—and a baby monitor that has a video screen. In the bags were clothes for him to wear now and to grow into, along with baby shampoo, soap, and lotion. There was even a medical kit that has baby pain relief meds, some bulb thing, and diaper rash cream.



I never realized how much a kid needed until now.

Apricot slowly starts unloading the bags and sets things neatly in piles as I just stand there watching her. She's damn beautiful and would make a great mom. I'm sure of it.

Fuck me.

Shaking my head, I toe my boots off and set them by the door. "I'll be right back," I tell her and go upstairs to the bedroom and take a quick shower. Hot spray hits my body, helping with the tension there.

After my shower, I dry off and dress in only a pair of sweatpants. I head back downstairs to find Apricot setting one of the two playpens together. One was gonna be down here while the other went upstairs. When I get the crib, it'll go to my place. I think it's where we'll be living from now on. This townhouse ain't big enough. Besides, I've got a yard.

"You need any help?" I ask, getting Apricot's attention.

Apricot lifts her head and gives me a small smile. "No, I'm almost done here. Then I'll move Justice from the carrier."

"All right. Then I'm gonna order some food." I walk across the room to the kitchen counter to get one of the menus Apricot keeps there.

"Okay," she says and goes about finishing what she's doing.

Seeing a stack of junk mail she'd been going through the other day, I pick it up. I was getting ready to throw it in the trash when I noticed one of them she'd balled up. Glancing over my shoulder, I frown and set the papers back down. I grab the ball of paper and unravel it, and nearly see red at what I read. "What the fuck is this?" I snarl, holding it as I twist to face my woman.

Apricot lifts her head, sees the paper in my hand, and visibly swallows as her face pales.

"Grimm," she whispers and straightens.

"Tell me what this is about, Apricot," I command, not about to let this shit go.

“I was gonna tell you.” Apricot drops her gaze to the floor and fidgets with her fingers in front of her. A sign of her nervousness. All the years I’ve known her, I knew this was something she’s always done.

“Yeah, when?” I growl, stepping forward.

“Please, Grimm, give me just a moment, and I’ll tell you,” she says, looking over her shoulder to Justice.

I clench my jaw and look at the playpen and then at her. “That set up all the way?”

“Yes.” She nods and pulls her lip between her teeth.

Nodding, I stalk over to the baby and unbuckle him. Being gentle with his tiny body, I lift him out of the carrier, carry him over to the playpen, and lay him in the thing. He doesn’t wake or shift other than to lift his little fist upward.

I step away, grab Apricot’s wrist, and drag her into the kitchen. I pin her against the counter. “Explain now.”

# CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## APRICOT

The anger rolling off Grimm is nearly thick enough to slice through. I want to kick myself for not remembering to throw that paper away. Why didn't I? I wanted to be able to tell him, but I was going to wait until tomorrow or the day after. We've already been through enough in one day and need a break from it all.

God, I'm such an idiot.

"Apricot." The way he all but growls my name in warning, I know I can't lie to him, not that I would.

"I've been receiving letters like that one for years. I've always thrown them away and brushed them off," I whisper, going on to tell him the rest of it. How I thought it wasn't anything to worry about. I tell him how they'd stopped; this was the first one I've gotten in a while. When I'm finished, I can all but taste the fury radiating off Grimm.

"You didn't think for one second when they started or any other time to tell someone?" he demands through gritted teeth, staring at me through slitted eyes.

"I didn't want to because everyone would make a big deal about something that's nothing."

"Bullshit."

"It is not," I snap quietly.

"It is and you know it," he snaps right back, getting directly in my face. So close, our noses touch.

"Grimm, it's not anything to worry about," I mutter and press my hands against his chest to push him back, but he doesn't budge.

"I suggest you rethink that because that letter is a fuckin' threat, Apricot. One that clearly states someone is not only watching *you*, but they're fuckin' stalking *you* and intend to do something again to *you*."

“It isn’t. I told you, I’ve been getting those letters, and nothing has ever happened before.”

“You’ve been damn lucky nothing fuckin’ happened to you,” he growls, his hands moving from the counter where he has me pinned to spear in my hair as his mouth slants and clamps down on mine.

His lips are firm and hard as he kisses me angrily.

Unable to stop myself, I open for him, and he takes it, thrusting his tongue in to claim my mouth. I melt into him, my fingers clenching at the front of his shirt, holding on as if he’s all that’s keeping me upright.

Grimm releases my hair and drops his hands down to cup my rear and lifts me. I wrap my arms and legs around him, and he moves, carrying me up the stairs. In the room, Grimm drops me on the bed and stares down at me through lust-filled eyes that still have a look of fury in them. I swallow nervously, but I don’t move. I can’t.

I watch as Grimm turns from the bed and stalks to my closet. He throws the door open and grabs something from within. When he comes back, he stops at the side of the bed.

“Stand up, baby,” he commands, his voice still harsh but with a hit of raggedness to it.

I do as he wants and stand directly in front of him.

“Strip.”

It’s all he says, and I do. I remove my shirt and jeans, then my bra and undies.

“Grimm.”

“No talking, Apricot, not right now. I’ll tell you when.”

Never in my wildest dreams did I think his voice could sound like it does when he makes his order that I not speak.

“Get back on the bed, hands and knees to the mattress, ass in the air.”

Between my legs, I feel the wetness seep from my slit. On shaky legs, I turn my back to Grimm and climb onto the bed

on my hands and knees. In this position, I can't help but feel exposed.

Grimm moves, a hand rubbing one of my butt cheeks. "You fucked up, and now you're gonna take your punishment," he says, pulling his hand back only to bring it down again with a sharp sting that he rubs away.

"Grimm," I cry out in shock, my body jolting.

"Quiet, baby," he orders. "Way I see it, you earned four spankings for not telling anyone about having epilepsy and another two for scaring the shit out of me. And for this shit with the letters, six more. Now, you're gonna get those, and with each one, you're gonna count them out." He brings his hand down again, and my back arches as he soothes the pain away. "That was two, these next ones are yours to call out."

Grimm brings his hand down, this time on the other cheek, a sharp pain has me cry out, but I count. With each one, my body starts to hum with need. Between each slap to my rear, Grimm massages my ass and dips a finger down to slide through my juices coating my entrance. I never knew how much something like this could be a turn-on, but my entire body is shaking with a need for Grimm to take me. To fuck me.

"Good, baby," he rasps, running his fingers down my inner thighs.

The feel of something soft touching my skin sends a shiver throughout my body. The fabric is wrapped around my thighs, holding my legs together. Grimm walks around the bed until he's facing me, and I realize he'd stripped off his sweats at some point during my spankings. His thick shaft juts out from his body, and a bead of pre-cum leaks out the tip. My mouth waters to taste him, but Grimm doesn't give me the chance. Instead, he covers my eyes with another fabric, tying it behind my head.

"You're gonna learn here and now, Apricot, that you're mine and being mine, you trust me with all of you. Heart, body, soul," he rasps, brushing the tip of his fingers along my cheek.

