

HOW A
Ferocious Omega
FINDS LOVE

KNOT *My* MC

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KNOT MY MC

How a feisty omega finds love

RORY MILES

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INTRODUCTION

Hello again, dear readers.

This book contains: death of a beloved parent, violence, mentions of past physical abuse/food deprivation. The FMC is also forced to watch an alpha (**NOT** her love interests) rut someone else.

With all that said, this book is intended to be low angst (low drama) and more of a cozy journey to the HEA.

There is significant cursing and explicitly detailed spicy scenes and perhaps an overuse of the word cunt but it was that or love pocket.

This is a non-shifting omegaverse book which means there are pack like structures but there will be no shifting into wolves.

Happy reading <3

KNOT MY MC


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*For everyone who hates the 80% breakup.
And to Knox for taking that pegging like a champ.*

PART ONE

THREE YEARS AGO

CHAPTER ONE

KIKI

The Wrecker clubhouse is full of hollering men, women desperate to become their old ladies, and drunk fuckery. I press my back against the wall, watching the havoc unfold around me. The air is sickly sweet, alcohol and sweat clinging to the walls. Dad cuts through the crowd, stepping between me and the insanity. The younger betas and deltas ease away from him. My dad's a beta too, but his reputation precedes him. Kiren Malone, VP of Wrecker MC, is over six-feet tall, built like a linebacker, and generally he's not one to mess around with unless you want to find your way into an early grave.

"What are you doing down here, Kiki?" His eyes narrow on me, and he crowds my space, trying to scare me.

He's not nearly as intimidating as he thinks. Especially not when I've seen him cry over rom-coms. He'd kill me if I ever told anyone that he sobs over stories about true love. He's gruff and tough on the outside, but deep down he aches for the love he once had.

I look at him and pop up an eyebrow. "Observing."

"You have homework," he says, glaring at a prospect who stumbles a little too close.

Tonight the club celebrates the few prospects who earned their patches. Those still chomping at the bit to become full-fledged members of Wrecker MC are rowdier than ever. Each passing initiation means they're one step closer to being *in*.

Everyone wants to be in. Wrecker MC is the largest club in Dolin, but only just. The Hell Hounds have nearly as many members, three of which happen to be my best friends. Dad doesn't know that though.

"I finished my homework already." I tip my head toward the prospect. "I'm not worried about that."

Dad grunts. "Well, I am. They've all been warned, but I don't trust any of them." He takes protective to the next level, but I'm an omega and with that comes unwanted attention.

"I think you want an excuse to kick Shiloh's ass." A smile twitches at the corners of my lips. Shiloh is a prospect who doesn't know how to keep his mouth shut. Dad catches the grin and shakes his head.

"You're trouble, you know that?" He pretends to sip his beer, always mindful to be sober when I'm around the rest of the club. I can't give him too hard of a time though; he's all I have. My mom, a beta, died when I was little. It's a damn miracle he's still functioning. Losing a mate is the equivalent to losing a limb. It's been more than a decade since she passed and he's never even entertained the thought of taking another old lady. Sure, he's slept around, but he's never dated.

He's loyal to three things and three things only: the club, my late mother, and me.

I cross my arms. "I was born into trouble, Dad."

Chuckling, he boops my nose. "And you'll give your future pack, whoever they are, hell, won't you, Kiks?"

"You mean the pack that I'm assigned too?" As an omega, I don't get to choose who I mate with. Right before an omega's twenty-first birthday, the Omega Council—the governing body over all omegas—uses a compatibility test to assign omegas to the best suited pack of alphas. I know who I *want* my alphas to be, but joining that pack would piss my dad and the whole of Wrecker MC off.

But a girl can hope, right?

My phone buzzes in my pocket and my heart jumps into my throat. Speak of the devil and he shall appear. Tempering

my reaction, I nod at my dad who is still waiting for an answer to his question and say, “My future pack won’t know what hit them.”

Dad cracks a grin. “Atta girl. Now go on up to bed.”

“It’s eight, Dad.” Sighing, I glance around. At seventeen, I’m too young to drink, but I like watching everyone make fools of themselves.

He points to the stairs. “Bed. Now.” As a beta, he can’t alpha command me but there’s something about his tone that sets my feet moving, and I’m halfway up the stairs before I realize it. I glance over my shoulder. He’s staring, making sure I listen. Lifting my hand, I flip him off. I can’t hear his laughter over the noise in the club house, but I see it in the way his head falls back and his mouth opens wide.

That smile sends a bolt of warmth straight through my chest.

A few scantily clad women eye him, taking in the version of Kiren not many get to see. He has plenty of options if he wanted to take a new mate. He’s never been interested in that and I love him all the more for it. Some of the groupies that hang around the club don’t like me because I’m an omega. I’m used to the hate, but having one as a step-mom? No thanks.

I make my way down the hallway, ignoring the moans coming from inside the rooms I pass. Dad and I have our own house, but on nights like this, we stay at the club. He’s too paranoid to leave me alone. I won’t get any sleep tonight, but I didn’t plan to anyway. My phone vibrates again and butterflies flutter in my belly, my pulse jumping in anticipation.

They’re texting me.

I don’t pull my device out though. I won’t until I’m safely in my room and out of view from any prying eyes. My room is at the end of the hall on the right, and Dad’s is across from mine. Opening my door, I begin to step inside but stop short when I see Axel knotting some MC groupie on my bed. She’s bound and gagged, but her chest heaves, and she moans into the fabric, clearly enjoying the encounter even though his knot

has to be hurting her. Omegas are the only females built to take a knot. Betas and deltas can do it, but it takes practice and a lot of lube.

All the excitement I'd been feeling drains from my body. My stomach turns at the unwelcome sight, and I pinch my eyes shut. "Axel," I say softly.

He knew we were staying here. He knows this is my room. This isn't the first time he's pulled a stunt like this, but Axel is the Prez and he can do whatever the fuck he wants. Part of me can't help but wonder if he's doing this on purpose, that he's intentionally filling my room with his alpha scent, but he and my dad have been friends for years. He wouldn't do that, right? Despite being an alpha, Axel hasn't taken a mate. He always says he's waiting for the perfect omega.

My throat constricts at the thoughts racing through my head, and I press my lips together, hating that I didn't think to check before coming in.

"I'm almost finished, Kiki," he grunts as the sound of his rutting crawls across my skin.

If Dad were here, he'd kill Axel, or try to. He's downstairs though, and he'd never hear me calling for help. I haven't told him about the previous times I stumbled upon the alpha fucking someone in the bed I sleep in, but it isn't unusual to find any member of the MC with their pants down in some random room. Axel could easily explain away why my room reeks of him. He can fuck whoever he wants, *wherever* he wants. Hell, he'd probably say he took her in the closest empty room and even I would be tempted to believe him.

Axel being here isn't happenstance though. He *knew*.

"I'll come back." I take a step out of the room, averting my gaze to keep from burning my retinas. Axel is like a second dad to me. Why is he fucking her on my bed? Why is he always in my room?

Why don't I want to acknowledge the obvious answer? Probably because it makes me want to cry and scream all at the same time.

“Come back,” he growls. The alpha command slams into me, and I stumble forward, reentering my room with a choked sob.

He’s never made me stay before.

I shove the tears back. Those are weak, and while I’m stuck bending to his will, I refuse to let him see how much it bothers me. “I don’t want to,” I say, hoping he’ll release me.

“Too bad, close the door and shut up.”

My body moves without my consent. *What’s he doing?* My forehead lines with confusion, and I stare at the wall above his head, hating him more with each passing second.

Axel glances at me over his shoulder. “Look at me.” My gaze drops to meet his before I can even begin to fight the command. My body won’t listen to me no matter how hard I try to break the hold he has. Axel’s nearly onyx eyes are wild with lust. Bile rises at the sounds filling the room. The scent of his arousal—like oil and tar—makes me want to jam my fingers into my nose to keep from breathing more of it in. The soft beige comforter is covered in their fluids. There’s no way I’m sleeping on that bed.

Anger flushes up my neck and the cinnamon scent of my ire floods the room, mingling with the weaker oleander scent of the beta’s. Her angry stare burns into me, but I can’t pull my eyes from Axel’s, not until he releases me of his command.

“Come closer.”

A whine lodges in my throat. My feet carry me to the edge of the bed. I want to scream at him, but I can’t even whisper, my body stupidly obeying his commands. From experience, I know not all alphas are like this. My alphas won’t be like Axel. *They* aren’t like him, but they’re not here and they’re not really mine.

At least not yet.

“Stay,” he demands.

Rage floods through my veins, but not even my anger can save me from his command. Axel is in charge.

The woman tries to catch his attention, saying something around the gag but Axel doesn't even spare her a glance. His nostrils flare as he inhales. He moans at my scent, mistaking irritation for arousal—or perhaps he's merely enjoying my discomfort—and ruts into her faster and faster.

Carnal sounds fill the room, but they're muted when they reach my ears. I'm here in the room watching, but at the same time, my mind takes me far away, protecting me from the worst of what's happening.

“So feisty,” Axel says to me with a cruel smirk. “So grown.” Those words cut through the mental fog, stabbing me in the heart. Had he ever cared about me in a way that wasn't perverse? He fucks her even harder, and I'm forced to watch him come. My body is numb, fingers clenched into fists as Axel groans with his release. When he's finished, he pulls out of her, grabs his shirt, and prowls toward me.

My spine stiffens, but I can't move. He stops less than a foot away from me, smirking as he cleans himself with his shirt. I hold his gaze, as commanded, but try my damndest to let him see how much I despise him—how much he repulses me in this very moment.

He simply snickers and holds the shirt out.

I refuse to take it.

His eyebrows draw down, and he shoves the shirt against my chest and grabs my hand, placing it over the fabric. “Keep it.” The cum coating the material wets my skin. Bile rises. His scent is wrong, wrong, wrong.

I don't like it. I don't want it on me.

My phone vibrates again, and I hold my breath, hoping to hell Axel doesn't demand to see the messages. Axel forces me to hold his gaze for a few more seconds, reveling in my dismay, before laughing and stepping back to untie the woman.

“Hell, kid, I'm just teasing you. Get the fuck out of here.”

He doesn't have to tell me twice. I race out of the room and across the hall, slamming my dad's door shut and locking

it. My fingers dig into the sticky fabric, and I growl softly, pulling it away from my body. It reeks of him, and the longer I hold it, the more it rubs across my skin, the more my stomach revolts. I run into the bathroom and toss the shirt into the trash, barely turning in enough time to vomit into the toilet.

The tightness in my body begins to fade the longer I'm away from the bastard. The hold he had on me slowly seeps out of my body, but it lingers, as if it thinks I need a reminder of who's in control. I don't.

I'm under Axel's thumb until I'm old enough to complete the compatibility ceremony.

I throw my own shirt away, unable to bear the thought of keeping it now that his scent marks it. I clean myself up at my father's sink, ignoring yet another text while I swish mouthwash and spit. I can't respond yet. I'm too shaken. Too unlike myself. This pitiful being, the trembling mess, isn't who I am. At least, it's not who I choose to be. I can only control my life outside of Axel's commands.

Looking at myself in the mirror, I try to find any traces of the little girl Axel helped raise. I loved him like a father up until I grew tits and he started acting like a sleaze.

He's careful to do it when my father isn't around. He knows Kiren would have his head. I should tell my dad. The club is one of the only good things in his life, and I don't want to watch him lose something else he loves. I don't want to find out who would win the fight. As much as my dad is a badass, Axel is demented. He's strong and powerful, and he won't hesitate to kill my father.

No. I can't tell Dad.

The club is supposed to be my safe place, but Axel's ruined it.

That *bastard*.

Tears fill my eyes but I blink them back, refusing to let him win more than he already has. Another alert hits my phone, and I steady my breath, grabbing a clean shirt from the overnight bag I share with Dad and tugging it on. I return to

the mirror; I still don't quite recognize myself, but the trembling has stopped. Traces of Axel's scent remain, but I don't have time to shower. The phone vibrates again.

I snatch the device from my pocket and open the group chat.

JAG

Come on, Kiks. Where the hell are you?

KNOX

Don't make us come over there.

CROW

I have a joint and cookies, Kiki. Get your perky ass over here.

Three forbidden alphas. Three alphas who mean more to me than the alpha of this MC. Three alphas who I desperately want to be mine, regardless of how fucked the situation may be.

I chew on my cheek and send a quick response, letting them know I'm on my way. I wanted to put on more makeup before going to see them, but the light eyeliner will have to do. I'm not going back into that bedroom tonight. The guys have seen me in worse shape than this, but I'm worried they'll see the vulnerability in my eyes.

Glaring at the mirror again, I steady my breathing and force myself to be calm. To be in control. Slowly, an unfeeling mask clicks into place and my shoulders pull back. I'm not prey, I tell myself, though I know to Axel that's all I am.

Sometimes, it sucks to be an omega.

CHAPTER TWO

CROW

Kicking some gravel with my black boots, I scan the alley. Kiki isn't usually this late. I tap each of my fingers against the pad of my thumb while we wait, wishing I had a pen and drawing pad to pass the time. I don't and it's taking everything in me to wrangle in the urge to go get her myself. Discontent settles in my gut, but I can't burst into the Wrecker clubhouse without starting a war. Hell Hounds and Wrecker have been at odds for years, and I can't give them a reason to say that the guys and I provoked a battle. We've only been fully patched for a year, but that doesn't matter. No matter how fresh new we are, we're Hounds.

"Where is she?" Jag says quietly, pushing off his parked bike and pacing in front of it. "Do you think something happened?"

It's late—the sun has almost totally set—but not late enough for her to have fallen asleep. Kiki comes alive at night. Knowing her, despite being at school all day, her day has only just begun. She spends her days prancing around at Wrecker MC, but at night, she prowls around with the Hounds.

Like a lovesick pup, I want every night she's willing to give us.

"Kiren would never let anything happen to her," Knox says, man enough to acknowledge that Kiki's dad is actually the best protection we could have hoped for with our omega behind enemy lines.

Technically, she's not ours, but technicalities can suck my dick. We grew up together, and while we're a year older than her, and a little more hardened, she's always been ours.

"And who the fuck are you?" She spat the question with such venom when we ran into her at a party after we first joined the Hell Hounds as junior initiates at fifteen that I knew right then and there that she was the omega I wanted. She eyed our prospect vests with disdain, her upper lip curling when she realized who we were.

"What's the princess of Wrecker MC doing at a party like this?" Knox asked, ignoring her question all together.

She bristled. "I have every right to be here."

"So do we." Jag lit a cigarette.

Kiki squinted at him and stepped forward, plucking the cigarette from his lips and taking a long drag. "Don't start shit with me, got it?"

The guys and I exchanged disbelieving looks. We had heard about Kiren Malone's daughter, but no one prepared us for the little fourteen-year-old firecracker.

"You know if they find out we were here with you, they'll kill us." I reached for the cigarette, but she held it above her head.

"I won't tell them."

I scoffed. "How are we supposed to believe that?"

She considered the three of us for a moment, lips puckering. "I have an idea," she said after a few seconds. "You don't trust me, and frankly, I don't trust you."

"A bit judgmental of you, really," Knox drawled.

"Mutually assured destruction is the only answer." She shrugged, taking another drag of the stolen cigarette.

"What are you suggesting?" Jag rubbed his jaw and studied the little omega.

Omeegas were supposed to cower and do as they're told. She wasn't afraid, and something told me she sure as shit

wouldn't obey me.

“Chief Acron got a new patrol car, but I'm told there's a spare key in his mailbox while he's on vacation.” Her eyes glinted with a challenge that was so kindred, none of us could ignore it.

And that's how Kiki became ours. As the years have gone by, we've done more stupid shit than I can keep track of, but risking trouble is worth it to see that gorgeous face light up with devious delight. We grew up rough and now at eighteen, the guys and I have started to want more than just friendship.

We're alphas. She's an omega.

It only makes sense.

Her smile makes me forget who I am and where I came from, and I know the guys feel the same.

“I'm here,” she whisper-shouts, coming around the corner and racing into the alley. Her blonde hair whips wildly behind her. The lamp light above us flickers on, triggered by the ever darkening sky.

My shoulders relax when she stops in front of us. Her simple black t-shirt and jeans do more for me than any short cocktail dress could. I'm the first to reach her, though Jag and Knox are right behind me. I wrap my arms around her, smooshing her in a giant bear hug. I'm a big guy and she's almost fragile in my arms. I cocoon her and breathe her in, relishing in her perfume. Her tits pressing against my chest are an added bonus.

“Crow,” she complains with a giggle.

Then the scent hits my nostrils. Alpha. Sexual. Axel's. A growl tears from my mouth and Knox and Jag release their own, smelling it even though they're still a few steps back. Kiki stiffens in my hold, and I release her. I move away, and her face falls.

“It's not what you think,” she whispers. So defeated. So sad. That's not like Kiki at all.

“Why the fuck do you smell like him?” Jag demands.

I shoot a glare in his direction, trying to tell him to chill. “Start talking,” I say, fighting the urge to force the answers out of her. She hates being controlled like that and we all swore we’d never do that to her.

Her lip trembles slightly but a moment later, a hardness settles across her features. Some of the light in her pretty blue eyes goes out, and I swear I could kill Axel for that alone. As she begins telling us what happened, I’m ready to take care of the shithead.

“You can’t do anything,” she says quickly when she sees how her story bothers us.

“Kiks.” Jag’s voice is hoarse and strained.

Anger trembles through me. I tap my fingers against my thumb again. Tap, tap, tap. Knox sets off down the alley, surprising me. Usually Jag is the first to lose control. Knox takes keeping us all safe very seriously, but it’s virtually impossible for us to do that with her when she’s out of sight half the time. Kiki squeals and races after him. She grabs for his arm, but he brushes her off with ease, continuing toward the clubhouse where Axel is. Jag and I glance at each other and take off after him.

If he goes down, we all go down.

Kiki growls and rushes him, jumping on his back and wrapping her arms around him in a sleeper hold.

“Let me go,” Knox roars.

“No!” Kiki shouts.

“Fuck.” I grab her hips and pull her off of Knox, only managing to peel her off because she did a shit job securing her hold. I press her back against my front and band my arms around her waist. She smells wrong. I hate it. I bury my nose in her neck, desperate to find traces of her scent that aren’t coated in Axel’s. The tiny beads of sweat on her skin release traces of cinnamon and sugar, a smell that’s wholly Kiki. Usually she smells like fresh baked cookies—sweet and like home—but the vestiges of her anger are sharp and spicy.

Her body softens against mine for a second but then she bucks and stomps on my instep. I hiss in pain but refuse to let her go. Knox turns around at the end of the alley, eyes wide and unhinged, body vibrating with rage.

“Please,” Kiki pleads, something I never thought I’d hear her do.

That alone snaps Knox out of his alpha instinct. Someone hurt her and all he wants to do is punish that person. Seeing as that asshole is Axel, Prez of Wrecker MC, that would cause a whole world of trouble. Then there’s the matter of Kiki not technically being ours as far as the Omega Council is concerned. That won’t be decided for a few more years. If I had it my way, I’d demand they give her to us. Doing that would only create strife and put Kiki’s honor in danger.

Knox storms down the alley, not stopping until he’s in front of us. He lowers his face so he can look Kiki directly in the eye. “We’ll kill him.”

Jag and I don’t protest. Knox makes the decisions and keeps us in line. Jag will do anything to protect us, and I’ll do whatever it takes to keep us together. Some may not like our pack’s dynamic, but we’ve had years to build trust. We’ll put that shit bag in the ground for hurting her. Knox knows as much.

“You can’t,” Kiki whispers. “He didn’t touch me.”

“Like that matters,” Jag murmurs, flicking a switch blade open.

“You can’t kill him and you know it. It’ll start a war and then you three will end up dead. I can’t lose you.”

Her confession does something to my hardened heart. Knox grips her chin with his hand and gently kisses her. She freezes in my arms, surprised. I hate him for taking her first kiss without asking her first, but at the same time, it’s about damn time. We’ve been teetering on the edge of desire, not wanting to push Kiki into something she’s not ready for. But when she softens and kisses him back, I suck in a sharp breath.

I knew it. Kiki Malone has always been, and will always be, our girl.

Sugary-sweet need sweeps around the alley, and Knox pulls back, rubbing his cheek against hers, coating her with his scent instead of Axel's.

Jag walks over and shoves me out of the way. The only reason I don't protest is because I've been hoarding her and I know he needs to touch her in order to calm down. She lets him squeeze her tight before finally pushing out of his hold with a husky laugh.

"I'm okay. Okay?" The light reflects off her aquamarine eyes. She wants us to drop it. None of us are ready to do that, but none of us want to make her uncomfortable by doing something she doesn't like.

"Are you hungry?" The corner of my mouth quirks. "I made cookies."

Her shoulders relax. "I'm always hungry for your food."

Those words make my chest swell with pride. Feeding her and the guys gives me a way to get out of my head when drawing doesn't work. Her liking my food makes me want to cook for her every day of the week, ensuring her belly is always full. She'd never have to know what hunger—true hunger—feels like.

There's a spike of irrational jealousy, brought on by memories of barely having enough food to stave off the ache in my stomach, but I quickly shove it down. My fucked up childhood has nothing to do with Kiki. Besides, I can do better.

I can take care of my pack.

"Ride with me?" I ask her.

"Always." That vow does something funny to my insides.

Knox grabs my backpack since Kiki's with me, and we all get on the bikes and head one block over to a park that's officially closed for demolition. The playground is practically falling over, and the tall chain link surrounding the property

has more than a few warning signs, but those are studiously ignored. We park and head to the part we'd cut out a few weeks ago. Jag holds it open for us to slip under.

"Last one there gets the bad seat," I say softly, starting into a light jog. We always fight over the spots and starting the competition is me trying to help us all find our way back to neutral ground.

"Like hell," Kiki growls and races ahead of me. Knox and I make a pointed effort to go slower, giving her something to take her mind off of Axel.

"That's not fucking fair," Jag shouts, still on the other side of the chain link.

Kiki takes the cleanest, least worn seat. Knox pulls ahead of me and drops down right beside her, setting my backpack on the ground. The bad spot is on the other side of the table. I take the other seat next to her and press in close. She leans into me and releases a soft, relieved sigh. As much as she's trying to act unaffected, what Axel put her through rattled her. Jag reaches the table a few seconds later, huffing a little and eyeing the flaking paint and wood. Splinters are almost a guarantee.

"Do you want to sit on my lap?" Kiki pats her thigh. There's a forced lightness in her voice. She's trying to act normal, but nothing about what happened tonight is okay.

The bench isn't strong enough for all of us, and she knows it. The one time we dared Kiki to sit in one of our laps ended up with the wood bowing to the point of almost breaking.

His eyes narrow. "You're not funny."

"It's a little funny," Knox admits, though he doesn't laugh.

Jag takes his seat, and I grab the backpack and pull out the container of chocolate chip cookies and the thermos filled with milk. The plastic is a little warm, a fact that makes me happy as hell. The only way to eat cookies is when they're fresh out of the oven.

I give Kiki a cookie first, then the guys. I take mine last, watching my friends devour theirs with a little ache inside my

chest. I eat mine slowly. When you go without food, you either learn to savor every bite and draw out the process, or you inhale it so quickly you barely taste it. I've stopped devouring my food and have learned to enjoy it, but from time to time, the urge is still there. Progress is progress though.

Kiki reaches for another. "They're so good, Crow." Her shoulder bumps mine. "The cookies will be gone by the time you're done," she teases. She doesn't know how I grew up, but the guys do.

Knox changes the subject. "I heard the party last weekend got a little out of hand."

Her eyes widen. "A little? I thought I was going to die. Lyle started beating on this kid and then it turned into a brawl. The only reason I got out was because some guy pulled me and Palmer out." She shakes her head. "I didn't even get to say thanks."

We were sent on a job and couldn't go, but our friend Kody went to look after Kiki. She doesn't know that though. I don't know if she'd take kindly to our sending someone to keep tabs on her, but it sounds the extra caution was warranted. A few of those idiots ended up in the hospital. Kody had gotten Kiki and the girl she'd been with out before they got hurt.

"We should have been there." Jag side-eyes me and Knox. He'd risk the Prez's wrath to hang out with Kiki.

Knox gives him an unimpressed look. "We had a job." *And a plan* he says with the way his jaw clenches. Being patched was the first part. Moving up and securing ourselves within the hierarchy is the next part. To Knox, we'll never truly be safe until we're in charge and I can't help but agree. Jag knows that too, but it still doesn't mean we enjoy knowing Kiki is out partying without us there.

Our girl can handle herself, but she shouldn't have to.

Knox and Jag scowl at each other for a moment, but Jag relents. "Yeah, I know." Jag glances away, properly

reprimanded. “I’m only sorry I missed the fight.” He cracks his knuckles for show.

“You’re going to get yourself in *real* trouble someday.” Kiki shakes her head at him. “Let me guess,” Kiki says, dispelling some of the tension. “You guys had to go steal something.”

Not even close, but there are lines we can’t cross when it comes to telling her what we do. We trust her implicitly, but our clubs are rivals, and we swore an oath.

“Something like that.” I fill the little cup from the thermos with milk and hand it to her first. “So Axel was on some shit tonight, huh?” The question slips out before I can stop myself from speaking.

“He was being stupid.” She clenches her fingers around the cup. “Sometimes I wish I were an alpha, if only long enough to take his will away.”

Silence falls over the table, but there’s nothing quiet about it. Knox seethes in his silent way. Jag’s eyes go a little wild, and I grind my jaw. An unspoken promise wraps around us. Axel’s on our shit list.

“You guys are scaring me.” Kiki’s laugh is hollow.

“The only reason he’s still alive is because you told us we couldn’t kill him.” I glance at the bikes, a stupidly dangerous idea sparking in my head. “If we can’t get rid of him, maybe we can do something else.”

Kiki turns her head, meeting my gaze. I tip my head in the direction of the motorcycles and her eyes flick between mine and ever so slowly her lips begin to curve, understanding what I’m suggesting without needing an explanation.

She shoves away from the table. “I’ll go get his bike.”

I shake my head. “No. I’ll do it.”

“No.” She puts her hands on her hips and stares me down. “It has to be me. Meet me back at the alley.”

I want to fight her on it, but I know she’s right. It would be bad if anyone saw me.

“She’s right.” *Now* Knox wants to be sensible. He wasn’t thinking straight a little while ago, but I relent, knowing they’re both right.

“Fine, but hurry up.”

Kiki points at me. “Don’t tell me what to do.”

Now more than ever, her snarky comment has meaning.

“I’d never dream of it, babe,” I say, placing my hand on my chest. “You command my heart.”

“Shut up,” she says with a laugh, rolling her eyes before spinning on her heel and setting off.

Trouble is, I’m not joking.

CHAPTER THREE

KIKI

Someone lit a fire in one of the old oil drums, and one of the newly patched is standing on a bench, pissing into the flames. The people around him raise their beers and cheer him on. I crouch near Axel's gleaming Harley, waiting for them to move along. I left the guys a little over ten minutes ago, and I would have taken the bike right away if not for the impromptu bonfire.

My legs are starting to burn by the time someone shouts about another round of shots and most everyone heads inside. Those left outside are too busy trying to get into their conquest's pants to pay me any mind. I wait a few more seconds just in case and then put the motorcycle in neutral and push the bike toward the gate I left open.

I'm sweating by the time I make it out, but I didn't want to risk anyone hearing the bike start up and then taking notice that the rider didn't match the owner of the Harley. I climb onto the bike and pull the clutch and hit the starter button, shifting into gear and rolling to a stop at the head of the alley.

At first, I missed the flashing lights because I was looking over my shoulder, but as I turn and glance down the alley, expecting the guys to be heading my direction, I realize they're not waiting for me. My eyes land on the cop car, and I idle for a moment with one foot on the ground. Where are the guys?

“Get off the bike,” the cop says, fingers twitching at his side.

Fuck this. If I get caught with Axel’s bike, I’ll be in deep shit. The guy is too dumb to realize what I’m doing as he starts to walk toward me.

“Don’t make this harder than it has to be. Climb off the bike and let’s talk.”

Yeah, I don’t think so. His shout can barely be heard over the Harley’s engine as I tear down the road. A few moments later his siren cuts through the air and my heart rate spikes. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Where the hell are the guys?

Did they leave?

That isn’t like them. Then again, this is one of the first times I’ve ever seen them mad at me. The squad car pulls up alongside me, and I glance through the passenger window. *Pull over*, the cop mouths. Gritting my teeth, I shake my head and take a sharp turn down a side road, ditching the cop for the moment.

The wind tosses my blonde strands into the air, and my hair stings as it smacks my face and whips my eyes. I should have grabbed a helmet. Now not only am I driving at a reckless speed without protection, the fucking uniform knows what I look like. Growling, I ride faster, breaking all manner of speed limits as I try to avoid arrest.

Camila, the head of the Omega Council, will lose her shit if I get arrested, and she won’t hesitate to ruin my life.

An intersection approaches and the squad car appears out of nowhere, screeching to a halt in the middle of the road. Fuck, he must’ve taken a short cut. I’m going too fast, but I still brake, turning slightly to the side to try and avoid a direct hit.

Time slows down, and my entire body surges with adrenaline as the bike continues to eat up the distance between me and the stopped squad car. The cop points a gun at me over the top of his vehicle, screaming at me to stop.

“I’m fucking trying,” I shout back, pulling on the brake even harder. The handle pulses, the ABS doing its damndest to keep the wheels from locking up. By some miracle, the bike slows enough that when I hit the cop car, I only jolt forward in my seat instead of flying off.

“Hands in the air.” The guy is glaring at me, and I send my own scowl back, planting my feet and shoving my hands into the air. “Now get off,” he says, the gun still trained on me.

The rumble of my engine fills the space between us, the red and blue lights of his car flashing against the buildings lining the street.

“I have to turn it off.” I gesture with my chin at the Harley.

“Do it. Slowly.”

Sighing, I kill the engine and climb off. Three bikes rumble nearby, and I whip my head to the left, watching Knox, Jag, and Crow roll by. Knox turns, facing forward and ready to ride. Crow’s grip on his handlebars is tight and he hunches over, preparing to shoot off. Jag is inching forward a little faster than the other two. Their helmets are on so I can’t read their expressions, but my entire body sings with relief. I don’t know how they found me. I don’t care. They’re here.

I knew they’d come to save me.

Only... they don’t stop. They keep driving. Crow bowls over his bike even further and the motorcycle jerks forward a little. They’re going to leave. I frown. What the fuck? They’re leaving?

Maybe they realize they can’t save me. Maybe they know rescuing me is a lost cause. Maybe... maybe they called the cops?

No. They wouldn’t. They’re not like that. We’re friends. We’ve been through thick and thin. But why are they here? The only way they would have been able to find me is if they knew I was trying to ditch a cop and they followed us. The only way they’d know I was trying to ditch a cop is if they called them on me.

Or not. Maybe they were waiting for me and saw the patrol car and decided to hide. That's more like them.

They're Hell Hounds. A whisper of doubt fills my head. *They didn't like Axel's scent all over you.*

I blink and my face contorts with frustration. Why aren't they helping me? We've outrun the cops before.

Because they set you up.

No. That's paranoia talking. I don't think they'd do that. They're my guys. We've been in plenty of trouble over the last few years, this is only different because I'm alone this time. The evil voice in the back of my mind tells me it's all too convenient, but I'm not sure that voice can be trusted.

They're not assholes. Maybe they truly are afraid to try and save me with the cop practically on top of me. The uniform is screaming at me to put my hands up, but I'm frozen, staring at the guys as they finally take off. Leaving me.

Alone.

Leaving me to rot in a cell.

Leaving without a goodbye wave. Leaving me without a spare glance.

I frown a little, not understanding what's happening and why. They've never been rude to me, but the way they leave is almost cold and uncaring. It's almost like they don't even see me, but that's virtually impossible. I'm right here, and they don't even glance back to make sure I'm okay as they set off. Frustration and hurt swell inside my chest. This is all a misunderstanding. I'll text them when I get home and they'll explain what happened.