Without being able to see what he's doing, I hear some rustling, like he's shifting something on the bed. "Lift up onto your knees." I do hear more noises of something being moved. "Now bend forward again, this time with your arms behind your back."

My lips part of their own accord, and my body heats. I do what Grimm commands a moment later and find myself with my wrists bound together.

Grimm remains quiet, other than to tell me I was being good. He doesn't touch me as I want him to, instead, he runs his fingers along my sensitive skin. I don't know how much more I could take from him, and I open my mouth to beg for more when he kisses my shoulder. Trailing little kisses here and there, he moves down my body, but he avoids between my legs. The feel of his tongue slides over my inner thighs just above the fabric he tied there, and I realize why he did it. It keeps me from opening further for him as I want to.

By the time he gets to my entrance, I'm almost shaky with the need to have him do something, anything to satisfy the need within me.

"Are you going to keep anything else from me, Apricot?" he asks. His breath right there, torturing me.

"No," I whimper, shaking my head against the bed.

"You gonna tell me anything else I need to know that you've kept to yourself?"

I moan as he adds a finger to slide along my slit with a light touch.

"Answer me, baby."

"Y-yes," I pant.

"Good, now tell me whose woman you are. Tell me who owns this sweet body."

Oh God, he's going to kill me with all this torture.

"Y-you, Grimm," I whisper, panting. "Always you."

"Damn right, baby."

I cry out as sheer pleasure overtakes my body when Grimm doesn't just swipe his tongue along my entrance, no, he devours me. The orgasm that washes over me takes my next breath. Grimm doesn't relent in his fucking me with his mouth and fingers, not until he's had his fill. I know when I feel him pull away and his cock thrust home.

"Yes," I cry out.

Grimm fucks me like a madman, his fingers digging into my hips.

Only when I come again does he join me with a groan, his cock spurting inside the depths that connect us as one.

Both of us are panting for breath when Grimm slides and unties first my legs, then my wrists, before rolling me to my back. With a kiss on my lips, he removes the fabric from over my eyes.

I blink up at him and see him staring at me intently.

"Grimm?" I call his name in a whisper.

He cups the side of my face and strokes my cheek. "I don't want to see anything happen to you. When I say you're mine, I mean it. I want everything from you. No secrets."

"You know everything now," I murmur honestly.

"Good," he says, leaning and kissing me with so much sweetness it causes my heart to skip a beat.

At the sound of Justice's cry, we break apart.



# CHAPTER NINETEEN

## GRIMM

“You want to say that again?” Scorpion grinds outs.

Last night, I texted Viking and Scorpion that I needed to meet with them along with Hydra. I wasn't taking chances with Apricot. She fucked up thinking it was nothing regarding the letters she'd been getting. It's why this morning I didn't let her drive herself to the shop. I drove us straight to the clubhouse, grabbed a spare SUV we keep, and took her to work. She wanted to keep Justice with her there, which would be fine, but she didn't have anything there for him.

After dropping her off work, I ensured a prospect was on her and came back to the clubhouse. Sabrina took Justice from me, and I searched for my Prez and the others.

I'd just finished telling them what I found out last night and sensed the anger rolling off of them as I'd felt myself when I found out. The thought led to me thinking of what we'd done after and how I'd punished her for keeping secrets. I don't need my dick getting hard right now. I know I did to her things I hadn't planned to introduce her to until after she was more used to me, but with what she did, I couldn't hold back. What I wanted to do was to tie her to the bed, but she didn't have slats on the headboard for me to do so. However, what I did worked just as well, and fuck if it wasn't a sight to see.

“Do you have the letter?” Viking demands, getting my attention.

“Yeah.” I reach back into my pocket and pull it out. “My first thought was that it has something to do with her aunt and uncle and the shit CJ went through, but I can't be sure.”

Scorpion takes it from me, reads over it, and hands it to Hydra, who does the same, then thrusts it toward Viking. Viking scans over the paper and clenches it in his fist.

“This shit ain't happening again,” Viking snarls.

“It can’t be that cult bullshit. Apricot’s not a firstborn,” Scorpion growls. “It’s always been a firstborn girl that cult wanted for the ones that were ‘Chosen’.”

“We may need to talk to CJ about this. She might know who we’re dealing with,” Hydra suggests.

“Doubt it,” Viking grunts, “Axe told me she’s been talking to him about the shit and the cat and mouse game they played with her over the years. But they always used threats against Apricot to keep at her.”

“Still could be them. Why threaten CJ with Apricot? What’s special about her that they’d threaten her with?” Hydra questions.

Scorpion runs a hand along the back of his neck, and I watch as he tenses further. “CJ didn’t, by chance, mention anything about birthmarks, did she?” he finally asks through clenched teeth.

Hydra looks at him and curses before shaking his head like he’d just remembered something. “Fuck.”

“What?” Viking and I demand at the same time.

“Shouldn’t have forgotten about that shit,” Hydra growls, raking a hand through his hair as he starts to pace.

“Forgot what?” I grind out, not liking this.

“Apricot’s got birthmark at her hairline on the neck,” Scorpion answers, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Yeah, what about it?” I wish he’d just spit it out and not make me wait for the answer.

“Fireball told me about it,” Hydra speaks up, releasing a harsh breath before continuing. “We’d been dealing with a shitstorm at the club. Fireball was worried about his girls. Not only because CJ was his firstborn, and if his woman’s family found out, they’d do something to get her, but also due to the mark that’s on Apricot’s neck. We all kept that shit a secret. The girls were protected at all costs in the clubhouse when they weren’t with their parents. Then we lost Fireball and his woman. Because of what was going on with Viking’s mom

and me and the divorce, I couldn't get custody of them, and that bitch took both girls. By luck, they let Scorpion and Sabrina adopt Apricot."

"So, because of this birthmark, she's picked. Why?" I furrow my brows, not understanding.

"Because those with the marks are supposedly the true 'Chosen' for what they call the 'Dark Lord' or some bullshit," Hydra spits out.

"Those motherfuckers ain't gonna get their hands on her," I snarl, rage beginning to build in my veins. I'm not going to lose her to some fucked up group who seem to think they can use women as property and for sacrifices. Fuck that. "Why doesn't she know any of this?"

"Never thought we'd have to deal with more of this shit after the ordeal with CJ," Scorpion growls. "She didn't want her sister to know the full truth of all of it. We all know Apricot would have felt guilty, and that's something she doesn't need."

"If she'd fuckin' known, she wouldn't have been keeping this shit to herself," I grind out.

"Maybe, maybe not," Viking seethes. "Now that we know this shit, we can be on the lookout to make sure nothing happens to her," he says, focusing on me. "You said you put someone on her this morning at the shop?"

"Yeah, one of the prospects." I nod.

"Good. For now, anytime she's not with you or any of us, she's got a prospect on her," he decrees and releases a haggard breath. "Now let's move on to this shit with your folks. Pirate got some information on Tweak, none of it good, but he's not the one who shot your folks up with heroin."

"Fuck, you tell Tripp?" I grumble, wishing it was him so this shit could be over with.