Something hits my neck and electricity surges through me. My body convulses and my knees give out. I glare at the cop who's tasing me, wishing I could eviscerate him where he stands.

The distant growling of their motorcycle engines is like taunting laughter as the cop stomps over to me and slaps cuffs around my wrists.

I'm so screwed.

My back aches from sleeping on the jailhouse bed all night, but the officers dragging me toward a van that's set to drive me to the convention center to meet my doom don't give a damn. I try to jerk out of their grasp, even though I know it's useless with my wrists cuffed and their iron grips around my arms.

"Seems like she wants to get tased again," one douche with long, blond hair says, smirking at me.

"Don't fuck around like that, Michaels."

"Aw, come on, Riley. You're always so by the book."

Riley, the serious one, grinds to a stop and glares at the man over the top of my head.

"I'm not fucking around, Michaels. She's not a toy."

"Do you two need a room?" I ask, jerking my arms again. "If you don't mind, I'd rather not be late to my sentencing with Camila."

Riley swings his gaze to meet mine. He's an attractive older man. A low pack beta if the job and scent are anything to go by. One might think there'd be camaraderie between us since we're both low pack, but guys like him hate Wrecker MC, and in turn, we hate them back.

"She's right," Riley says, pulling me along once again. "We can't be late. Camila will pitch a fit."

"Camila's always pitching fits. She's a bitch."

Riley grunts, but doesn't disagree. I don't either. Camila makes Axel look like a kitten. She has the power to destroy me, and with the trouble I've gotten into, she just might do that.

I'm pushed into the back of a squad car and driven to the looming building situated in downtown Dolin. I've made a

point to avoid this place ever since they put a tracker in me. Shit. The tracker.

I'd forgotten they noted the lack of one on me when they processed me last night. It's technically illegal to tamper with the device, but I wasn't about to leave that shit in my skin. The small scar on the inside of my wrist tingles with awareness, as if sensing my thoughts. Dad helped me remove the tracker, but they can't prove that.

For all the Omega Council knows, I dug the small chip out of my skin and tucked it in my sock drawer for safe keeping.

Regardless of what they think, the fact remains that they know I've broken two laws and Camila isn't going to be happy about that. She'd piss her pants if she knew about the stuff the guys and I got into.

The guys.

A hard frown pulls at my lips as I'm escorted into the convention center and toward the elevator. I need to talk to them. I thought I meant something to them, but the way they rode away last night gutted me. The rational part of my mind gets it; there was no escaping the cop once I ran into him. The other part of my mind, the one that aches for them, can't help but feel betrayed. They didn't even wave. They didn't even shout anything to me before they drove off. They simply left.

And maybe that's what bothers me most of all. It was as though it was just another night for them, but when we were together at the park, it hadn't felt like just another night. It felt like more than that.

Or was that all in my head?

Confusing thoughts consume me on the elevated ride to Camila's floor. The officers keep firm grasps on my arms as they lead me to her door. I don't try to resist again; it's a losing battle. The sooner I accept whatever fate is assigned to me, the sooner I can move on with my life.

Riley knocks on her closed door, side-eying me as I shift from side to side to release some of my nervous energy.

"You'll be okay, kid."

I glare at him. “Screw you.”

His eyebrows raise and he scoffs. “Teenagers.”

Riley looks about my dad’s age, just shy of forty with a few faint wrinkles that age his face. The jab stings. Maybe I am acting like a child, but when a person is trapped and doesn’t know what to do, they’re not exactly the best version of themselves.

Camila’s door swings open and she crosses her arms in front of her chest, eyeing the men before setting her cold, pissed off sights on me. “That’ll be all, officers. You can uncuff her and leave her with me.”

Michaels releases me but Riley hesitates for a moment, fingers tightening ever so slightly before he lets go. Silence fills the hall as he unlocks the cuffs and eases the metal bands off me.

“Ma’am,” Riley says, sparing me one last glance before heading down the hall to catch up with Michaels who’s already set off. Camila waits to speak until the officers are in the elevator and heading down to the first floor.

“You low pack sluts can’t help yourselves, can you?” The venom in her voice has me taking a step back.

The disdain for me being low pack isn’t new. Most people from the royal blood lines look down on low packs. A long time ago, there was a strict order and omegas were only allowed to birth children to royal alphas. No one cared what the betas and deltas did. Like with anything though, rules like that only work for so long. Omegas are the only ones that can give birth to alphas, and when an omega gives birth to a beta’s child and the child happens to be an alpha, it’s considered a half-breed. A low pack alpha, one born outside the royal alpha lines. Eventually that child will form his own pack with other low born alphas.

Unfair as it may be, upper society as a whole blames omegas for the dilution of royal blood lines.

Camila surges forward and catches my shoulder. Her fingernails dig into my skin through my t-shirt and she hauls

me into her office. “Let’s have a little chat, hmm?” She shoves me into a chair.

I growl and she slaps me. My head whips to the side and I seethe, wishing I could lash out and kick her ass. I can’t though. The moment I do that, my life would really be over. Getting ahold of my omega-fueled temper, I settle on a death glare.

Camila snickers and leans against her desk, staring down her nose at me. “Kiki, is it?”

“Yes.” She already knows this.

“Is that your given name or your street name?”

“Wrecker MC doesn’t give nicknames.”

She tsks. “Not that kind of street name.” Her eyes pointedly slip down my body. “You’re pretty enough for sex work.”

“You’re a cunt, you know that?” I spit the question out before thinking better of it, and her palm cracks against my cheek again, slapping the same spot she had before. I tip my chin up and scowl at her.

She growls and smacks me again.

I saw that coming, but part of me revels in her loss of control. That a simple, lowly slut like me could make her lose her cool.

Gripping my chin with her hand, she says, “I haven’t shunned you yet but call me a cunt again and I’ll do it.”

That straightens me out. There’s not much known about those who have been shunned, only that they’re forced out of civilization without anything but the clothes on their back and a promise of death if they try to return. I like my bed too much to live off the land, thank you very much.

Delighting in my sudden compliance, she laughs in my face before dropping her grip. “That’s a good girl,” she murmurs. “The way I see it, Kiki, you have one more chance to prove to me you can do as you’re told. If it weren’t for all the alphas needing an omega, I’d send your ass packing.” She

sighs like she'd enjoy nothing more than watching me get kicked out of society. "As it is, it's my duty to do what's best for the alphas."

I don't say anything, choosing to stare at a spot on the wall to the left of where she sits. She only does what's best for the royal bloodlines, and she knows it. I'd bet good money she doesn't give the low pack pairings much thought.

"Can you be a good girl for me?" she asks, snapping her fingers in front of my face to draw my attention to her.

"The *best* of girls." I should tell her to fuck off. I should tell her the alphas can kiss my ass, but I don't. She's got me and she knows it.

As if sensing her triumph, a cruel grin cuts across her face. "I knew you'd see reason. You have one more shot, Kiki. Don't screw it up." She picks up a small device. "Now, let's see about replacing your tracker."

I swallow as she approaches, not liking the evil glint in her gaze one bit.

CHAPTER FOUR

KIKI

The cops never gave me my phone back, so I'm surprised to find my dad waiting for me when Camila kicks me out of her office. His arms are crossed over his chest, gaze trained on me as I shuffle over. The deep lines creasing his forehead warn me that I'm about to get my ass ripped into.

Don't let him see you sweat, Kiks. Jag's voice fills my head, reminding me who I am. My stomach flips at the thought of him and the guys. My heart flutters, foolishly still excited and hopeful. I need my phone. I need to text them. Better yet, I need to see them.

Straightening my shoulders, I stop in front of Kiren and tip my head back to meet his gaze. "She's a cunt." I hold up my wrist and show him the fresh wound from where Camila implanted the tracker with her little gun. It's a nifty device, and there's not much of a mark, but my skin is pink from the sharp tip and a bit of blood is pebbling at the surface. "I think she likes me."

Dad fights a smile, trying to stay mad. "Dammit, Kiki. I can't be a tough father when you say shit like that."

I sigh. "Fine. Go ahead. Tell me how stupid I am."

"You're not stupid, babe. Reckless, sure. Stupid? Never." He studies my face, the lines of anger returning. "Why'd you take his bike?"

Glancing away, I lift a shoulder. "Sounded like fun."

“So it was your idea?”

I stiffen. Does he know about the guys? If he did, he'd be a hell of a lot madder than he is right now. No, he probably thinks some prospect put me up to it.

“Yeah, it was my idea.”

“Why Axel's?” Dad steps closer. “I found his shirt in my trash can next to yours. I went into your room. It smelled like him.”

He doesn't ask, but he knows he doesn't have to. The question hangs heavy in the air. *Did he hurt you?*

“It's not like that. He fucked some groupie in my bed, and I walked in on it. I was mad about it so I stole his bike.”

“You swear that's all that happened? If it was something else”—he shakes his head—“you need to tell me if Axel did something. I can protect you. What happened?”

His question surprises me, but he knows better than anyone how the world works. Alphas lose their shit over omegas. Axel is an alpha. While my first heat is still years away, my scent is still enough to tempt Axel. Axel killed his own pack once upon a time.

If I tell my dad the truth, he'll try to kill Axel. While I know my dad is a badass, I'm worried what will happen if he goes head to head with the Prez. Axel is unhinged. Axel won't think twice about killing my father.

I can't let that happen.

I love him too much to put him in danger like that. I've already lost my mom, and I don't know what I'd do without him.

“I told you,” I finally say, meeting his gaze and willing him to believe it. “He fucked a groupie. I don't know why his shirt was in a trash can, but I didn't stick around to watch the show.”

Dad doesn't respond. I don't look away. That would be a sure sign that I'm lying. I wait him out, staring into eyes that are as blue as my own.

“Maybe you should go to the omega housing, make some friends.”

Sucking in a sharp breath, I try to keep my voice calm. “I tell you everything is fine and you want to ship me off? Are you tired of playing dad?” That’s not a fair question, but why would he even consider that? The only place I’m safe is with him.

“You know that’s not it.” He shakes his head. “I want to protect you.”

“You can protect me by letting me stay. I don’t want to go to the omega housing, Dad. I want to stay with you.” I grab his arm and squeeze. “Please, don’t send me away. Don’t leave me.”

Eventually he nods, and I drop my hold on his arm. “You know I’d never leave you. You’re my baby girl. My life would be pointless without you.” He looks around. “Let’s go home.” He turns and grabs the spare helmet off the bike, handing it to me.

“You’re not going to ground me?” I slip the helmet on and wait for him to get on the bike so I can climb on behind him.

“Axel told me not to. Said you already had enough punishment with getting arrested.”

“I wrecked his bike,” I point out.

Dad lifts one leg over the Harley and settles into the seat, side-eyeing me. “There wasn’t any damage.”

“Well, I wrecked it. Crashed into the cop car.”

Sighing, he pinches the bridge of his nose. “They didn’t tell me that.”

“So Axel doesn’t know?”

Dad shakes his head and pulls on his helmet. “No, and we’re going to keep it that way. Get on, Kiki.” The helmet muffles the sound, but I don’t miss the disappointment coloring his tone.

I slide in behind him. “I’m sorry, Dad.”

He pats my knee. “No more stunts like that, okay? I can only protect you for so long.”

“Okay.”

The bike roars to life. “I love you, you know that, right?” His voice is hard to hear over the engine, but his words have my chest tightening. I shouldn’t have been so reckless. He already lost a mate and losing me would have destroyed him. I’m lucky I didn’t get hurt. I’m lucky Axel isn’t out for blood, because if he were, my dad wouldn’t be able to stop him.

“I know. I love you too, Dad.”

I’ll be good from now on.

After eating a late lunch with Dad, I finally work up the courage to ask for my phone. He said I wasn’t grounded. Still, part of me is worried he’ll hold the device hostage to teach me a lesson.

“Did they uh, give you my phone?”

He laughs and drops the last plate into the dishwasher. “I was wondering when you were going to ask for the damn thing.” Jerking his thumb over his shoulder, he says, “It’s charging in the living room.”

“Thanks.” I rush out of the room and snag the device. Jogging up the stairs, I unlock my phone. I shut my bedroom door and flop onto my bed, staring at the screen.

No alerts. No missed calls or texts. I check my social media, just in case the guys tried to get ahold of me there, but there’s nothing. My stomach twists and a strange hollowness takes residence inside of my chest.

Knox kissed me last night for the first time. Crow held me like he was afraid to let me go. Jag pressed himself against me like he was trying to make us become one.

That felt a whole lot like they cared.

Had I misinterpreted things? Had I read too far into their actions and accepted it as more than it truly was?

Opening our group message, I stare at it. What do I say? I type out a message, asking what the fuck happened, but that's accusatory and I don't even know if they did anything wrong. My mind is a mess and I can't jump to conclusions. We're friends. I have to give them the benefit of the doubt.

I delete the first message and start over.

KIKI

I'm home. Want to meet up?

There. Simple. No half-veiled accusations.

I stare at the screen, waiting for one of them to respond. It never takes them long to get back to me. Two whole minutes pass and dread fills me. I couldn't have been that stupid, right? We were friends.

We've been hanging out for almost three years. All the trouble we've gotten into had to force some sort of bond, regardless of whether it was romantic or friendly. There are only so many times you can almost die with another person before you start to feel close.

And then there's the kiss. Knox's mouth was firm and adamant on mine, like he needed to mark me with more than his scent. I run my finger over my lips at the memory. I'd been so shocked when his mouth claimed mine, but that only lasted a second. That kiss did something, changed something. But now I'm not sure what to think.

Why won't they text me back?

Why didn't they call?

A few minutes pass but no reply comes. Maybe they're busy. They've been working on more jobs for the club and it's a little unreasonable to expect them to text me back right away. While I wait, I scroll through some older messages.

CROW

Where you at, Kiki? The ice cream is melting.

They bought me some on the anniversary of my mother's death, knowing I'd be depressed as shit.

JAG

Bring your bathing suit.

We'd broken into a city pool one night, drinking beer and playing Marco Polo until the sun started to rise.

KNOX

Tell Frankie to get his hands off you.

I pause on that one. Knox had sent it to me when he saw the stupid jock wrap his arm around me at a party. Ten minutes later, Frankie had a black eye and wouldn't look at me.

There's so much evidence. So many things that tell me they care. But a reply to my message never comes. My phone screen eventually shuts off, the auto-lock kicking in from inactivity. Hours tick by, but the screen never lights up. With the darkened screen comes sadness. Then hurt and confusion and rage.

I didn't want to believe it. I didn't want to trust those intrusive thoughts saying they set me up. We were friends. We were thick as thieves... we were... from rival MCs. They were patched in. They've been doing more jobs. Was I one of them?

I don't believe that.

Three weeks pass without any word. Every day without them makes the hurt grow a little more. Every hour that ticks by is another knife in my back. Every minute without a text confirms my worst fears.

They set me up.

Somewhere along the way, I lost sight of our differences. I let my emotions, my desire to fit in with a pack, cloud my judgment. I played right into their hand, giving them everything they ever needed to well and truly hurt me.

Because that's what this was about.

Psychological warfare.

Make Kiren Malone's daughter fall in love with the Hounds and then destroy her. It's low and dirty and entirely fucked up.

I shut the door to the house and lean against it, pressing my eyes shut as I battle through my hurt and anger.

"Kiki? Is that you?" Dad calls from the kitchen.

I suck in a sharp breath. I thought he'd be busy. Quickly shoving all of that vulnerable hurt down, I conceal everything. I won't let him know the extent of my pain. I can't. That's what they want. Hurting Kiren's daughter is as good as declaring war. I can't let Dad fight for me, not over this. Not over something so... pathetic. Something so *omega*. I thought I'd found my future mates, even despite what the Omega Council has planned for me, I thought I'd find a way to be with the guys.

"Kiki?" Dad asks again, his footsteps coming closer.

"Yeah." I push off the door and paste on a grin. "What's up, old man?"

He glares at me as I set my backpack down. "How was school?"

"Fine. I thought you'd be gone tonight." I take in the apron covered in flour.