"Yeah, Pirate gave him the information he found." Viking plants his hands on his waist and meets my gaze. "In church, we'll talk about the rest, but I'll say this now, I think you were

targeted, and they were killed as a message for you and the rest of us.”

“What message would that be?” I cock my head side to side feeling it pop due to it being tense.

“That whoever killed Veronica can get to us, and this shit isn’t over. They’re hiding in the dark to keep us from finding out who they are,” he answers.

Shit.

If that’s true, then none of us are safe. And if they were able to find my folks, then whoever the fuck is playing with us can look into each of our pasts. That right there is definitely not a good thing. Not one fucking bit.

# CHAPTER TWENTY

## APRICOT

My mind is a whirlwind, and I can't stop worrying about what's happening at the clubhouse. I knew Grimm wasn't going to keep the letter to himself. He straight up told me last night over grilled cheese and ham sandwiches that he was informing the club.

I didn't know how much time had passed while we were in the bedroom. Time had all but ceased to exist during our sexual festivities. I loved it, even the spanking. I never thought it could be so erotic. I'd read about how good it could be, and I'm tempted to do something to have Grimm do it again. But maybe not to the extent of him being infuriated.

While I fed Justice, he'd fixed us something to eat since we couldn't order anything. Afterward, he'd taken the second playpen box upstairs and set it up. Justice sucked his bottle down, and I burped him. I can't get over how small he is and how sweet. Looking at him, you can see the similarities between Grimm and Justice. With the drastic age difference, you would easily think they were father and son instead of brothers.

I quickly changed Justice's diaper and put him in a clean one-piece-footed sleeper. I grab a blanket, throw it over my shoulder, and carry Justice upstairs.

Now here I am in my shop and waiting to hear something, or at least, I hope I'll hear from Grimm soon. I hate fretting about every little thing.

The bell over the front door dings, getting my attention. I twist on my stool to see who's come in and smile at Nevaeh. "Hey, chick, what are you doing here?"

"I wanted to check on you. Peyton told me what happened at the clubhouse yesterday, so I figured I'd see for myself that you're okay," Nevaeh answered, closing the distance between us. Nevaeh was one of the girls who'd been rescued when everything went down with Fawn, and the club helped her by

not only giving her a place to live but a job at one of the restaurants.

“I’m good.” I hop off the stool and carry the flower arrangement I’d been fiddling with, putting it on the counter.

“Pretty,” she says, looking at the flower arrangement and then back to me. “That’s good you say that, but seriously, how are you?”

“Really, I’m good.” I nod, then sigh when she quirks a brow at me. “Okay fine. It’s been a lot. Loads really. I finally have Grimm as mine, and everything seems to want to go chaotic.” I go on to tell her all that’s happened, pouring it all out. Every detail about what happened with Tripp and Grimm, the part where he claimed me, even the sex. I don’t leave a single thing out.

“Holy shit, chickadee, talk about some serious shit you’ve had going on. And I’m taking it you haven’t talked to Fawn, Peyton, or Shyann about any of this?”

“I haven’t had time to. The times Fawn was in, it was with clients and, of course, at the clubhouse, I can’t since their men are always near them. There’s no way I’d talk about any of this where one of them could hear it.”

“I see your point.” She grimaces. “Well, how about we go to lunch? You and me, and we’ll go over everything, and I’ll also talk to you about maybe taking me on as an employee?”

I blink at her for a second, taken back by her asking for a job.

“You want to work here?” I point at the counter with my pointer finger. “At the flower shop?”

“Yeah, I need a change, and you could use some help.” She shrugs.

“I can’t pay much right now.” This is true, considering I just opened two days ago. But I could definitely use an extra set of hands.

“That’s okay. I have enough saved up to take a pay cut.”

“Then you’re hired.” I laugh, wanting to hug her.



“Awesome, now let’s go to lunch to celebrate.”

“You got it.” I step back from the counter and turn to grab my keys. I close the shop, flipping the sign to closed and lock the door, ready to spend some time with Nevaeh.

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Nevaeh and I’ve been at lunch for well over an hour just laughing. I know I should return to the shop, but I’m having a great time. I check the time on my cell and see a text from Grimm.

“Grimm?” Nevaeh asks.

“Yeah.” I smile and look at the text.

**Grimm:** Where are you?

I quickly text him back.

**Me:** Cafe down the street having lunch with Nevaeh.

Grimm immediately texts back.

**Grimm:** Next time, text me if you’re leaving the shop. Don’t move until I get there.

I roll my eyes and drop my phone on the table, not worrying about responding.

“And what did your man have to say?” Nevaeh grins.

“That I’m not to move until he gets here.” I giggle and pick up another fry from my plate and pop it into my mouth. “He’s protective.”

“Oh, I can believe it. I’d seen him staring at you at the clubhouse when he and you were dancing around each other.”

“We weren’t dancing around each other.”

“Yeah, you were. You just didn’t know it.”

“Well, what about you and Maverick?” I ask, turning the conversation toward her.

She straightens in her seat and shakes her head. “Nothing to talk about.”

“Yeah, okay, if you say so.” I smirk.

I know she has a thing for Maverick, and the two of them are roommates along with Ryann. He’d moved in with them when Peyton started living with Ice.

Nevaeh opens her mouth to say something, only to shut it as she stares over my shoulder. I twist in my seat to see not only my man heading in our direction but Maverick. Oh, this should be good.

“I have to go,” Nevaeh says, moving to get up. Only it’s too late. The two men take seats next to us in the booth.

“Hey, roomie.” Maverick grins.

“What are you two doing here?” I ask, looking at Grimm. “And where’s Justice?”

“He’s at the clubhouse with your mom. Picking you up since you closed up shop already.” He leans in and presses a kiss to my lips, lingering there for a moment. “Don’t like you leaving there without telling me,” he says, brushing my lips once more and pulling away.

“I’ll let you know the next time,” I whisper softly.

“Good. You done here?” he asks, eyeing the table.

“Yeah.” I nod.

“Right, then, let’s go,” he says, pulling out two twenties from his wallet and placing the bills on the table. It was way more than what our food cost, but I didn’t say a word.

I look at Nevaeh and smile. “Come by the shop tomorrow and we’ll set your schedule.”

“What schedule?” Maverick asks, glancing between Nevaeh and me.

“Nevaeh is going to start working at the flower shop with me,” I announce, scooting out of my side of the booth as Grimm takes my hand, tugging me into his side.

“See you tomorrow,” Nevaeh says, shoving at Maverick to move. “Move, asshole.”

“Aww, baby, you know you love me. You’re just mad I used up all the hot water this morning.” Maverick smirks, wrapping an arm around Nevaeh’s shoulders.

“Whatever,” she grumbles.

I giggle and snuggle into Grimm, tilting my head back wanting to see his face. “Let’s go.”

Grimm guides me out of the cafe and straight to a large pickup truck.

“When did you get this?” I ask, surprised as he opens the passenger door.

“Bought it about an hour ago,” he says, lifting me and planting me in my seat. “Needed it for Justice and you to ride in when you’re with me.”

“I have a car.”