"Axel changed his mind. I'm making some bread and pasta tonight. Want to help?"

"I can't. I have homework." I grimace. "Another English paper."

“How many do you have to write to prove you understand the damn language?” He raises his eyebrows.

“This is a research paper.” I shrug and kick my shoes off. “They like to torture us. When will dinner be ready?”

“Six thirty.”

I nod. “Good, I’ll be done by then.” I drop a quick kiss on his cheek and snatch my bag from the floor. “See you in a bit.”

“Don’t work too hard, Kiki. That’s what they want.”

“Yeah, but I can’t afford bad grades,” I remind him. “It’s only a little homework, Dad. I’ll be done soon.” I jog up the stairs, slip into my room, and shut the door. I discard my things from school. There’s no paper. I just didn’t want to cry in front of him.

I drop onto my bed and unlock my phone. Zero alerts. Zero calls. Zero texts. Nothing.

Absolutely, definitively, nothing.

Something in me breaks, opening a wound so deep I can barely breathe. My stomach turns and my throat tightens and burns, a sob strangling me. I clench the device as my blood runs cold. They played me good. Really fucking good. I drop my phone onto the mattress, curling into a ball as nausea dominates me. My entire torso hurts and cramps.

Is this what it feels like to lose someone you love?

Is this how my dad feels every day?

Was their end goal destroying me? Because if so, they did a damn good job of it.

You’re Wrecker through and through, baby girl. You have to watch your back. Dad had warned me over and over again. I didn’t listen.

I should have known better than to trust those Hell Hounds.

They’re not my MC.

CHAPTER FIVE

KNOX

I've never experienced heartache before. I always thought people were exaggerating when they said a breakup made them sick. For two weeks I've been a miserable fuck. Jag and Crow are no better. Every time I climb onto my Harley, my stomach cramps. Tonight is no different. I fire up the motorcycle and nod at Jag before taking off. Crow is still laid up at home. The beating Axel and his friend gave him really messed up his hip and leg.

Jag and I ride side by side down the road, both of us knowing exactly where we're heading. It doesn't take long to reach her neighborhood, and when we do, we park a few streets over and slip through side yards and alleys until we reach the giant tree across the street.

Her light is on. It's always on when we show up. Kiki usually doesn't find her way to sleep until two in the morning. Jag and I stand sentinel; watching, but nothing more.

Axel showed up with a few of his crew—no Kiren in sight—while we were waiting for Kiki the other night.

Leave her alone or I'll force her on my knot.

I lost my shit when he told me that, but it's hard to fight someone with a metal rod in their hand. I'm still bruised around the ribs. Jag is pretty fucked up, but Crow got the worst of it. One of those fuckbags fractured his hip. Axel made it clear that we need to stay away. That won't stop me from

making sure she's safe. I can't get inside the Wrecker property, but I can and will be at her house every night, keeping watch.

A few hours pass. Jag goes through half a pack of cigarettes. Eventually Kiki's lights go out. A bit after that the front door swings open. Jag and I duck low, expecting Kiren to storm over and rip into us. He wasn't there with Axel that night. I know he won't take kindly to us lurking outside his home. He's not the dick that put Crow in the hospital, but he's not a friend. Kiren quietly closes the door—almost like he's the teenager and he's trying to sneak out—then gets into a car that I hadn't noticed before. The engine turns on and the car pulls away.

"I'm going in." Jag is already halfway across the street.

"Fuck. Jag." I rush after him. "He'll be back."

"I know he will; that's why it's in and out, Knox."

"If she sees us—"

"She won't. She's asleep now."

I grimace but follow him anyway. He's always a little more reckless than I am, but right now I'd give anything just to smell her again. Jag insisted we douse ourselves in scent blockers, doing what we could to keep our presence unknown, and I'm damn glad I finally listened. Kiren would be able to tell we were here if we hadn't. We can't risk him saying something to Axel. Jag has the lock picked in two minutes and he slips inside first. Kiki's scent slams into my body when I take my first step, making me stagger. The nausea in my stomach recedes, and I take my first full breath since the night we had to abandon her.

It wasn't right then, and it still isn't right now, but the guys and I agreed we couldn't risk Axel following through on his threat. He's a fucking bastard, and he would do exactly what he said. He'd find a way to get her alone without her dad present, and he'd make her take his knot. A deep growl works up my throat.

Jag scowls back at me. "Stop."

And I do, because if I wake Kiki up and she finds us in her house, we're putting her in danger. We loiter downstairs, wandering around but not really doing anything but breathing her in and wishing we could go see her. Ten minutes pass and Jag heaves a heavy sigh.

"We should go."

"One more minute," I say between clenched teeth. They make candles that smell like cookies and baking, but they don't even compare to Kiki's sweet scent.

If we were stronger than Axel, this bullshit threat wouldn't matter. If we had more to go at him with, he'd be the one in the hospital. We don't have that now. We will though. I'll do whatever it takes to get to the top, and once we're there, the guys and I are coming for Axel's head.

I only hate that it'll take time to get that sort of power. It's wrong to leave her. We should stay. Fuck the consequences. We can't though. Crow is still hurt. He's easy pickings. Making a stand now will only do more harm than good.

As much as I fucking despise my rationale, I know waiting is the only option that leaves us all alive. Waiting might destroy me.

"Come on." Jag heads toward the door.

He's right. We've been here long enough. We have no idea how long Kiren will be gone and we sure as shit can't have him finding us. With slow steps, I trudge toward the front door. Every fiber of my being screams at me to stay put. There's a coat rack mounted to the wall. A simple black scarf hangs on one hook. My hand wraps around it before I can fully commit to stealing it. I bring the fabric to my nose and breathe.

100% Kiki.

I wrap the scarf around my hand and join Jag on the front step. He locks the door from the inside and quietly shuts it, eyeing my prize.

"She'll notice."

“That’s the point. Maybe she’ll know it’s us—maybe she’ll understand we’re still here.”

He shakes his head. “I doubt it, but I’m not going to tell you to put it back. Next time I get to pick.”

A grin cuts across my face. “She’d be pissed if she knew.”

“She won’t find out, at least, not for a long time.”

We both tip our heads up and stare at her window. The light is still off. She’s safe.

That ache in my stomach is back, though.

Life is going to be hell without her, but for her sake, I have to do it. We have to do it.

I don’t think I’ve ever hated myself more.



CROW

The physical therapist arrives at the apartment with a giant smile and too much perfume. She says hello to the guys, who for some reason, have decided it appropriate to watch me suffer. I grind my jaw and stand without using any help.

“Crow.” The woman puts her hands on her hips. “Why are you so stubborn?”

“I don’t need a damn walker.”

Knox scoffs. “You can’t even go take a piss without it.”

“Shut up,” I growl. It’s been three fucking weeks. The hospital and doctors and this damn therapist are making a bigger deal out of the injury than needs to be made. I was able to ride with it, I should be able to walk now that they’ve fixed me up.

Only I can’t do much without the fucking walker. I can’t sneak into Kiki’s house with the guys. I can’t work. I can’t cook without hurting.

“I’m fine.”

The therapist narrows her eyes. “Listen,” the woman begins, in that tone. The one that says she’s trying to make me see reason. I hate that tone. It makes me feel like a child. “You’re still recovering. I know it’s hard, but sticking to the plan, the exercises, and using the assistance,” she violently gestures to the walker, “will all help you get back to normal a hell of a lot faster.”

“No need to cuss at me, doc.”

She glowers. “This isn’t a joke, Crow. Are you going to take your recovery seriously? If not, I don’t see why I need to come here and help you.”

“He’s going to take it seriously.” Knox gives me a stern, almost fatherly look. “Use the damn walker and go do your exercises. Don’t be a dick about it.”

He doesn’t get it. None of them do. The only thing I want is to get better. I don’t want therapy. I don’t want this chick cooing at how good I’m doing when I’m simply taking a few steps or stretching against the wall. It’s demeaning.

“Alphas and their pride.” She huffs and grabs her bag. “Good luck.” She marches toward the door. Knox and Jag both glare at me like I’m an idiot.

Shit, maybe I am.

“Wait,” I say, grabbing the walker and scowling at her. “I’ll do it, but no more sweet talking. Just tell me the exercises and let me do them. I don’t need your nice words.”

Spinning on her heel, the therapist spears me with a venomous look. “Fine, you don’t want me to be nice about it? Get yourself together and let’s do what needs to be done. Stop wasting my time.”

“All right.” I take a step forward, hating the scooching sound the walker makes. “That’s better.”

Knox and Jag chuckle and finally leave the room, heading to their own rooms while I suffer through forty-five minutes of pain. It’s worth it though. As much as I hate this, I know I

need to do it. I need to get better. Knox has a plan. I have three years to get strong enough to take on Axel and his guys. Three years sounds like an eternity.

Next year Kiki turns eighteen. I had an idea for a big party to help her celebrate officially reaching adulthood.

I can't do that. I can't even send her a card.

My chest aches and I clench my jaw.

The only thing that keeps me shuffling forward is the distant hope that someday soon, she'll be back where she belongs.

CHAPTER SIX

ONE YEAR LATER

JAG

Knox would be pissed if he saw me right now. I grin to myself. Good thing he's not here. The agreement was always sneaking in while Kiki was out or asleep. We were never meant to be inside her home while she was awake. Technically, I followed the rules.

Kiki is the one who deviated from her normal routine. I was supposed to have at least another half-hour without her home. But for whatever reason, she's here and I'm under her bed, hoping to hell the oversized bed skirt and king size bedframe are enough to hide me. I drenched myself in scent concealers, so I'm not worried about her smelling me. I am worried about her realizing her underwear drawer is open.

The dresser drawer had been closed when I arrived, and in my rush to hide, I forgot to close it. Kiki shuffles into her room, humming under her breath and dropping onto the bed. The mattress dips above my head, and I hold my breath when she starts to sing the chorus.

She's never been pitch perfect, but it's been over a year since I've heard her sing. I clench the lacy thong tighter in my hand as the bed shifts again. Her bare feet are dangling over the side of the bed, and in the scant centimeters between the floor and bottom of the bed skirt, I catch her bright red toe nail polish.

She's so close I could reach out and touch her. But if I did that, then she'd flip out. I'd have to explain why I'm here and why I'm holding her underwear. I'd have to explain why we never texted her back. That's not a conversation I'm ready to have, at least not without Knox and Crow present. Which brings me back to how much shit I'll be in if either of them find out.

The risk was worth it.

Kiki drops her phone and the headphones she was wearing onto the ground beside the bed. In the next second her top and bra follow. I'm left swallowing my damn tongue when her shorts and thong hit the floor next.

What's she doing?

Her dad is gone—off on some business with Axel more than likely.

The bedside table drawer opens and a soft buzz fills the air. I bite my cheeks to keep from releasing a dark chuckle. Naughty thing. My cock grows painfully hard as she makes small noises of delight, the device hitting a point of pleasure. Reaching over, I grab her discarded thong and stick it and the other I'd grabbed into my pocket.

I want to jerk off, but I can't. There's too much risk of my scent breaking past the scent blockers. They work for things like sneaking into her house, not covering up cum. I press my hand to my aching member, grinding my teeth and committing every gasp and moan she makes to my memory. The pressure of my hand isn't nearly enough so I slowly roll over, lying on my stomach beneath her bed and shamelessly grinding against the floor, taking enough of the edge off to keep from exposing myself.

I picture her writhing body beneath mine.

I picture those gorgeous eyes blowing wide as my knot stretches and fills her.

A startled yelp fills the air and a burst of vanilla and sugar perfumes through the room. I'd give anything to watch her trembling, to watch her come undone and to see the slick

covering her cunt. My cock pulses, warning me I'm pushing too far.

I've put everything at risk.

I turn my head to the side and bite my forearm, focusing on the sharp stab of pain as Kiki mewls and screams and fucks herself into a mumbling mess. Pressing hard into the floor, I beg my dick to calm down. My teeth clench a little harder, nearly breaking skin.

Kiki comes in a glory of shouts and bucks, the bed above me dipping and creaking until her whimpers subside and the only sound filling the air is her panting breaths. She's satisfied for now, but I could give her so much more than that toy. An omega needs a knot.

I pinch my eyes shut and remind myself how fucked up this situation is. I remind myself of the promise I made to keep her safe. That is the thing that keeps me frozen under the bed with my teeth clamping down on my arm until she slides off the bed and kicks her clothes toward the laundry basket.

Kiki heads into her bathroom and the shower turns on. I wait until I hear the curtain pull closed before crawling out from under the bed. Her sheets are a mess and despite myself, I lean down and press my nose to where she lay, breathing in deeply, purring as a tiny speck of wetness coats my nose.

Standing, I lift a finger and swipe up the slick and taste it.

Like fucking ambrosia.

I take a step toward the door, but stop and glance at the bathroom.

Don't, a voice of reason whispers through my mind.

The whisper of rationality is met with an almost uncontrollable urge to revolt.

I've already come this far to torture myself, what's a little more? I'd be breaking more rules, but that's what I'm good at. It'd be risking even more, but when the adrenaline surges, my feet carry me forward.

Pressing my forehead to the trim, I slowly twist the knob, taking a shuddering breath. My chest expands and I hold it, easing the door open a centimeter. If I were to look in a mirror, I have no doubt my pupils are dilated. I open it a little farther, nostrils flaring as I inhale the Kiki scented steam. I let myself have an inch, peering through and thanking whatever deity for her nearly transparent shower curtain. I can make out faint outlines of her body.

My grip tightens on the metal knob.

This was definitely a mistake.

Drawing up more self-control than I ever thought I possessed, I make myself close the door. I make myself leave her room. I force myself to slip out undetected, without a sound or trace except for the stolen thongs weighing heavy in my pocket.

I take fifty steps away from her. A hundred. Another hundred and then I tuck myself into an alley and hide within the shadows, pulling out my cock and wrapping that delicate silky fabric around myself.

The material is soft enough I can imagine it's Kiki wrapped around me. I drop my head back against the brick fence, mouth falling open as I replay each and every sound she made. Grunting, I stroke myself a little faster, a little rougher, until my dick gives a hard jerk. I slide her underwear up to my tip and let my cum spurt into the material, soaking it. Drenching it with my scent.

My heart pounds as I come down from the high of doing what's objectively wrong. It's creepy to steal her underwear, but I don't give a damn.

I'll take whatever I can get until I can see her again, until I can dare her to do something dangerous and share in the exhilaration of wondering if we'll make it out alive.

CROW

The pencils in my backpack jostle and I drop into a squat, cursing myself for thinking I'd be able to slip into her room undetected. Kiki rolls over in her bed and mumbles something, not fully waking up. I hold my breath and wait until her breathing evens out again before slowly rising and walking toward where she sleeps.

Pulling out my phone, I turn on the flashlight at the lowest setting so I can see her. I point the light toward the ground and let the soft glow bathe her from afar. Her blonde hair is a mess, the strap of her little black tank top has slipped down her shoulder, and her pale pink lips are slightly parted. I take a mental picture, memorizing the contours, the slope of her nose, the arch of her top lip, the sharp angles of her eyebrows.

I wish I could see her eyes again. Those vivid blues haunt my dreams, reminding me of how much I've lost night after night.

"Kiki," I breathe, voice barely audible.

She doesn't stir.

It's for the best, still, I find myself reaching for her, almost touching her. I want to see the depth of her irises. Every time I try to capture them, something doesn't feel right. The light or the color or... it's wrong.

Maybe it's because no matter how hard I try to draw her likeness, nothing will ever quite steal my breath the way she can. Pack are supposed to wait to be assigned an omega, but that's something that's never interested us. We already know exactly who we need.

She's right in front of me.

My fingers tremble, the last ounces of my restraint keeping me from closing the last inch and placing my hand against her shoulder. With a slow inhale, I force my hand back to my side and take another moment to memorize her features.

She's sleeping hard and a sudden small smile curves her lips.

A sudden vision of Kiki living among the stars, sharing company with the extraordinary, settling in right where she

belongs. I turn off the flashlight and slip out of her room, rushing out of the house and sliding into the SUV I drove over. The dome light is hardly adequate but that doesn't matter.

I grab my pencils and sketchbook, spending the next few hours perfecting my vision, or at least the outline of it. The cramps in my hand are finally bad enough that I stop, dropping the pencil back into the bag and casting my gaze around. The rising sun has turned the horizon blue, a color much like the aquamarine irises that haunt my dreams.

When was the last time she had cookies?

Does she make her own now or does she buy them from the store?

One of my greatest pleasures was taking care of her in a way that meant something to me. A way I was never taken care of. Caring for her helped fill that void inside of me. I still feed the guys, but without her, it isn't the same. Without her, things aren't complete.

Without her, I don't see the point.

I shove that thought away. Knox has a plan. We're already moving up within the MC. Once we have enough power, once we have enough men to back us up, we'll take on Axel. Or at least, that's what we'd like to do, but with Kiren as her father, I don't know how that'll play out.

We won't hurt him. He's too important to her and we're not that despicable. Maybe we can tie him up and keep him out of the fight. He'd be safe, and once she's back in our arms, I don't see how he'd be able to stop the inevitable.

No one can control the stars.

No one can control Kiki.

But I hope to hell she'll let us take care of her when the time comes.

I hope she'll choose us.

Until then, I'll find a way to bring her to life on paper.

KNOX

Though they don't say it to my face, I feel the unspoken resentment from my friends. Even if they hate me for it, they trust my decision and will follow me down this path of self-torture, hoping all the while that I know what I'm doing.

I don't.

I'm trying. I'm working within my means, finding the best way to make sure we're never vulnerable like we were that night. Kiki wasn't our weakness, being less powerful than Axel was. The way his hot, rancid breath coasted across my skin while he threatened to knot her still makes me shake with rage.

He was so sure it would happen, so delighted to hear me growl in protest. I crack my knuckles before pummeling the punching bag a few more times, pushing my muscles to the point of failure. The only way to get better is to go beyond what's comfortable. My shoulders burn as I try to clench my fingers into fists. They're too sore. Too battered from repeated abuse.

They hadn't healed from yesterday's session, and I'll have to slather the cracks with healing ointment. With a heavy sigh, I check the time. Half-past eleven. Kiki's dad usually leaves right around midnight. Sometimes a little later. I take a quick shower and change, slathering myself in scent blocking lotion.

That first night we snuck into Kiki's house was one of many. What started as an innocent way to feel close to her has turned more of a way for me to torture myself. I love breathing in her scent.

The night is cool and by the time I reach her house, the light to her bedroom is already out. I settle into my usual spot, leaning against a sturdy tree and waiting for Kiren to leave.

Almost like clockwork, Kiren creeps out of the house and hops into a car down the road. I'm more than a little curious as

to what he's up to, but his midnight rendezvous are the reason I'm not losing my mind.

The guys and I trade shifts, but if I don't get at least two nights a week inside of her house, my skin starts to itch and my mind can't focus. Logically, at some point it won't be so easy to visit her. She could take a trip or we could be sent on a weekend job, but that hasn't happened yet, and I refuse to waste an opportunity to be near her.

A full two minutes pass before I quietly walk-up Kiki's front steps. I slip in the spare key we'd stolen from the backyard and find my way inside. Kiren's scent slams into me first, but as I edge deeper into their home, I find what I'm looking for.

Sugar. Vanilla. A touch of cinnamon.

Kiki.

Her scent is stronger in the living room today, and I spend a bit of time simply breathing it in. I sit on the couch and try to picture her with me. Would she let me kiss her again? I lick my lips like I can still taste her. That kiss was meant to be chaste, but as soon as my mouth was on hers and she melted against me, it morphed into me teasing my tongue along the seam of her lips until she parted them.

I got a little taste of her, but it's something I'd die to experience again.

My only regret is that I wish I would have let go of my self-control and taken hold of her and kissed her properly. But I restrained myself, knowing I'd taken her first kiss without asking her if it was okay, and if I had another chance, there would be more firsts to take.

Rising from my seat, I head up the stairs, avoiding the creaking stair and opening her door. I stand in the threshold, staring at her nearly naked body. She's kicked off the blanket and she's not wearing pants. A tight pair of black boy shorts covers most of her ass, but the rounded bottom half hangs out, begging to be grabbed.

I struggle to function as my gaze travels over her. A tiny tank top that barely covers her full tits. Soft thighs. Strong calves. That delectable neck.

It's pure, agonizing torture.

But I can't seem to stop.

Every time it's my turn, I find myself here, suffering through trying to be with her but not *be with* her.

My hands clench at my sides. She's still vulnerable.

Until that neck has our mark, our claim, she's still at risk. There's so much to do.

I won't let her down. I can't.

I'll find a way to get back to her and keep her safe.

PART TWO

PRESENT DAY

CHAPTER SEVEN

KIKI

“No, you fucking idiot,” I growl at my phone. The animated orc winks at an animated woman and my character is left standing there, a stupidly confused look on her face.

The screen prompts me with two choices. Stay and fight with him or leave and go home. There’s no option to tell the dude why what he did hurt my character. Engines rumble close by, saving me from having to work through the inevitable break up that comes before the happily ever after. I love *Playing for Love*, the interactive game, but sometimes it pisses me off. I lock my phone and set it on the table.

They’re back.

Sitting on one of the benches outside the club house, I watch the bikes ride through the gate, searching for my dad. I reach to fiddle with the necklace I usually wear. My fingers grasp around thin air. Where the hell did I put that? I spare a second of concern for yet another thing I’ve lost before focusing on the guys parking in front of me. They pull off their helmets, revealing bloodied faces and bruised eyes. *Crap. Not again.* I stand but resist going over and demanding answers from them.

No one will tell me anything until Axel and Dad are back.

I wait. My fingers twitch and my gaze skips over the familiar faces. Dread coils in my gut as more motorcycles enter the premises. None of them are my dad’s. Axel is one of the last to enter, and I run over to him, not giving a damn how

ridiculous I look. There have been more than a few run-ins with rival MCs lately. Turf disputes as if Dolin isn't big enough for a half dozen MCs.

"Where is he?" I ask, breathless from the short sprint and burst of energy. "Where's my dad?"

Axel pulls his helmet off and refuses to meet my gaze. "Kiki." A bruise blooms across his cheek.

What the hell happened?

The heaviness in his tone is all I need to hear. I stumble slightly but someone catches me. I glance over my shoulder. Vermont, the secretary, is pulling back his long, dark dreads and staring straight at me. I pull my eyebrows together in question. *Is he okay?* Tears glisten in his eyes and he presses his lips together, shaking his head.

"No," I say, pulling myself out of his hold. "No," I repeat, glaring at Axel. "Where is he?"

Axel's eyes lift to meet mine, and he scowls. He clearly doesn't like the way I'm talking to him, but right now I don't give a damn. He still doesn't answer. Spinning on my heel, I march over to Forest.

"Where's my dad?"

Forest glances at the Prez. I smack his chest. Why the fuck is he looking at Axel? I'm the one asking the question. My heart slams against my ribcage and my legs shake, threatening to give out if I don't get an answer.

Grabbing his shirt, I shake him. "Where is he?"

Forest's large hands close around mine. "He's gone, Kiki."

"Gone?" I whisper, fisting more of Forest's shirt in my hands. "What do you mean *gone*?" I snarl, shoving him away. "He wouldn't leave me."

"Kiki, don't be stupid," Axel grunts.

Is it so wrong to hope? The alternative is... a reality I'm not ready to face.

I whirl around and storm toward him. Axel holds his hand up.

“Stop.” His alpha command slams into me, throwing me back to that night I caught him in my room all those years ago.

I carefully avoided that space in the clubhouse after that incident, and I only went to bed once Dad was ready too, staying on the small cot he set up in his room. He never asked me about Axel again, but I noticed him keeping a closer watch on me when the alpha was near.

Axel never commanded me again.

Until now.

“Kiren is dead, Kiki. Shit happens when you live the MC life. Don’t dishonor his memory by acting like a dramatic bitch in heat.”

I suck in a sharp breath, curling my fingers into fists and seething. “Fuck you, Axel.”

He scoffs. “That’s your one pass. I know you’re hurting, but you’re a grown woman. Act like it.”

Grown? I just turned twenty-one yesterday. My brain won’t fully develop for at least a few more years and there is no reasonable reaction to learning about the death of someone you love, but I don’t bother explaining that to him. He wouldn’t understand, just like he wouldn’t understand why forcing me to watch him fuck someone when I was only seventeen was disgusting.

“Come on, Ax,” Vermont murmurs, shoulder brushing against mine. He was one of Dad’s friends.

“No, Vermont. She needs to harden up. Her dad made her soft and he’s not here to protect her anymore.” Axel climbs off his bike and walks toward me. “Our little Kiki needs an alpha.” He reaches up to toy with a strand of my hair.

My throat constricts and my stomach turns. “Like hell,” I spit, slapping his hand away.

Axel growls at me.

Fuck him.

“She’s set to be matched at the Compatibility Ceremony tomorrow night. She’ll find a pack then,” Forest says, stepping to stand on my other side. “She can’t be yours.”

The ceremony. Shit.

Axel glares at Forest. “Says who?”

It’s true. The biggest night of my life is tomorrow, but with Dad gone, it seems pointless. He won’t live to see me make good on my promise to give a new pack hell. He won’t get to meet my pack and threaten to hurt them if they break my heart. I won’t get to hug him ever again. A cry lodges in my throat and while everyone tries to reason with Axel, all I want to do is scream at the injustice of Dad’s death.

“She’s Kiren’s kid, for fuck’s sake,” Forest says.

A gun fires before my mind can even process Axel pulling it out and pointing it. Vermont takes a few quick steps back, abandoning me as Forest collapses to the ground with a scream. Axel points the gun at Vermont, then swings it around to warn off the rest of the club members. They say you learn who your friends truly are in life or death situations. I have none.

I’m alone.

When the barrel lines up with my face, my cheeks are damp.

“Aw, sweetheart. I promise to be nice.”

Forest is whimpering on the ground, clutching his leg. There’s so much blood.

Swallowing back the tears, I shake my head. “Camila won’t let you—”

“You and I are going to go talk to Camila.” He presses the gun to my forehead. “Tomorrow afternoon after the drop. Do you understand me?”

I pinch my eyes shut and nod. I followed the rules. I did what she asked. I’ve done my best to stay out of trouble after

stealing his bike, knowing all it would take was one fuck up for Camila to shun me. The only thing worse than being shunned is Axel wanting me for his mate.

I *hate* him.

Dad will—no. Dad won't do anything. He's dead. Sorrow surges through my veins, a sob clogging my throat. My skin grows tight and hot the longer I fight the tears. The gun leaves my skin, and I force my eyes open. Axel's form blurs, but there's no missing the smirk on his face.

“You're Wrecker MC, Kiki. Don't fucking forget it.

I run up the stairs of the club house, rushing to my dad's room to get my things. If Axel thinks he'll claim me, he's dead wrong. I'd rather die. With shaking hands, I grab my bag and shove my wallet and some clothes into it. I left my phone behind, but I'm not going back for it. Axel shot Forest like it was nothing. I'm surprised he didn't kill him, but he'll do worse to me.

I push the window open and climb out. My feet hit the slanted rooftop that slopes down to the covered patio in the back.

Why hasn't the asshole chased after me?

My brain is too wired, too focused on escaping, to fully process my father's death. My cheeks are damp and tears still slip down my face, but I can't tell if they're due to the loss of my father or the fear of becoming Axel's. Hell, both of those are probably contributing to the emotions choking me.

I lean back slightly and walk down to the flat roof, checking over my shoulder every few seconds to make sure Axel hasn't come after me. As soon as I reach the edge of the garage roof that drops down to a group of old oil barrels that were used to transport the illegal guns the MC runs, I crouch and turn around. I grip the edge and drop my legs down, grunting as the rough material bites into my skin. A relieved

sigh rushes past my lips when my feet hit the lid of a barrel. The metal bottom scrapes against the concrete, and I stiffen, releasing my hold on the roof and peering around.

No one comes running to grab me. I wait a few more seconds before hopping off the barrel and bolting toward the back fence. There's no gate, but I'll climb the damn chain link to escape Axel.

"Kiki," he roars, finally realizing I'm not waiting around for him.

My senses snap and sharpen, vision tunneling until all I see as I stare toward the barrier is the faint outline of my nose and the pixilated air in front of me. My chest heaves. Blood thrums through my veins, an ominous chorus as I gasp for air.

"Get your ass back here!"

I tense, expecting the tug of obedience, but it never comes. There's too much space between us for his command to work.

I pump my arms and legs faster, all but crashing into the six-foot fence and grappling for a hold. The worn metal groans in protest, swaying and unstable. It's not safe. I haul myself up anyway. Time slows. My shoes sluggishly press into the diamond shaped links, my body seemingly weighed down.

No.

No, no, no.

Climb, climb, climb.

I have to escape.

The fence joins in sharp triangles. The metal twisting together at the top glints in the fading daylight as if screaming at me. *Go around.* I can't. This is the only way. Already shoes slap against the concrete parking lot, racing for me. I have to go over. I try to avoid them, but I have to balance myself somehow and those tiny points taunt me. Focus, Kiki. I shake my head and set my palms on the top of the fence, hissing as metal bites into my skin and draws blood. Hooking one leg over the fence, I push myself to continue. Keep moving. I can't stop.

I'm almost on the other side. So close to freedom.

"Fucking omega bitch," Axel snarls, voice much closer than it was before.

My heart thunders in my ears and sweat breaks across my brow. I lift my other leg over the fence, but something tugs me back. The material of my shorts is stuck. *No*. Dammit, no! My gaze flies up, landing on Axel who is barreling toward me. He's running so fast he'll be on me in a matter of seconds.

"Come on," I whisper, pushing my feet down on the tiny slots they're resting on in hopes that my shorts will rip. The thick material of the jeans pulls tight and digs into my thighs. Growling, I lean forward, inadvertently pressing my palms onto the metal points even harder. I whimper in pain as blood trickles down the chain links, coating the rusting metal in crimson. I jerk my hips. A loud rip fills the air and my heart jolts.

Yes!

I still have a chance. I lift my other leg, but Axel grabs my ankle, yanking me in the opposite direction with a vice grip. My ass lands on a spoke and I snarl, trying to kick at him. His hold is sure and his smile wicked, the vicious joy on his face that of a predator who's already caught his prey. A stone drops in the pit of my stomach.

"Get down," he demands.

The desire to obey jolts through me.

Fighting with everything I have, I try to resist. My hips turn of their own accord. *No, dammit. You're going the wrong way!* I scream at my body. I grunt as my hands press down again to help me keep my balance as my other leg comes to the clubhouse side of the fence. A flush races up my neck as I try to combat his words. Sheer humiliation riddles my body with trembles. I can't fight back. I can't give him hell. The only thing I *can* do is listen to this bastard.

Slowly, painfully, unwillingly, I climb down the fence. My blood streaks across the metal, leaving behind proof of my attempted escape.

If only I had made it.

CHAPTER EIGHT

KNOX

The news hits our clubhouse a quarter past eight. Kiren Malone is dead. Shot in cold blood on the side of the road on a drug run we had planned to intercept. I've been biding my time, waiting for the right moment to hit Axel's business, and I finally had enough. There are too many drugs. Too many kids with parents like mine; they're suffering and it's Wrecker's fault.

Things didn't go according to plan. Somehow Kiren ended up dead. From what I gather, once they found him, Wrecker MC drove straight to where we were hiding. Axel and his men killed two of ours, claiming it was retribution for Kiren's death.

But we didn't kill Kiki's father.

I drum my fingers on the table and stare at my VP and Secretary.

Jag traces over a scratch in the wood, brow furrowed.

Crow scowls at the wall like it's hurling insults.

The rest of the table is quiet for a moment as they try to process what happened this afternoon. Some are beat to hell, having gone after a few Wreckers once the guns ran out of bullets. They got away and we were left picking up the pieces of our crew. We buried two of our own out on that lonely road.

I clear my throat and resist the urge to race out of the room, grab my phone, and send Kiki a text. I haven't sent her

a message for a little over three years. I don't even know what the fuck I'd say.