“Yeah, and it’s small as shit. I ain’t drivin’ it unless I have to. Prefer to get you a new damn car that’s not some wreckage waiting to happen.” Grimm closes my door before I have a chance to argue that point, but I have to admit he’s got a point. It is small.

Grimm hops in behind the wheel and starts the truck. “We’ll get your car later. Gotta get Justice and head to your place to grab some shit. Then we’re going to my place.”

“Your place?”

“Yeah.” He jerks his chin and puts the truck in reverse. “It’s more space and I haven’t been there in a while.”

I swallow nervously, thinking about how he’s going to take me to his place. This is huge. Majorly huge and I don’t know what to do with it. We’ve been going warp speed, and there are no brakes, not that I’d want any. I guess it’s as if he’s giving me another piece of him. At the thought, I smile and look out the window. Maybe soon I’ll have all of Grimm since he holds all of me.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

## APRICOT

In the last several days, things seem to have been strained between Grimm and me. Not of my doing. Or I want to believe it wasn't something I'd done.

We've been staying at his place, and I love it. It's peaceful in the middle of nowhere with no one around.

The house sits up high on a foundation to level the ground out. The stairs lead up to a porch I could envision having a porch swing on and sitting outside to listen to the sounds of the surrounding area. Inside he's not really decorated as much but has the basics that any man would think to have, including an oversized couch and loveseat that sits in front of a flat-screen TV hanging on the wall. The rest of the house is bare for the most part except his bedroom, where he has clothes thrown all over the floor and the bed unmade.

The only thing about being here is that I'm not sure if Grimm actually wants me here. He hasn't really spoken to me. After leaving the cafe the other day, he'd gone from being the Grimm I was coming to love back to the one who was distant and not speaking to me. If he does, it's in minimal wording or about Justice. At this point, I'm starting to worry that he only has me here for Justice and nothing else.

Doubts keep flickering in my head, and it doesn't help that he's not even touched me. Not a kiss, a hug, nothing. I don't know what's going on with him, but I'm sick of it and intend to confront him the first chance I get.

I figure since my mom has taken up watching Justice for Grimm, I decide to text her and ask if she'd watch him a little longer. I need to speak with Grimm. Find out what's going on between us.

What if he's done with me? He got his fill and wants to wash his hands of me but doesn't know how without causing problems.

Panic races through my veins, and I can barely focus on the task at hand. Nevaeh starts in a week, she had to give her notice at the restaurant, and until then, I'm alone with several large orders. One day I'd like to add a delivery service, but that's a ways to go. Blinking, I shove thoughts of the future, Grimm, everything to the side. I can't deal with it now.

The bell over the door rings. I lift my gaze to greet whoever it is and smile at the sight of Tripp. "Hey."

"Hey, sweetheart, how have you been?" he asks, coming up to the counter and leaning over it with that grin of his in place.

"I'm good." I drop the ribbon and spin fully to face him. "What do you think of the shop?" I ask, waving a hand indicating the space.

"Looks great." He nods. "Glad you got it up and going."

"Thanks." My smile brightens though I'm really not feeling it. Still, Tripp is a friend. He'd told me so when he'd text. "So ... what brings you in?"

Tripp loses his grin and straightens. "I wanted to check in on you."

I cock my head to the side, sensing there's something more, and he does not want to tell me. "How about you tell me the truth?"

"I did want to check in on ya, sweetheart." Tripp sighs and reaches up to brush a hand through his thick dark hair that he always wears messy. "I got a call from an informant. Sutherland and I have about a strike against the club wanting to use women associated within the club. We were close to here, so I'm in here while he's on the phone with Viking."

Oh my God.

My eyes widen, and I clutch my fists. "Who would do that?"

"I can't tell you that, Apricot," he grunts, shaking his head. "Hell, I shouldn't have told you as much as I just did, but you have a right to know that much for certain."

The bell over the door rings again. I glance in that direction and stiffen at the sight of my man coming in, his features set in stone and he's glaring at us.

"Hey," I murmur, his eyes coming to me.

He doesn't return my greeting as he storms across the room. Grimm doesn't stop until he's directly in Tripp's face. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

"Grimm," I snap, getting his attention. "Stop and get out of Tripp's face. We were just talking."

Grimm cocks his head slightly and narrows his gaze on me. "About what?"

Rolling my eyes, I open my mouth to answer him, but Tripp beats me to it.

"Relax, I'm only here to make sure she's safe."

"Why wouldn't she be? I've got eyes on this place when she's not with me," Grimm grumbles as his cell phone starts ringing. And again, the bell over my door rings, this time to Sutherland stepping inside.

"Everything good in here?" he asks.

"Yes, just Grimm and Tripp having a caveman moment," I mutter, annoyed with the whole situation. "I'm going to get my things ready to go while you all have it out. Just don't ruin any of my displays." Spinning on my heel, I stomp away, done with all of the he-man acts. All Tripp was doing was making sure I was okay, and Grimm wants to come in and be a complete jerk. He doesn't even say 'hey' to me. Just jumps right in on the fact Tripp is here.

Shaking my head, I decide to get my things together, make sure everything is put away in its proper places, and shut down the shop. By the time I make it to the front again, Sutherland and Tripp are gone, leaving me alone with Grimm. His eyes meet mine, and I can't help but again wonder what's happening between us for him to lose interest.

"Ready?" he asks gruffly.

“Yeah, just need to set the alarm and lock the doors,” I inform him as I did yesterday.

“Right then, let’s go.” Grimm doesn’t wait for me as he walks away, expecting me to follow.

I do, but only so that when I get outside, I can tell him I want to go to my place. As much as I want to talk with him and demand to know what’s going on, I’m scared to know the truth and think maybe we need space.

I lock the doors with Grimm standing there, tension rolling off him in waves. “Take me home,” I whisper, not sure if he heard me or not.

“Gotta get Justice first,” Grimm states, guiding me to the passenger side of the truck.

“No.” I stand my ground. “I want you to take me to my place. Then you can go get Justice and take him to yours.” The thought of being away from that little boy hurts just the same as it does when I think of not being with Grimm.

“Come again?” Grimm demands, turning me to face him.

I straighten my shoulders and hold my head high. “I said take me to my place first.”

“Why?”

A tinge of uneasiness flows over me as Grimm steps back.

“I just want to go to my place. I think we need time apart.”

“Time apart?” he repeats, his lip curling at the side in a sneer. “Right, I’ll take you home. Get in the fuckin’ truck.”

I flinch at the harsh tone of his voice, unsure of what to expect next. Is this it? Is he done?



# CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

## GRIMM

Fucking hell. I don't know what I'm doing here. Other than fucking shit up with Apricot.

For the past few days, I've kept my distance so I didn't do something that would hurt her. Not when I'm furious with this whole situation. Viking asked Pirate to look deeper into Apricot's aunt and uncle to find out more about what they were into. Everything he's found so far is enough to send me over the edge. The group is nothing more than some sick fucks who get off on some weird ass shit. The reports he's found so far talk about women who were first born into certain families that were 'Chosen'. Then you had the ones who were born with the birthmark. Every time a girl is born with a birthmark at the hairline, they're supposedly born to serve as more than a 'Chosen' which I don't fucking get.