Sorry for ditching you and sorry about your Dad.

She'd probably ignore it.

"Who did it?" Jag finally asks, looking at me. I made good on my promise to them. As VP, he's my second in command but Crow is just as important to the club as Secretary and third in command. We worked our asses off, but I got us in tight with the last Prez. I did everything he asked and when he was ready to retire, I was his first pick. A few people were pissed, but most didn't fight the transition, and once I proved myself as Prez, everyone fell in line.

"I don't know," I say, sitting back and crossing my arms. "I know who everyone will think did it." They'll blame us for Kiren's death. They killed two Hounds. At this rate, war is on the horizon, and much like the sun that rises every morning, nothing we can do will stop it.

Crow shakes his head, the light from his computer bathing his face in a white glow and making his pitch black hair seem even darker. "Jimmy gave us bad intel. You think he did it on purpose?"

"He's a rat. You can't trust rats," Rukus, the treasurer, mutters.

There had been a rumor about Jimmy working with the cops, but no one could ever prove it. I didn't trust the guy so much as his motives. He thought he'd be getting some of the drugs, and he's known to do anything to make money. It was the perfect opportunity for him to take a cut and make some cash... not that we had actually planned on giving him any of what we took.

That was only the deal we made to get the information out of him. Jimmy might be a rat, but he's damn good at figuring out everyone's business, including ours.

I clench my fists. "It doesn't matter what he told us. It matters what he knows. Somehow Axel knew where we would be, and Jimmy was the only one outside of this room that

knew our location.” I have no doubt in my mind Axel got a hold of Jimmy and he snitched. That or Jimmy was working us over all along.

Fuck, I shouldn’t have used him for the information, but he’s the best of the best.

“They attacked us unprovoked. They can’t claim we killed Kiren if they don’t have proof,” Royce says. He and Rukus share a look. They’re a bit older than us and sometimes get it in their head that they know better.

“You know that’s not true. If we were going to kill one of them, we wouldn’t have worn Hell Hounds gear and you know it.” Jag runs his hand through his blond hair. “Things have been tense between our clubs and Wrecker fucked with our last shipment of guns. Everyone knows we were going to strike back hard, and now they’ll all think Kiren’s death was on us.”

I study my men, the frustration lining their faces speaks volumes. The two clubs have traded slights and stolen things from each other for years now, always barely toeing the line of going to battle.

But the death of the VP?

Two of my men shot dead?

That’ll call for more than a little petty theft.

Axel’s blood thirsty enough as it is without adding my club expecting vengeance. We need a plan, and preferably one that doesn’t get us all killed.

“I want everyone strapped. No one leaves the club alone until we get a chance to talk to Axel.”

“Do you think that’s smart? His finger is probably already on the trigger.” Rukus frowns, his gray speckled beard twitching with the movement. “You’ll get yourself killed, Prez.”

Maybe, but I didn’t miss the way Axel’s men went for Hounds that didn’t have formal titles. They strategically killed

lower club members. They could have shot me if they wanted, but they didn't.

"Don't worry about me. Keep yourselves safe. Jag and Crow will come with me."

Royce side-eyes Crow who glares right back.

Leaning forward, I tap the table with my finger to catch Royce's attention. "You have shit to say?"

"Maybe I should go with—"

"No. Crow is coming. He's had my back more times than I can count."

"If it's my limp you're worried about, Royce, I can aim and shoot just fine." Crow mimics pulling a gun and pointing it at the other man. "Care for a demonstration?"

"We lost two Hounds today. Stop fucking around," Jag snaps, making Royce sit back and rethink what he's saying. "Does anyone else have anything to say about Crow?"

Everyone avoids our warning glares. I may be the Prez, but Crow and Jag command these men too. Together, we're the alphas of Hell Hounds MC and unless someone wants to try to kill all three of us, they'll have to live under our rules. That's not to say we're tyrants. We're not.

Club business goes through the committee and voting, but when it comes to shit like whether or not Crow is capable, we don't hesitate to flex our muscles. We inherited these positions for a reason. We spent every second scheming and strengthening the Hounds from the inside out until the club grew bigger and stronger than Wrecker.

Strong enough to fight for what we've always wanted. Big enough to keep *her* safe.

The gavel cracks against the table, driven down by my tight grip, and the men rise, exiting the room. They'll inform the rest of the members and prospects about our orders while the guys and I try to set a meeting with Axel.

Crow snaps his laptop shut and slips it into the sleek backpack alongside his sketchpad. "Now that he's dead—"

“I know,” I say, grimacing at what he’s implying.

“Axel’s going to try to take her.” Jag shoves away from the table. “I’ll grab extra guns.”

“I’ll go with you.” Crow follows him out of the room, his right leg giving a little with each step. A three year old present from Axel and his crew.

With nothing left for me in the room, I exit with them and reach for my phone in the small bin sitting on a shelf in the greater room. I unlock the device and pull up the old group text thread.

KIKI

I’m home.

None of us ever responded to her, and she never sent another message. She never called. She never tracked us down to demand answers. She never noticed we were taking her things. All the nights we broke into her house while Kiren went out, with her so close but so fucking far away, she never realized it. She didn’t do any of the things I thought she might, but that’s part of why I loved Kiki.

She’s unpredictable.

I close out of the old thread and start a new one, a message from me to her.

KNOX

I’m sorry.

I stare at the screen for a few minutes, waiting like a hopeless fool. She doesn’t respond. I dial Axel, holding my phone to my ear while I scan the mostly deserted club. A few guys are drinking at the built-in bar, but for the most part people are busy working in the shop on the other side of our lot. Axel doesn’t answer either.

Jag and Crow rejoin me and I sigh. Jag lifts an eyebrow in question.

“He didn’t answer.”

“Did you expect him to?”

No, but I wanted Kiki to respond. I’m a bastard for thinking she would.

“Guess not,” I finally admit. “Come on, let’s get this over with.”

I dread the chance of running into Kiki more than I do trying to get a word in with Axel.

That woman’s always had a grip on me, and I’m not at all surprised that her hold hasn’t faded after all these years. As I climb onto my bike, it isn’t worry about whether Axel will try to shoot me or one of my brothers that consumes my thoughts.

It’s about a gorgeous blonde with a spitfire soul.



Five men strapped with semi-automatic weapons greet us at the gate blocking the driveway that leads to the Wrecker clubhouse. One of the guys points his gun at me, his fingers inching toward the trigger. I pull off my helmet and set the side kick down before I climb off my bike. Jag and Crow mirror my movements, joining me in front of the motorcycles to stare down Axel’s men.

“You have some balls showing up here after what you did,” the guy pointing the gun at my face says while the rest of his crew point their weapons at Jag and Crow.

“We didn’t do shit, and that’s why we’re here. I want to talk to Axel.”

“No can do, shit bag.” A brave prospect spits on the ground. “Hounds aren’t welcome here.”

I stick my hands in my pockets, only a little worried they’ll shoot me before I can pull my own weapon. I’m counting on the fact that it’s the middle of the day and the open businesses down the road wouldn’t take too kindly to gunfire in the area. These guys won’t do it unless they’re begging for the cops to

get called. With the amount of heat they're packing, most of it likely illegal, they wouldn't want that.

"Why don't you call your boss and let him decide if he wants to talk to me." I step back and lean against my bike, settling in to wait.

Axel's guys exchange looks and the one with the gun pointed at me jerks his head toward the club house.

"Go on, Prospect."

Scowling at us, the prospect points the barrel of his gun down and jogs toward the club house. I study the windows of the building, searching for whichever one belongs to Kiki. It feels wrong being so close to where she might be and not being able to go check on her.

Crow shifts a little, moving more of his weight to his good leg. Most days the only proof of the injury is a slight limp to his walk, other days, like today with the angry storm clouds rolling in, it gets worse. His leg has never been the same after that night.

Jag lights up a cigarette and takes a drag of it, narrowing his eyes on the jackasses in front of us. A few of them are seasoned club members, but none of them are important enough to remember their names. The only people I give a damn about remembering from Wrecker are Axel, Kiren, and Kiki. I remember the faces of his council members, but their names are lost on me.

After another long drag of his cigarette, Jag flicks it at their feet. The red cherry glows bright and smoke curls up from the end.

"Fucking dogs," one of the guys mutters under his breath.

"You know who Cerberus worked for right?" Jag widens his stance.

"Who the fuck is Cerberus?" the same guy asks, face growing tight with annoyance.

I can sense Jag is rearing up for a fight. He's always looking for an excuse to find trouble, but we don't need any

more than we already have.

“Don’t bother,” I mutter.

A door to the club house slams open and Axel stomps toward us, the prospect hot on his trail. The thunderous expression on Axel’s face has me straightening. I pull my hands from my pocket and hook my right thumb in my belt loop. The gun on my hip is a second away if I need it.

The guys in front of me won’t shoot me in broad daylight, but Axel might.

“You have a lot of fucking nerve,” he snarls, passing by his crew and storming straight up to me. His nostrils flare as he presses into my space.

I hold my ground, refusing to back down. “We came to talk.”

“After you shot my VP?”

“We didn’t do it.” I study the hard lines of his face. Axel isn’t much older than Kiki’s dad, but his face has aged more. His angry scent flares around me, sickly sweet like the smell of gasoline, but there’s a trace of something familiar riding it.

Something I had forgotten but missed all the same.

Kiki, only it’s not her usual vanilla and sugared scent. It’s coated in brine. She’s scared. Or she was.

Why the fuck does he smell like her?

Why the hell is she afraid?

His threat. If he so much as touched her... Jag and Crow must smell it too, because suddenly the three of us are growling, a fierce desire to protect what was once ours. She should still be ours. I level Axel with a look, all attempts to smooth over our relationship fleeing my mind as I focus on the only thing that matters in the moment.

Axel licks his lips and sneers, knowing the exact reason why we’re pissed. “She’s going to be real fun, boys.”

I shove his chest and pull my gun, pressing the barrel to his forehead before he can even recover. “I will blow your head

off if you touch her.”

“Just like you did to Kiren?” he goads, his smile saying *gotcha* while the men at his back prepare to defend their Prez. We don’t have enough men to fight. I can’t let Jag and Crow die.

“We didn’t kill Kiren.” I grind my teeth together and force my hand to lower despite my mind rebelling at the thought. *Fucking save her*, the voice inside my head rages, but what can we do?

We’re outmanned and outgunned. Even if I killed Axel now, the guys and I would be dead shortly thereafter and that wouldn’t do Kiki much good.

“Then who did it? We know you were planning to steal our drugs.”

Fucking Jimmy. Two timing shit bag.

“Then you know where we were waiting,” Crow cuts in, pointing his own gun at Axel’s men. “You knew where to expect us. Why would we risk stealing the drop to off Kiren?”

“You know it wasn’t us,” Jag adds. “Your guys killed two of our own for no good reason. Tell your men to stand down before we end up with a good reason to go to war.”

“What’d you say, motherfucker?” one of Axel’s groupies snarls.

“Drop the guns.” Axel’s voice cuts across the air, his alpha command strong and firm.

“You have to command them to make them listen?” I lift an eyebrow.

“You do what has to be done when you’re the Prez.”

“My crew listens because they respect me, not because they fear me.” I trade a look with Crow and nod. He lowers his weapon.

“How about you worry about your people and I’ll worry about mine?” Axel’s face might be permanently lined with how hard he’s scowling.

“And Kiki? Who’s worrying about her?” Jag asks the question I’ve been dying to hear the answer to.

Axel scoffs and shakes his head. “It’s been three years and you kids are still whipped? She must have one pretty puss—”

I grab his throat and slug him in the gut. Axel sputters, trying to catch his breath, but I tighten my grip. His men bring their guns up but so do mine. Time slows down as I stare into the eyes of a dead man walking.

“Like I said,” I release him, taking three steps away to avoid the fist he throws at my face, “you touch her and we’re going to have a problem.”

“She’s not your omega.”

Wrong. She’s my everything. She’s our everything, he’s too stupid to realize that yet. Kiki has always been and will always be ours. The threats he issued all those years ago might’ve kept us away, but Kiren is gone now and Axel can eat gravel. There’s no one left in Wrecker that’ll protect her from him.

Kiki belongs with us, but I have to find a way to talk to her first. I won’t force her to come with us. The thought of leaving her here makes me want to punch Axel again. I’ve already worn out my welcome, and while I’ve confirmed Axel knows Kiren’s death wasn’t our fault, he won’t let me get away with attacking him more than once.

Axel rubs his jaw and studies the three of us. “I’ll give you that pass because you’re young and your dick is controlling you. Next time though? I’m going to make sure the last thing you see is the bullet coming out of my gun.”

“I hear you.” I back toward my bike, smart enough not to turn my back on him. “I meant what I said,” I say as I sling my leg over my Harley. “You hurt her—”

“She’s Wrecker, kid. Worry about your own crew.”

I bite my cheek to keep from growling out loud or saying something that’ll be punctuated by gunshots. I’ll find a way to get her out of there, but now isn’t the time. I nod at Crow and

Jag and we start our bikes together, backing out as one unit and tearing down the street and out of sight.

We're coming for you, Kiki.

CHAPTER NINE

KIKI

Lightning cracks, bright white veins snaking across the sky, ending in vicious tips. A loud boom chases the flash of light and rattles the windows. The clouds open and torrents of rain pour down, splattering onto the pavement.

I love storms, but not today. No, today it's as though the world is mocking me. Sometimes I think humans forget we're not invincible and mother nature only tolerates our arrogance for so long before she decides it's time to remind us how vulnerable we all are. Another spark of light slices through the clouds, reminding me who's really in charge. Just like Axel is trying to do.

I smell him before I see him; scent rancid and repulsive. Slipping away from the window, I return to my seat. The worn recliner is uncomfortable, but I refuse to sit on the bed. Axel slams the door as he re-enters, gait more agitated than it was before he left. The prospect who came to retrieve him had said the Hounds were outside. The window to this room doesn't face the street and Axel's command for me to stay in the room kept me from checking to see exactly who was outside.

The naive woman inside of me hoped it was Crow, Knox, and Jag, but the smarter side of me knows better than to wish for them to save me. They left me a long time ago and made it clear exactly how little they cared about me.

They never came back.

I don't speak to Axel. I don't ask if everything is okay when he begins to pace. I don't meet his gaze when his head whips up and turns in my direction. I stare straight ahead at a crack in the wall, thinking of a way to get out of becoming his mate. Camila is all about tradition and upholding the results of the compatibility tests, but I wouldn't put it past her to give me to Axel. She'd probably enjoy watching me squirm.

"Look at me," Axel barks.

Goddamn him. I'll never forgive him for commanding me like this. The single worst thing about being an omega is having the right to choose taken away.

My eyes cut toward him, not an ounce of affection in them. I let him see how much I hate him. Maybe once he realizes I won't come easily, he'll leave me alone. That's a stupid thought. Axel has been playing this game for years, toying with me how he could while my father was alive.

Now that he's dead... agony slices me in two and tears pool in my eyes. Sorrow clogs my throat and I begin to lose control, chest rising and falling as I fight to withhold a sob. *No.*

I won't cry in front of Axel.

He stares at me, assessing me as I go from the verge of a panic attack to complete stillness. I blink, pride swelling within me when no moisture slips down my cheek.

You control your emotions, Kiki. Don't let them control you, Dad's familiar words float through my head, bringing me the strength I need.

"I won't be your omega." I lift my chin a little. "Even if Camila gives me to you, I'll never be yours." The law would make me his, but he'll never get the omega he wants. He'll never know love, at least not from me.

He scoffs. "We'll see about that." His eyes light with something sinister, and he steps toward me.

Then again, maybe this is exactly what he wants. I stay still. I won't recoil. I won't give him the satisfaction.

Stopping in front of me, he places his hands on his thighs and leans down until we're eye to eye. "You're going to go into heat for me."

"I won't."

His lips twitch. "It's not an option. Go into heat," he says softly, but the alpha command is still threaded into his words.

My body goes taut, tension coiling, muscles tightening. "That's not how it works."

He can't force me into it, can he?

"Are you sure about that?" He brings his face even closer to mine, inhaling deeply before saying, "Go into heat for me, sweetheart."

Something deep within me pulses at his command. Obey, obey, obey. Give him what he wants. Please your alpha. Those thoughts race through my mind but they're not my own. I resist, gritting my teeth and curling my fingers into fists. A few moments pass and nothing else happens.

He growls and grabs my face, his grip not tight enough to bruise but hard enough to hurt. "Go into heat!"

The scream strikes a chord of fear, and the same throb responds to his demands. But that's it. My body doesn't do as he commands; it can't. I scoff at the realization. "You can't force nature," I hiss. He can't control the storm outside any more than he can control when my body decides it's time for my heat. "My heat isn't yours to demand."

Frustration lines his face and I fold my lips to keep from smiling in his face, delighted that there's at least one way to resist him. It's stupid to laugh in the face of the man demanding these things.

My dad is dead.

My loyalty to Wrecker died with him.

Axel is *not* my alpha.

His grip tightens, and I swallow a whine. "We'll see about that." He pushes my face away and storms from the room,

slamming the door behind him as another flash of lightning tears across the angry clouds.

He was serious about going to Camila. I haven't escaped the danger. Not yet.

It's stupid to think anyone will save me.

The only way out is to save myself.

There are some alphas out there who don't care about your feelings, Kiki. You protect yourself by any means necessary.

I'm trying, Dad.

The next afternoon, Axel drives me to the convention center in a car instead of on a motorcycle. He must be worried I'll try to jump off, and he wouldn't be wrong, though the command to sit still and be a good girl has held me captive since I slid into the passenger seat. He hasn't spoken to me since, but he doesn't have to. His thoughts practically scream at me.

You will submit to me.

I dig my nails into the bandage covering my palms, the blood has stopped flowing but the injury is fresh. The puncture wounds weren't as deep as I thought they were, but the wire of the fence sliced through my skin. My hands pulse in response to the pressure I'm applying. I use the pain to ground myself. It's one thing I can control. Lines mar my forehead as the city flies by.

The buildings, the homes, the businesses, they're all for the alphas. The ridiculous classes I had to take—a requirement for every pubescent omega—told me as much. An omega provides the means to create our world's future leaders. Axel wants me for his own nefarious reasons, but I'm certain he'd also love for me to birth an alpha. A mini Axel. I shudder at the thought.

But not all alphas are like that, are they? Knox and Jag and Crow are... not here.

My stomach churns, the need to throw up growing stronger with every passing second. Today I should be getting ready for the Compatibility Ceremony. Since my birthday was so close to the date of the ceremony last year, Camila decided I could wait to be matched until this year. An entire year is a long time for a pack to wait for their omega's first heat. But as of two days ago, I'm twenty-one. My body is primed and ready, and it's time to be matched. I should be going through hair and makeup with all the other omegas, prepping for the fancy ceremony.

If things go according to Axel's plans, that won't happen.

After my overnight stay in jail three years ago and Camila's threats, I did everything in my power to be good. I stopped sneaking out, though that was partially because the guys ditched me. Familiar anger kindles in the pit of my stomach. Frowning, I force my thoughts away from the guys who broke my young heart.

I was a silly, stupid girl. They were Hounds. I should have known better.

I spent three years following rules. I graduated from high school. I didn't move into the omega apartments because Dad obtained special permission to keep me at home. Everything was done according to the rule book. I should be finding the pack that'll cherish and protect me, not being handed off to Axel. I can only hope Camila will see how well I've done and deny the alpha. Since he killed his pack of alphas and forbade anymore from joining Wrecker, he's the only alpha in the club.

His past is speckled with criminal activity.

The chances of pregnancy go up if there's more than one alpha.

The Omega Council is all about breeding.

That may not be enough to sway Camila to my side. She serves the interests of the royal council first and they don't give a damn what happens in the lower packs. They only want to protect their precious pure alpha bloodlines.

It's messed up, but it's reality.

None of it matters now that Dad isn't here.

Pinching my eyes shut, I fight off another wave of sadness. I cried so much last night after Axel stormed out of the room. I didn't think I had more tears to cry, but moisture pools at my lash line. I pull in a slow breath and force myself to calm down.

You're so strong, Kiki. Your mother would be proud.

"Dammit," I whisper under my breath. It's like my mind is trying to torture me.

"The fuck did you say?" Axel snarls, the harsh sound of his voice booming across the space between us.

I've never been a flincher. Dad made sure to toughen me up. Living life within Wrecker hardened me too, but despite all of that, his anger triggers the slightest wince. It's a miniscule movement, but as soon as I do it, my eyes snap open and I glare at Axel. His gaze flares with triumph, almost like he's proud of getting a reaction out of me.

"Did Kiren even matter to you?" I ask with a shake of my head. "You were his friend."

"Yeah, we were friends, but even he knew this was coming."

His words slam into me and steal my breath. I think my heart stops beating. Every thought ceases inside my head and what Axel said plays over and over.

Even he knew this was coming.

He knew this was coming.

He knew?

Dad would never. Right? No. He wouldn't.

"You're lying," I spit as my rage coats my scent with cinnamon. "You're lying," I say again, as if that'll somehow make the words true.

"I'm not." Axel smiles and slides his gaze to meet mine. "You were always going to be mine, Kiki."

“He wouldn’t agree to that.” I look away, vision blurring from a fresh wave of tears. Dad was better than that. He loved me. He wouldn’t use me as a bargaining chip. He wasn’t like that. He wanted to send me to the omega dorms to keep me safe, but I wouldn’t let him.

“You know he killed those men that killed your mom, right?” Axel asks.

I shake my head. “You’re lying. She died in a car crash.”

“That’s what he told you.” Axel scoffs. “He really did a number on you, didn’t he?” His hand lands on my thigh. “Don’t worry, baby, I won’t lie to you like Kiren did.”

I shove his hand away. “Stop talking.”

“No. You need to hear the truth, Kiki. Your dad wasn’t a good man.”

Like hell he wasn’t. Sure, he might’ve done some illegal things, and maybe he did kill some assholes because they killed my mom, but that would be justified. They killed his mate. He killed them.

An eye for an eye, Kiks. It’s how our world works.

“Now that he’s gone, I can start telling you the truth.”

No. Now that my dad is gone he’s trying to turn me against him.

“You’re a piece of shit.” I blink the tears away and glare at Axel. “You can’t brainwash me into thinking you’re the good guy, Axel. You’ll never be the good guy, and I’ll kill you before you get a chance to knot me.”

His grip tightens on the steering wheel and his knuckles turn white. “We’ll see about that, won’t we?” Narrowing his eyes, he flicks his gaze to my tattoo—a bright blooming flower. “That tattoo is dumb.”

I don’t bother responding. As soon as I turned eighteen, I got the design. A reminder that even after the harshest of winters, spring will come and flowers will bloom. Dad loved it. Axel hated it, but it’s not like I was looking for his approval.

“After your heat, we’ll see about getting it removed.”

Much to his disappointment, my heat never came. There were a few moments I worried his command was working, but I think the ache and strange sensations I felt throughout the night were grief. As for his threat, I don’t react aside from clenching my jaw. He’s living for my reactions, and I’m trying my damndest not to give them to him.

He hits the turn signal and turns into the parking lot at top speed. My body jerks to the side and my shoulder hits the window. I start to unbuckle before he can command me to, but he orders me out of the car, using that damned alpha control on me once again. I grind my teeth together and follow him into the building. Gooseflesh pebbles my skin, my black shorts and t-shirt not doing much to keep the chill of the AC away. The floor is gleaming, freshly cleaned with a lemon scented cleaner, and the decor of the lobby is nicer than anything at home or the club house.

We’re not exactly poor—we never had to worry about food or basic supplies—but we sure as shit didn’t have marble flooring or big stone planters with fancy indoor plants filling them.

Axel smashes the button to the elevator and glances around. I stop a few feet away from him, unwilling to get any closer than I have to. Silence stretches between us, tense and uncomfortable. His anger rolls off of him in palpable waves of tar and gasoline. My own ire greets his until the lobby is filled with an overwhelming mix of frustration. The elevator doors slide open.

My heart skips.

Axel steps inside.

I stay where I am, and his eyes narrow when he realizes I haven’t followed him inside.

“Get in.”

There’s no denying him, but I still try. My feet are heavy, like they’re filled with lead, as I take the first step toward the elevator. *Stop!* I scream inside my head, but my body won’t

listen to me. Fighting the grip he has on me, I fist my hands and try to force my feet back. I stumble slightly, the mixed signals confusing my body enough to trip it up.

“Goddammit, Kiki.” Axel stomps out of the elevator and grabs my arm, dragging me the rest of the way inside. He jerks me around until I’m facing him. The vein in his forehead is bulging, a clear display of his loss of control.

Axel likes obedience.

I’ll be damned if I give it to him. “Get your hands off of me.”

“You need to learn to keep your mouth shut,” he shouts into my face as the doors close.

You’ll give them hell, won’t you, Kiki? Don’t let your alphas, whoever they end up being, push you around.

You protect yourself by any means necessary.

“Let go,” I repeat, voice deadly calm. Reaching up, I grip his shirt and pull myself a little closer. I can’t guarantee how Camila will react, but if anything, she’s consistent with her punishments.

Axel doesn’t notice what I’m planning, too pissed to realize he’s in danger. “You may have forgotten, but omegas listen to their—”

I slam my knee into his crotch, using my grip on his body to yank him into the hit. His eyes widen and a rush of air passes his lips. He releases a strangled sound and drops the hand on my arm to clutch his dick instead.

Taking advantage of the moment, I shove him away. “You may have forgotten, but you’re not my mate.” The doors open, carrying the last of my shouted words into the hallway.

“Kiki,” he wheezes, but I don’t stick around to give him a chance to say more.

I take off down the hall, racing toward Camila’s office. The door is slightly ajar, and I shove it aside, barging in on her. She startles slightly and squeaks.

Standing, she places her palms on her desk. “What are you doing?”

“You have to shun me.”

“What?” Her perfectly trimmed eyebrows pinch together. “What has gotten into you all this week? I’ve never had so many omegas breaking the rules.”

“Kiki,” Axel’s roar fills the hallway.

I cross the room and grab her arm, shaking it slightly. “Shun me.”

Camila gives the door a thoughtful look. “I remember you. The omega who stole a motorcycle, right?”

“Fucking bitch,” Axel mutters in the hallway. His steps pound against the floor, shaking the building. Each reverberation rattles through me.

“Shun me,” I plead again, heart hammering. “Please. Send me away.”

She glances at where my bandaged hand is curled around her arm and carefully peels my fingers off her skin. She pushes me away and wipes her hand on a tissue, like there’s some sort of disease she’ll catch from touching me.

Though I don’t turn around, I know the moment Axel steps in the doorway. The hairs on the back of my neck rise and my legs start to shake as the adrenaline surging through my system destabilizes me.

“Hello, ma’am.” Axel sounds so polite when he’s not demanding my obedience.

Camila considers him then slides her gaze back to meet mine. “Is this your omega?”

“Well, no, but that’s what I wanted to talk to you about.”

Straightening, I turn slightly so he can’t come up behind me. I’m torn between watching him and watching Camila’s reaction to what he has to say. Deciding he won’t attack me with her in the room, I study the woman. She’s pretty, but there are a lot of scowl lines on her face and the way she treats

omegas diminishes her beauty. She's meant to be an advocate for us, but instead, she treats us like trash.

Camila isn't here for us.

Still, deep down I have to believe there's good in her. Even if it's the tiniest of slivers, it's there. She won't give me to Axel. God, I hope she won't give me to him.

"Go on." Camila crosses her arms in front of her chest and squints at Axel, and even though he's the alpha in the room, somehow she gets to him.

Axel moves his weight from one foot to the other, nervously casting his eyes in my direction. "Her dad died."

"He wants to make me his omega even though he knows that's not how it works," I say, beating him to the punch. "He tried to force me into my heat."

Camila's lips pucker.

"She kneed me in the nuts. She's not suited for those alphas tonight, and you know it." Axel runs a finger over his patch. "She was born into Wrecker MC and that's where she belongs."

"I'll find a way to kill him," I say candidly, shrugging. "If you send me with him, he'll be dead within the week."

"You're a cunt," Axel spits.

"And you're a coward." I finally look at him, letting him see the truth of my words. "You were threatened by those other alphas and you killed them. Everyone knows it. Axel doesn't allow alphas to join Wrecker MC because he's afraid." I laugh, the sound void of humor. I've hit the nail on the head. "You're scared."

Of being overthrown? I don't know anyone in the club that wants to be Prez, but with my dad gone and Axel on this obnoxious crusade, someone might come out of the woodwork. He's volatile and that's not a good trait for an alpha or a Prez.

"Shut up." The command seals my lips shut, and I seethe, body vibrating with rage that's been building every time he

holds his power over my head.

“Please,” Camila says, holding up her hand. “This is all so much. Why don’t we sit.” She gestures to the chairs in front of her desk.

Axel and I both eye them. I’m not fucking sitting next to him, and he’s too proud to sit at her bidding.

With a heavy sigh, Camila shifts the papers on her desks. “Suit yourself. I understand you want— what’s your name dear?”

“Kiki,” Axel speaks for me since I’m still not allowed to.

“Right. You want to ask for Kiki to be your omega.”

“Yeah.” Axel huffs. “She’s out of control.”

Camila looks me over. “She’s been in trouble.”

“Exactly. You can’t match her with a pack.” Axel’s face shines with triumph.

“But, I can’t break protocol. There’s a system for a reason”—she holds up both hands to stop Axel before he can yell—“I know what you want, but it simply isn’t that easy.” She drums her fingers on the desk. “There is another option though.”

Not the auctions. Please not the auctions. My chest tightens, and my breath stutters. If she sends me there, he could still get me. He’d have to beat the highest bidder, but Wrecker MC has a healthy savings account.

“What’s that?” Axel hasn’t connected the dots yet.

My lips won’t move. I can’t beg her not to do it. She glances at me and I frantically shake my head. She gives me a look that says *what else am I supposed to do with you?* A whine lodges in my throat, filling the room with a soft keening sound. Axel sends a warning look in my direction.

“The auctions.”

Axel doesn’t speak for a second. “Why would I bid on her when I already have her? No, she’s coming with me.”

Camila releases the most condescending laugh I've ever heard. She's ballsy for an omega, but then again, she's dealt with far more influential alphas than Axel. "You can try, but the guards are already outside of my door and Cornelius would be very disappointed to learn you've disregarded my offering."

Cornelius is the head of the Royal Council and the most powerful alpha in our society. He controls everything. Axel pales, realizing the severity of the situation. He may be a badass criminal, but he can't compete with someone that has the sort of money and power that Cornelius has.

"Fine. When does it start?" Axel side-eyes me. "She's going to need a firm hand."

"If you leave your contact information, I'll send you the details. As for Kiki, I'm certain whichever pack wins the bidding will ensure that she behaves." Camila smiles at me while Axel scribbles his number on a piece of paper. "I'll need to speak with her."

"You can talk," Axel grunts. "Don't try running."

"I hope you crash and die," I say with a saccharine smile.

His head actually rears back in surprise. He seriously can't be so delusional.

Camila clears her throat and gestures toward the door. "I have a lot to do to prepare for tonight."

Axel stomps out of the room, shouldering past a guy wearing a security uniform. The man peeks inside.

"Everyone okay in here?"

Camila nods. "I have it under control now. Make sure Axel gets out of the building." She focuses on me. "You have quite the mouth on you."

"He's an asshole." I step toward her desk. "I'm serious, you know? I will kill him if you let him take me."

"I can't control who wins the bidding, and if you'd rather live in prison for the rest of your life, that's your choice." Picking up the phone from its cradle, she presses a number. "I have another one. Yes, I know. Well there will simply be more

to pick from this time, so long as the bids come in, that's all that matters, right?" She gives me her back. "What do you expect me to do, Eduardo? I can't control where the trash lands."

I bristle. I'm not trash.