Regardless I'll do whatever it takes to keep Apricot safe and out of the hands of those who want her. She means everything to me and doesn't fucking know it. It's why her comment about me taking her home pisses me off. Mostly at myself. All because I've been distant with her, having gone back to the way I was before, being short and not talking to her at all. It's fucked up, but I've needed to think with my head and not any other part of me, such as my dick or the heart that I didn't even know I had. Then again, my heart is sitting next to me.

I drive us over to the townhouse and park, little does Apricot know, but I've had the prospects move all her shit to my place. I'd asked Fawn, Peyton, and Shyann to oversee where shit gets set up while I handled business. None of those women liked the fact I was straight up moving Apricot in with me without speaking to her, but they didn't fight me. Just made it known they disagreed and that I needed to stop with the he-man caveman antics, which I didn't listen to.

Apricot moves to get out before I get the truck shut off, and I let her. She opens her door and hops out as I follow suit.

Neither of us says a word. At the door, she finally turns to me and tilts her head back to meet my gaze, and I can tell she's got herself worked up.

"I'll see you later," she says, holding herself straight.

I continue to hold her stare until she turns to the door, unlocks it, and steps inside. I move in behind her, keeping my eyes on her as she comes to a stop at the sight of the empty townhouse.

"Oh my God, my stuff is gone," she whispers, and I feel a tinge guilty for not talking to her, but not really.

The townhouse is cool and all, but it's not big enough for all three of us. I want my woman in my bed where I not only know she'll be safe but I can tie her to the damn thing whenever the fuck I want. And I look forward to doing it soon, though I want to get other shit handled first. Get whoever is fucking with Apricot taken care of.

Apricot's eyes find mine, and she takes in my blank expression and the fact I don't seem worried about the place being empty.

"You ..." She narrows her gaze and plants her hands on her hips. "You did this, didn't you?" she accuses.

"And if I did?" I cock my head slightly and step into her space.

"Why? Why would you have my place emptied out, and where did you put my stuff?" she demands, holding her ground.

I reach out and grip her hips, pulling her flush against me. Her eyes widen when she feels my dick, but she shouldn't be surprised by this. Not by a long shot. I tighten my hold on her and lean down until we're nose to nose. "Why? Because I told you, you're mine, Dimples, and I'm not about to be away from you if I can help it. My place is bigger. We have more space, and there's no way I'm giving up the quiet I get out there. Having you here and me there won't happen. You want fuckin' space? I call bullshit."

"It's not bullshit," she snaps.

“It is. Just speak your fuckin’ mind and tell me why.” I’m sure I know the answer, but still.

Instead of answering, Apricot shakes her head and shoves against my chest, but I don’t let her get away. I’ll never let her get away from me.

“Let me go, Grimm.”

“Not happenin’, Dimples.”

“You can’t do this.”

I focus on Apricot, taking in the miserable look on her face, but I know it’s ‘cause I’ve been a dick. I put the sadness there. I also ignore it because everything I’m doing is for her. “I can’t do what? Protect you? Keep you safe? Make sure no one ever fuckin’ tries to get at you again? You don’t fuckin’ know,” I growl, releasing her. “You’ve no fuckin’ clue as to the dangers swirling around you, and all I’m trying to do is keep you safe.”

“I’ve no clue about what? What are you talking about?” she demands, stepping back.

“Every fuckin’ thing. Shit you don’t need to know about. If you did, it would haunt you, and that’s something I don’t want.”

“It’s not for you to decide, Grimm,” Apricot screams and gets in my space, slamming her fists against my chest. “You and everyone else need to stop being so overprotective, thinking I can’t handle the truth. I’m a lot tougher than you all think.”

I grip her wrists in my hands, hold them to my chest, and lean deeper into her. “You think you can handle knowing that those sending you letters want you for the sole purpose of what they didn’t get your sister for?” I curl my lip in disgust at the mere thought. I don’t want her to know this shit, but I’ll give her this one snippet in hope of her listening to me.

“What?” Apricot’s voice is no more than a breath as she blinks up at me with a look of utter surprise. “What are you talking about?”

“Wasn’t going to tell you this shit. None of us want you to know it. Especially your sister.” I let her wrists go and step back, keeping my eyes locked with hers as I tell her the basics. Although I make sure Apricot knows that I’m not about to tell her everything. I’m not gonna disrespect CJ by telling her story to her sister. No matter how much I know my woman deserves to know it. I watch Apricot’s expression as I tell her and don’t miss the horror that overcomes her features as it sinks. I take in the tears streaming down her face and wish I didn’t tell her shit, but she’s pushing buttons. “We’re not gonna let anything happen to you. You know that, right?”

Without words, she nods and turns away.

I release a heavy breath, step up behind her, and wrap my arms around her. I press a kiss to her temple and pull her against me. “You gotta trust me, baby,” I murmur in her ear. “I’m only doing what I gotta do to keep you safe. I can’t lose you, Apricot. Not fuckin’ ever, you hear me?”

“I don’t understand anything going on. Why is this even happening?”

Those simple words hold such anguish in them and were like a sucker punch to my stomach.

“Don’t know why shit happens like this, baby,” I answer and press a kiss to the side of her head before turning her to face me. I reach up and grip her chin between my fingers and tilt her head back so that she’s looking at me. “But what I do know is that I fuckin’ love you, and I’m not about to let anyone get their hands on you.”

I watch the way Apricot parts her lips and takes in my words. “You love me?”

“Woman, I wouldn’t fuckin’ touch you if I didn’t. Fuck, I moved you into my house because that’s where I want you. More than that, I need you there.”

“But why have you been keeping your distance from me?”

I drop my hand down to curl around her waist, and I pull her flush against me. “Because I’m an asshole. Had a lotta shit on my mind, and I don’t want to ever see you hurt. Now, how

about I get you home and into bed so I can fuck you the way I've been wanting to."

"What about Justice?"

"I'll get your folks to bring him home later," I say, whispering the words against her lips before capturing them with my own.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

## APRICOT

“So, how are things doing?” Nevaeh asks from the other side of the counter, her elbows propped on the top of it with her head resting in her palms.

It’s been a week since Grimm moved me out of my townhouse and into his place. And in that time, so much has changed. Some of it feels wonderful, whereas other parts of it really suck. The very fact that my entire family kept a massive secret from me being one of those. I can understand for the most part and love them for wanting to protect me as they have, but it doesn’t mean they shouldn’t have told me at some point in my life.

Though Grimm still has his moments of being distant, he’s trying, and I get the reason he does what he does though he doesn’t push me away. Not really, he just seems to have a lot on his mind at times which is what makes him seem distant.

I inwardly shake away the thoughts and smile at Nevaeh. “Things are good. What about with you? How are you liking not working evenings at the restaurant?”

“It’s great. I love having my evenings open to be able to do whatever I want and not on a time crunch.”

I nod, understanding where she’s coming from. I’d worked part-time in the same restaurant the club owns during high school as a waitress to make money. I always looked forward to having time off to be able to hang with my friends. When I worked the weekends, it sucked since all I wanted to do was go out with my friends to parties.

The two of us converse while working and time seems to tick away faster than it ever has before. Between getting orders ready and customers flowing in and out, it hasn’t been boring, and my mind hasn’t had a chance to doubt or overthink things as I’ve been known to do. Especially where my relationship with Grimm is concerned.



He'd told me he loved a week ago, and it melted away the walls I'd intended to build up against him.

The chimes of the clock I'd gotten over the weekend start ringing as the time strikes three. Only another two hours until I close up shop, and I'm ready. Mainly because this evening, my parents are keeping Justice, and I get Grimm all to myself.

I make a spur-of-the-moment decision as I squeeze my thighs. I want more of what we had the other night, where he'd tied me to the bed, blindfolded me, and took his time to demonstrate all the way he loves me. I'm pulled from my thoughts by the bell over the door before I can get too deep into them. I stand and meet Nevaeh's eyes. "Why don't you go ahead and go for today?" I suggest. "I'm thinking since we're caught up that we'll close early today."

"You sure?" she asks, glancing from me to the customer who'd come in. I follow suit seeing the elderly gentleman who'd been coming into the shop nearly every other day. He'd introduced himself as Mr. Pruitt.

"I'm sure." I nod and go to greet Mr. Pruitt. "Are you looking at getting your usual order, Mr. Pruitt?" I ask and wave to Nevaeh as she leaves.

"Ahh, yes," he says, his eyes wrinkling at the sides. "My love does enjoy receiving the flowers you put together." The way he says 'my love' sends a chill down my spine. Not because he used those words but how they came across.

Nodding, I step away. "I'll go ahead and get that order together for you."

"Thank you, my dear." He smiles, but this time, it's not the same. Something overcomes his features.

I make my way over to the counter and reach for my phone. I barely get it unlocked before strong hands grip me from behind.

I jerk my head around, and my eyes widen at seeing a man I've seen on more than one occasion. I didn't know the guy, but he always turns up in the same places as me.

“It’s time to cleanse you, my love,” he says and jerks his chin. “Lock the door and turn the lights out. We’re doing this here. I’m not wasting time.”

“As you wish, my Lord.” Mr. Pruitt bows his head and does as he’s told.

“Let me go.” I jerk against the guy’s hold and do my best to fight against him.

“I will let you go when I’m ready to do so.” He laughs, bringing one hand up to caress the side of my face. “You’ve ruined yourself, my love, and now Mr. Pruitt and I must cleanse you of the filth you’ve allowed to taint what belongs to me and our Dark Lord.”

“I don’t belong to anyone.” I yank again at the hold he has on me, but he’s too strong.

Suddenly I feel something piercing my neck and let out a sharp cry as everything goes blurry.

This is not good.

---

I come to slowly and am unable to focus on anything as I fight off the thick fog still lingering in my mind. I open my eyes enough to see that I’m still in the flower shop, but all the blinds have been pulled, and the lights are turned off. Candles are the only thing to light the area surrounding me. It takes me a moment to gather my bearings, only to realize I’m wearing nothing, and my arms and legs are stretched wide and bound to something. I don’t know what, though.

“Ahh good, you’re awake,” Mr. Pruitt says, stepping in front of me. “My Lord will be ready for you in a moment, but first, we must prepare you.”

“Prepare me for what?” I croak, a knot of fear threatening to choke me.

“For you to take your place at his side. As the last of the Chosen, the true bride of the Dark Lord, you are to be cleansed

and placed on the altar where you belong. It is by your blood the Dark Lord will join with his vessel.”

Oh my God. This guy is delusional. Truly sick in the head.

“It is time.” The man I didn’t know the name of stepped forward, forcing Mr. Pruitt to the side. He holds a hand out to Mr. Pruitt, who hands him a wicked-looking blade with all sorts of designs forged into the sides.

He steps into my space and runs the tip of the blade against my skin. If I wasn’t tied up, I’d be shaking from the fear coursing through my veins in this moment.

I open my mouth to plead for him to let me go, but he and Mr. Pruitt start chanting. I dart my gaze between the two men and feel my heart thud hard and fast. So much so, I thought it’d rip right through my chest.

Mr. Pruitt comes even closer and pours something over my head. It’s warm, and it only takes me a moment to figure out it’s blood that he’s pouring. As he steps away, still chanting, the man directly in front of me pulls the knife away, only to slice it deeply against my skin. Not just once but five times. All in different areas along my chest and stomach.

Tears prick at my eyes, and I scream out in tormented anguish. I can only pray to survive what’s to come and have hope that, by some chance, someone saves me before it’s too late.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

## GRIMM

“What the fuck do you mean you can’t find anything else out?” I snarl, getting in Pirate’s face. He’d been looking into that sick fucking group since we found out that Apricot was targeted.

“It’s just what I said. I’ve dug as deep as I can. Got what I could,” Pirate snaps, not backing down. “Those fuckers have done well in burying their shit. Whoever the asshole is, he’s damn smart and has had to have done his homework.”

“Fuck,” I yell, stepping away from Pirate, whirling around, and releasing a heavy breath. The other day Apricot had received another letter, this one at the shop, but I’d intercepted it before she saw it. Which was a damn good thing considering what was in it.

“Grimm, brother, you’re gonna have to calm down,” Viking states just as the front doors to the clubhouse are slung open.

Nevaeh rushes in, her eyes wide with panic.

“Babe, this is a closed party,” Maverick mutters and takes in her features. “You wanna tell us what’s going on and why you crashed in here.”

Nevaeh doesn’t look at Maverick as she seems to search through each of us until her eyes lock on me. “You need to get to the flower shop. Something’s going on.”

I don’t bother waiting around to find out what she has to say. There’s no way I’m sticking around. Instead, I take off in a dead run heading for the door. At my bike, I start her up and barely get the kickstand up before taking off with my brothers following suit.

Different scenarios play out in my head, and fear, unlike any other, threatens to consume my very soul. The one I thought I’d lost a long time ago. I shove the feeling down and allow the anger and rage to take over. I can’t allow any of the

other emotions to take over. I need the rage to be able to focus and save my woman from whatever I'll find at the shop.

---

I park right out front of the building and take in the covered windows as I swing a leg over, climbing off my bike.

“Brother, we gotta do this smart. Don't know what we're gonna walk in on,” Ice mutters. “Gotta know you'll keep your head straight.”

“Nothing's stopping me from getting to Apricot.” I clench my teeth together, round Ice, and stalk toward the door. I don't bother with the handle. I lift my boot and kick the damn thing right off its hinges. I step inside and immediately see red at the sight in front of me.

Two men, one older and the other around my age spin to face me. “You will not ruin this,” the older one yells and looks at the other man. “Finish, my Lord.”

The younger man smirks and lifts a knife that's coated in blood, Apricot's blood, to his mouth and licks the side of it. “She's sweet and will make the perfect sacrifice.”

I take a step forward, and the guy steps slightly to the side, throwing an arm out to press the tip of the blade to Apricot's neck. I finally look at her and see the fear and tears filling her eyes.

“Leave,” the younger man commands.

“That won't be happening,” I snarl, my lip curling at the edge in frustration. “But you can move that knife from my woman's throat before I kill you.” Though he is going to die anyway, I just don't want to kill him too quickly.”

Both men laugh and shake their heads. But it's the older one who speaks this time. “You think you have the upper hand here, but you don't.”

“Care to elaborate on that?” Viking growls, his voice filled with the very same fury raging through me. “Way, I see it,

you're outnumbered here.”

“But will it be for the Bishop and his followers to keep you at bay?”

The fuck?

That shit doesn't make sense.

“You do not rule this town. It belongs to those who now control it. The Bishop will only allow so much before he comes at you. You have something of his, and he won't let you keep it. Soon he'll come for it, and you all will feel his wrath.” Before anyone could do or say anything, the older man reaches out and slits his own throat. The one holding a knife to Apricot's throat eases it across her slender neck quickly and does the same to his own throat.

“Apricot,” I roar, jumping into action, grabbing a towel from the counter and holding it to her throat. “I've got you, baby.” With one hand holding the towel in place, I cup the side of her head with the other.

Everything around me seems to blur, and I can't focus on anything else but holding on to Apricot and keeping the towel pressed against her throat.

---

Time seems to creep along at a slow pace. One that leaves me pacing the floors of the hospital waiting room. It's been hours since Apricot was taken back. The police had already come and gone. All except for Tripp, he decided to hang around. As much as I want to tell him to get the fuck out, I can't. I can tell from the expression on his face he cares for my woman, and she sees him as a friend.

Fuck.

I wish they would hurry the fuck up and let me know that she's okay. That she'll make it. My fear of her not getting through this is nearly overwhelming to the point I can barely keep myself from falling to my knees.

After my brothers helped cut her down from the restraints holding her in place, I held her to me while someone found something to use to shield her body. I'll never forget, until the day I die, I'll remember it like it was yesterday, all the blood coating her body from head to toe. The bastards had covered her in blood and cut her up before we'd gotten there. Then as they faced off with us, they'd cut their own throats along with Apricot's.

Fucking cowards, taking the easy way out. How I wish I'd been able to kill them for what they did to my woman.

The sound of the doors swinging open draws my attention, and I straighten. The doctor steps out and takes us all in, his eyes coming to me, Scorpion, and Sabrina as he approaches. The doctor gives Sabrina a compassionate look and nods. "She's going to be okay."

I release a breath I didn't know I'd been holding and nearly collapse to my knees in relief. "When can I see her?"

"The nurses are transferring her to a room as we speak. If you will give them some time to get her situated, you can go on up, but I must tell you," the doctor pauses for a brief moment, "she won't be able to talk for a while without discomfort. It's best that she does not talk for a few days. And she'll be in pain for a while as she heals from the wounds she suffered. She was lucky not to have more damage to her throat than she did and will be okay, eventually. However, there is one more thing."

"What is it?" I demand, not wanting him to keep going on. I wanted him to give it all to me, so I know what lies in store for my woman.

"Her lab work showed she's pregnant. It's still very early according to her levels."

Pregnant.

My woman is pregnant.

Fuck.

I could have lost not just Apricot but the child she carries as well. Motherfucking hell, I wish I could bring those



bastards back and kill them myself.

“What room is she in?” I can’t wait any longer, I need to set eyes on her. Make sure she’s okay. That everything will be fine.

The doctor gives me the room number, and without looking back or waiting for anyone, I stalk out of the waiting room and head for the elevators. There’s nothing more important to me right now than having my eyes on the one person who means the most to me. Sure, I have my brothers and Justice, but when it comes to Apricot, she’s my world, and I can’t live without her in it.

# EPILOGUE

## APRICOT

*Three Weeks Later ...*

“Dimples, let’s get a move on,” Grimm calls out from the bedroom door.

“I’m coming.” I turn to look at him with a smile as I murmur with a slight rasp.

It’s been a rough time since that day at the flower shop. I haven’t been back in there, and I fear I won’t be able to for a while. What happened to me is something I’ll never forget. If not for Grimm, I don’t know if I could get through it. He’s been there from the moment I woke up in the hospital bed, and he’s not left my side.

I’d say having him around is overwhelming, but it’s not. I love having him close, more than that, I need him. He’s my anchor that keeps me from going down the dark hole of nightmares.

Everyone has been great with letting me have time to heal. They gave me space when I needed it, and were there at the times I didn’t think I could bare to be alone with my thoughts.

A week after everything happened, Shyann brought over a case with crystals in it and explained to me what each of them is for. After explaining, she told me of some of the things she’s done that helped her overcome the darkness that wanted to take hold of her. I started what she suggested, doing as she showed me, and it seemed to help.

Putting my shoes on, I walk around the bed to where Grimm’s waiting for me and give him a smile. “Where are you taking me?” I ask, not knowing what he’s planned for today. He only told me to get ready this morning and didn’t tell me anything else.

“Ready.” I lean in and lift on my toes. Grimm tilts his head down as he wraps an arm around my waist. Our lips meet, and I part mine to allow him access. We haven’t been intimate since before that day, and everything that happened due to me

needing to heal, but the heat between us has been anything, if not fiery. He's shown me in plenty of different ways how much he wants me. From massages that leave my panties soaking wet for him, to simple kisses in passing. Of course, there are also the touches and him holding me in his arms.

I couldn't ask for more.

Grimm breaks the kiss, and I don't bother holding back the pleading moan for more.

"Don't worry, Dimples, I'll make sure we continue this later when we get back here. Your mom has already picked up Justice and has informed me she's keeping him overnight." He grins, and I can't help the giggle that passes my lips.

"Well, then, I guess we better get whatever it is you have planned out of the way so we can get to enjoying more of this," I say, rubbing my hands up and down his chest. I guess you can say being pregnant has definitely amped up my desire tenfold for this man, though I've always craved him in more ways than I ever thought possible.

Grimm chuckles and takes my hands in his. Hopefully, whatever he has planned doesn't take long.

---

Grimm drove for over an hour only to stop at a state wildlife park.

"What are we doing here?" I ask, twisting in my seat to look at him as he parks the truck. As much as I'd have loved to have been on the back of Grimm's bike, I understand his reasoning for not taking it. He didn't want anything to happen to me.

"We're having lunch," he declares and grins as he hops out.

Speechless, I follow him with my eyes as he rounds the hood of the truck and opens my door. I barely register him unbuckling before he helps me down. I'm thankful for him helping me because I don't think I would be able to climb out

without hurting myself. I feel great, but I'm still healing, and hopping out of his beast of a truck wouldn't have felt good.

Grimm takes my hand in his, closes my door, opens the back passenger one, and grabs a bag I didn't even know he had in here. Together we walk a bit of a way away from the truck. Grimm releases my hand only when we get to a clear patch of the green that isn't littered with leaves or sticks and sets the bag down, unzips it, and pulls a blanket out of it. I help him set it up, and together, we spread it out on the ground.

I'm surprised by Grimm's sweetness as he helps me take a seat on the blanket. When he joins me, he pulls out a few containers. "What's all this, Grimm?" I ask, licking my lips nervously.

"Wanted this to be special," he answers, lifting his gaze until we lock eyes. "Never in my life did I think I'd deserve someone like you." I open my mouth to say something, but Grimm shakes his head and stops me. "Let me finish, baby." I nod, and he continues. "Growing up the way I did, I've already told you wasn't good. My life was saved by the club, but that doesn't mean I didn't already fuck up to the point I didn't know if I could come back from it. With you in my life, though, Apricot, it's like I can breathe easy. I don't feel like I'm dirt anymore. You are the best part of me, and I don't want to be without you." Grimm reaches into his pocket and pulls out a ring. "I talked to Scorpion and CJ about this, and they both agreed. Now, I'm asking you, will you be my wife? Marry me? Be the woman who rides on the back of my bike for the rest of our lives and a mom to not just our kids but Justice?" He holds the ring up to my finger and slips it on as I stare at it. I'd seen it plenty of times growing up. It was the very one my birth dad gave my birth mom. The one my parents, the ones who raised me, told me stories about.

Tears prick at my eyes and start to spill down my cheeks as I nod. I finally lift my gaze back to Grimm's, my breath hitching. "Yes, I'll marry you."

"Good." Grimm grins and gently lowers me to my back, his mouth capturing mine for a heated kiss.

I wrap my arms around him, and for the first time in my life, I know without a doubt that I'm where I was always meant to be, and I look forward to spending the rest of my life with this man.



Dear Readers,

Thank you for reading Grimm. If you enjoyed Grimm and Apricot's story, just wait until Maverick. He's up next, and what he has in store is definitely going to be a fight on his hands as he has to fight for what he wants. But will fighting be enough?

Sincerely,

E.C.

## ALSO BY E.C. LAND

### Devil's Riot MC

Horse's Bride

Thorn's Revenge

Twister's Survival

Reclaimed (Devil's Riot MC Boxset Bks 1-3)

Cleo's Rage

Connors' Devils

Hades Pain

Badger's Claim

Burner's Absolution

Redeemed (Devil's Riot MC Boxset Bks 4-6)

K-9's Fight

Revived Boxset (Devil's Riot MC Boxset Bks 7-9)

Red's Calm

### Devil's Riot MC Originals

Stoney's Property

Owning Victoria

Blaze's Mark

Taming Coyote

Luna's Shadow

Choosing Nerd

Ranger's Fury

Carrying Blaze's Mark

Neo's Strength

Cane's Dominance

Venom's Prize

Devil's Ride (DRMC Boxset 1-5)

Protecting Blaze's Mark

Whip's Breath

Viper's Touch

### Devil's Riot MC Southeast

Hammer's Pride

Malice's Soul

Axe's Devotion

Rebelling Rogue

Ruin Boxset 1-3



Remaining Gunner's

**Devil's Riot MC Tennessee**

Breaking Storm

Blow's Smoke

**Inferno's Clutch MC**

Chains' Trust

Breaker's Fuse

Ryder's Rush

Axel's Promise

Fated for Pitch Black

Tiny's Hope

Their Redemption Boxset 1-5

Fuse's Hold

Nora's Outrage

Tyres' Wraith

Brielle's Nightmare

Pipe's Burn

Their Salvation Boxset 6-10

Faith's Tears

Lyrice's Lasting

**Dark Lullabies**

A Demon's Sorrow

A Demon's Bliss

A Demon's Harmony

A Demon's Soul

A Demon's Song

Dark Lullabies Boxset

**Royal Bastards MC (Elizabeth City Charter)**

Cyclone of Chaos

Spiral into Chaos

**Aligned Hearts**

Embraced

Entwined

Entangled

Ensnared

Crush Boxset 1-3

Entrapped

**Night's Bliss**

Finley's Adoration (Co-Write with Elizabeth Knox)

Cedric's Ecstasy

Arwen's Rapture

Christmas Delight

**Satan's Keepers MC**

Keeping Reaper

Forever Tombstone's

Hellhound's Sacrifice

Outrage Boxset 1-3

Mercy's Angel

Facing Daemon

**Toxic Warriors MC**

Viking

Ice

War

Storm Boxset 1-3

Grimm

**De Luca Crime Family**

Frozen Valentine (Prequel)

Frozen Kiss

Heated Caress

**Sons of Norhill Tops**

Inheriting Trouble

**Pins and Needles Series**

Blood and Agony

Blood and Torment

Blood & Betrayal

Agony Boxset 1-3

**DeLancy Crime Family**

Degrade

Deprave

Detest

Desire Boxset 1-3

Deny

Demean

Delusion

Destroy Boxset 4-6

**Available on Audible**

Reclaimed

Cleo's Rage

Connors' Devils

Hades Pain

Badger's Claim

# CYPRUS'S TRUTH

*The truth comes out in many ways.*

## CYPRUS

Taking full custody of my little sister, I know I have a fight on my hands. If it wasn't for the club, I'd sink, but I can't rely on the ol' ladies to help all the time. My Prez's woman put out an ad for a nanny. I told her to handle it—she knew what she was doing. I trust her. I didn't expect her to hire the woman she did, or for the truth that comes out along the way.

## DANCING STRUGGLES

There's something about moving to a small town. I never thought of myself as a country girl, but I'm taking to it easily. It helps that my best friends from the area and has embraced living out here in the middle of nowhere. Moving to Norhill Tops was the best decision I ever made.

The only problem is I constantly run into the one man I never thought I'd see again. Every time, I have to bite my lip to keep from doing something else entirely. We were together for only a weekend, but it was enough to leave a lasting mark. He ruined me for anyone else, and he doesn't even know it because he doesn't remember. It's in the way he looks at me ... well, more like through me.

Or so I thought.

The dance between us is a constant struggle, especially when we get thrown together. Talk about déjà vu all over again.

# NINES'S TIME

*Innocence is revealed in several different ways, for her and  
for me.*

## NINES

Accused of something so vile, I've got to find a way to prove I'm not the one they're looking for. I didn't do it, and they know it. On top of that, she steps ... more like stumbles ... into my life. Time stops with one look at her, and I see the vulnerability in her eyes.

I don't have it in me to go for what I want, not when I've got this hanging over my head. But I can't let her go either.

She's mine for the taking. But will she believe me when it comes to the truth?



# BRAKE'S INTENT

*Intending to do one thing doesn't always work out, and  
sometimes you find yourself doing another.*

## BRAKE

Some things come to me easily, while others are much harder. I've come to terms with who I am. I'm a twin to my brother. A member of my club. A man who is different from others. I hold secrets no one knows, and I will do whatever it takes to keep them that way.

There's more to me than anyone can understand, and I won't have my brothers look at me differently.

I'm not surprised my secrets are brought to light the day she walks into my life again. But can I stand the judgment, and the look in not just her eyes when I fight what's between us?

Danger surrounds the club, and I made my intentions clear—I won't let anyone else be pulled into my troubles.

# SOCIAL MEDIA

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