"You'll send someone to come get her then?" A pause. "Good. See you soon." Camila hangs up and glowers at the phone. Whoever Eduardo is pissed her off. Gathering herself, she finally points to a chair. "Sit there. They'll be here to pick you up soon."

I don't move.

She growls. "Sit or I will force you to, and I won't use my words. The guards have pretty tasers that Cornelius bought them last year. I've always wanted to watch someone get tased."

Bitch.

I take my seat, but swear after today I won't be so compliant. I won't be controlled like Axel wants to command me. I will do exactly what my father asked and make a pack's life a living hell if they so much as try to alpha bark at me.

CHAPTER TEN

KIKI

It's hard to properly grieve when you're locked inside a small room. I pace the floor, running my fingers through my hair and searching again for a way out. There isn't one. I've checked a dozen times. There are no windows. The ceiling is solid. The vents are too small to slip through. The steel door with double bolts is the only way out, and there's no way to pick the locks. Even if I had supplies, the locks look too complicated. I'm trapped.

Helpless.

I hate being helpless. The buzz of the overhead light threatens the last of my sanity. I scowl at the ceiling. The bandages on my hands itch. With a half-hearted growl, I rip them off and toss them on the floor. The blood has stopped, but the injuries still ache a little. It'll take a few days for the cuts to fully heal.

"No, please. Please don't take me to the auctions. I don't belong there. Please." A woman's whine floats into the room via the thin crack between the floor and door.

Stopping mid-stride, I squat down and tip my head, trying to peer out but there's not enough space to see anything that might be of use. A sudden cramp assaults me, and I gasp, breathing through my teeth until the pain subsides.

That was weird.

The voices outside grow closer and shadows cross over the light bleeding through the crack between the floor and door. I

stand, dropping my arms at my sides to wait for whoever it is to finish undoing the bolts.

The door swings wide, revealing a gruff beta whose hand is already on the taser on his hip. “Don’t do anything stupid.”

I had thought about resisting but that would be dumb. My best chances of getting out of Dolin will come whenever I’m given to the pack who bids on me. While it goes against everything my dad taught me, I willingly hold my wrists out, allowing the beta to cuff me. He warily studies me. He must be used to some sort of resistance, but I offer none.

“Come on then,” he says once the metal is secured around my wrists. He grabs hold of my arm and escorts me out.

Two other omegas and another guard stand in the dimly lit hall. One omega is openly sobbing, her eyes bright red and face blotchy. The other is more subdued. I lift my chin as I’m placed at the front of the line. The guard that was waiting in the hall comes to link my cuffs to a chain that’s connected to the other women. I don’t recoil from him like the one who is crying. I don’t avert my gaze like the quiet one either.

The guard squints at me. “What are you staring at?”

“Nothing.” I don’t look away, even though I know that’s what he wants. I force him to meet my gaze.

The beta who retrieved me leads another omega to the lineup and places her in front of me. She’s crying too.

“One more and then we’ll be ready,” the beta says to the guard in front of me.

My guard grunts and moves to connect the new woman to the daisy chain. Once we’re all cuffed and chained together, the guards take up posts at the front and back of the line. The guy who took everyone from their room turns at the head and begins walking backward.

“Let’s go, ladies. Don’t cause any trouble and we won’t have problems.” He unholsters the taser. They led us out of the building and across the convention center parking lot where a nondescript white van is waiting. The head guard turns around once we reach it and opens the doors. One by one, they

unhook us from the chain and shove us inside. Our cuffs are locked to the metal rods bolted to the back of the seats.

The two omegas who were crying earlier start up again. Sniffles and gasped breaths fill the space. The guards climb in and slam their doors shut. One of them glances at us from the passenger seat, his upper lip curls when he notices the crying.

“I hate it when they cry,” he says to his companion.

“They always do.” The one in the driver seat cranks the radio up, blaring some rock music to drown out the sobs.

I turn and study my fellow omegas. No one has spoken, no one has tried to fight back. Are they biding their time too? My eyes land on the omega who’s the most visibly upset. Her shoulders shake and her nose runs, the snot and tears blending together and coating her face. She’s not biding her time. She’s already admitted defeat. Pressing my lips together, I face forward.

It’s not that I don’t sympathize. I do. Part of me wants to join her, but honestly, none of what’s happening can compare to losing my dad. The circumstances have put a temporary pause on my grief, but the sadness tightening my chest lingers. A hollowness fills me, something intangible missing from the core of my being. A puzzle piece that’ll never be found. It’s different from what I feel about my mom. I know I loved her and she loved me, but I don’t know that love like I did with Dad. He was my rock. He was there for me through everything.

Maybe they’re finally together again. Morbid as that may be, I smile a little at the thought. Losing a mate is supposed to be the worst sort of loss anyone could ever experience. How Dad made it through the pain and managed to be a good parent is beyond me, but it makes me miss him even more. He deserves to finally be happy. I don’t know if Heaven is real, but if it is, I doubt Dad is there. I don’t know what to think about where people go when they die, but for Dad’s sake, I hope wherever it is he’s with Mom.

Heat rushes up my neck and sweat trickles down my spine. I shift in my seat. “Can you turn up the air conditioning?” I

shout to be heard over the music.

“It’s on.” The beta in the passenger seat doesn’t bother to look at me.

“It’s hot back here.”

No response. Assholes. The van stops a while later, and only one of the guards leads us inside of an old warehouse that’s been repurposed for the auctions. As we enter, I notice a woman standing against the side-wall, hands already chained to the railing. Her sparkling dress shimmers even under the crappy lighting. Her bare feet are planted on the concrete, her tall high heels lying on the ground beside her. The closer we get to that wall, the more that one omega begins to panic.

The omega waiting at the railing stares at us, her big blue eyes unfazed. Something about the way she watches tells me this isn’t the worst thing she’s seen. This woman has been through some shit.

“Against the wall.” The guard gestures with his taser gun.

As one unit, we shift closer to the railing. No one wants to get tased. He begins the slow process of hooking us all to the railing. When he gets to me, I consider lashing out but think better of it.

Wait for the right time, Kiki.

“Please, you have to listen. It wasn’t my fault.” The frantic omega swings her head in every direction, desperate to find someone to believe her. “It wasn’t my fault.”

“I’m only going to tell you this once,” the guard says. “Shut up or you’ll get zapped. You can still be sold off if you’re unconscious, got it?”

The omega sniffs and shrinks back, too innocent to know that most tasers won’t render someone unconscious. The only way that’s possible is if the voltage is turned up to a cruel level. The threat does what it was meant to though and the beta grins.

“That’s what I thought.” He slips his gaze down the lineup. “The auction will start soon.” As soon as he leaves and the

door slams shut behind him, whispers erupt around me.

“If we can get the cuffs off, we can escape.” The omega who was threatened starts to jerk her hand, failing to yank it out of the cuff.

“Where would we go?” another asks.

“I don’t know, but I don’t want to be sold off.”

I sigh and lean against the railing. They’re wasting energy.

“It’s no use,” the one that had been here when we arrived says. “I’ve been here all day, and I haven’t found a way out. You’ll only hurt yourself.”

“I don’t belong here.” The crying omega shakes her head, tears splashing onto her shirt. “This is all a mistake.”

Maybe, but unlikely. Camila always has her reasons, even if it is as petty as her not liking an omega. Everyone who gets sent to the auction is sent for a reason.

“I belong here.” I arch an eyebrow and look at the omega’s tear ridden face. “I hurt an alpha, but I’d do it again.”

Her face scrunches. “But I didn’t do anything wrong. My ex—”

“You had a boyfriend?” the omega in the shiny dress asks. “Omegas aren’t supposed to date.”

Omegas are supposed to save themselves for their mates. An archaic standard that only applies to us. Alphas are free to fuck whoever they want until they take a mate, and even then some still fool around with other people.

The other omega tries to explain why it isn’t a big deal, and I have to stop myself from rolling my eyes. This is serious and while she may have been foolish enough to date someone, she doesn’t deserve to be sold off any more than I do. Honestly, we all deserve to choose who our pack will be, but that’s never going to happen. At least not with Camila and the Royal Council in charge.

“If your pack is awful, I’m sure Camila will help you find a new pack.” I know the omega with the dress is trying to

console the woman, but she shouldn't fill her head with nonsense.

We all know the score.

I scoff. "Camila won't do shit to help us."

The omega glares at me, trying to tell me to shut up. I lift a shoulder. I'm not going to fill these chicks' heads with lies. It's almost cruel to give them a thread of hope to cling to when there's clearly none. I half-heartedly participate in the rest of the conversation, but the only thing I have in common with these omegas is that we're all here in the auction house.

And soon enough, we'll all be sold to the highest bidder.

The warehouse is unbearably hot but there are no fans or vents for refrigerated air. The back of my shirt sticks to my damp skin. We've been waiting for hours, but time has gone by agonizingly slow. Finally, the door slams open. I tense, expecting a bunch of alphas to parade through the door, but a different guard escorts an omega in the signature white dress from the Compatibility Ceremony over to us. If she's in the dress, that means she was so close to being matched. The omega's face is bright red and her eyes flare with anger as the guy drags her across the floor and chains her to the same rail the rest of us are attached to.

"Don't scream," the guard tells her.

The omega's lips pull back slightly, and I hold my breath, half wishing she'd do it just to see his reaction. Defeat flashes across her face, and she presses her lips together.

"Good girl," the guy says, voice dripping in condescension.

She thrashes, like she can somehow escape the cuffs and throttle him. I bite back a smile as she fiercely glares at the guy's back. She has balls. I like it.

“What’d you do to get in here?” I ask, too curious to not find out what she’s done to get sent here so close to when the ceremony starts. Her hair and makeup are done. All she had to do was sit and wait like a good little omega.

Whatever she did, it must have been serious.

Huffing, she glances at me. “Fucked a beta at the Compatibility Ceremony and got caught.”

Oh shit. That’ll do it. Nothing like losing that sacred omega virginity hours before finding out who your pack will be. I chuckle. At least she went out with a bang. “So scandalous,” I finally say.

Her lips twitch a little as she considers me. Something passes between us, an understanding of sorts. Neither of us are going to break down and cry. Neither of us are going to make it easy on the packs who buy us. She may not be from an MC, but she’s got spunk.

“What did you do?” she asks.

“Kicked an alpha in the nuts when he tried to grab my ass,” I half-lie, telling her the same story I told the other omegas. I couldn’t share the truth with them. I didn’t want that sort of pity.

The woman nods at me in approval. “I’m Reagan. I’d say nice to meet you but, well...”

“I get it. I’m Kiki.” I don’t say anything else and the conversation picks up around me. I settle in, trying to get comfortable, but it’s impossible with the handcuffs. The discomfort only grows as the hours pass. Eventually everyone stops talking and falls into their own thoughts while we wait for the inevitable.

At seven-thirty, alphas begin to filter into the warehouse. An omega starts to cry again. I ignore her and the alphas. I count my breaths. If I focus too much on what’s happening, I might actually start to panic too. Before it was easy to pretend like none of this was real. Now that the alphas are here, filling the seats and casting glances in our direction, stifling the hot air with their alpha scents, reality creeps in.

I block it all out as best I can until a man struts in like he owns the world. The alphas all fall quiet and watch him stroll through the warehouse. I've never paid much attention to the high packs and who they are, but it's clear this guy comes from money. He has a nice suit and shoes. The watch on his wrist costs more than it should, and his cocky confidence fills the room as he steps on stage and smirks at the crowd.

The sick bastard is enjoying this.

The guards come over and link us all to a new chain, one they hold on to with death grips as they lead us up on stage. I hear Reagan, the omega who fucked the beta, huffing behind me. Her annoyance bolsters me and I stand tall, not allowing myself to feel an ounce of pity for myself. The only way I'll get through tonight is to ignore it all. We're positioned behind the alpha at the front of the stage, in perfect view of the audience. Is Axel here?

Don't look, Kiki. Don't give him the satisfaction of seeing your fear.

"Good evening. I'm Eduardo, the auctioneer. Before we begin there are a few rules to go over."

Despite telling myself not to check for Axel, my gaze slides to the alphas in the seats while they listen to Eduardo. Everyone listens to him with rapt attention. Well, everyone but the three alphas at the very back.

My heart flutters.

They're familiar, and it takes my brain a moment to catch up with what my heart already knew.

The guys.

Crow's jet black hair is slicked back and longer than it was the last time I saw him. He's bigger too. He was always strong, but he's filled out. Crow is more of a big guy than a solid cut wall of muscle. His emerald eyes shoot through me, reminding me of every time he looked at me and gave me that dimpled smile of his when we were just kids.

I've never met an omega like you, Kiki.

Are you down to ride or not, Kiki?

I struggle to breathe through the years of memories suddenly bombarding my brain. As Kiren's daughter, hanging out with the Hounds was treason in the highest regard. None of that mattered back then. When the four of us were together, we weren't kids from two rival MCs. We were a unit.

A pack.

The Hell Hounds vest Crow's wearing is just as I remember it, black and slightly faded from being worn so much. There's a small patch on the right side, one that can only be worn by someone on the council.

How the hell did he get on the council?

They'd barely been patched in the last I saw them.

Right now, that's not important. Crow's not alone.

Jag sits next to him with his arms crossed. He's filled out too, not quite as large as Crow—cut more like a fighter than a bear. Jag's blond hair is just above his shoulders. He's different too. None of that bothers me as much as the way his eyes have changed. From here, I can still tell they're that same crystal blue, but there's a darkness in them that wasn't there before. That same small patch that denotes him as a council member is on his vest too.

The alpha next to Jag shifts in his seat. Knox.

The one who was ready to beat Axel's ass the same night they called the cops on me. Knox runs his palm over the short beard peppering his jaw, studying me with too keen an interest in those rich brown irises. His hair is cut in a fade, a hell of a lot shorter than it used to be. Of all the guys, Knox is the one who hurt me the most. He kissed and then betrayed me.

Is it possible they came to save me?

No. That's stupid. I mentally chastise myself for being naive. The only thing those alphas want is to watch me hurt.

"Two-thousand dollars," Reagan says loudly enough to interrupt my thoughts.

I pull my gaze from the guys, watching Reagan go toe to toe with Eduardo about the rules of bidding. The only omegas who have money to throw around like that are high pack. While Reagan may not be throwing out millions, no low pack omega would toss aside two grand.

“Fine, two-thousand then.” Eduardo holds his hand out and there’s a bid from an alpha in the next second.

Reagan doesn’t speak up again. So she’s not rich, but she’s not dirt poor. The auction for Whitney finishes at a whopping twelve-thousand, and I can’t help but feel insulted. She’s far prettier than me, and if that’s all she’s worth, I’ll be lucky to go for ten grand. I’m not saying I’m ugly, it’s just Whitney has a classic sort of beauty whereas I’m a little rough around the edges, especially after the night I spent tossing and turning in Axel’s room. My V-neck t-shirt and blue jeans have nothing on that pretty dress she’s wearing.

The collective weight of their gazes drills into my skull, but I grind my teeth together and refuse to look at them. Their focus tugs at something inside of me. Fondness. Desire. A bead of sweat slips down my spine.

Is this some sort of last hurrah? A final way to get at Kiren’s daughter before she’s sold off?

I’d be lying if I said my heart didn’t hurt. I’d be lying if I said my mind didn’t try to convince me that perhaps they’re really here to help me. I thought I destroyed the part of me that cared for them. I didn’t think seeing them again would stir these feelings. Three years ago I cried when they stopped talking to me, but I hadn’t understood how much they really meant to me until tonight. Seeing them again reopens that wound, but I don’t have it in me to mourn the loss of them too.

There’s only so much hurt I can handle, and tonight I’m maxed out. If they came here to see me cry, they can get fucked.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JAG

This place makes my stomach churn with unease. The way the alphas act—like they've never been laid—is disgusting. The only redeeming part about being here is knowing we'll be saving Kiki from ending up with some shit bag like Curtis. He runs a cheap strip club and is known for being a creepy prick. Staring at him now, I know without a doubt he's into sketchy shit. The omega he won looks less than thrilled. Can't say I blame her. Aside from noting who Curtis bid on, my attention is focused on Kiki. She didn't notice us right away, but when she did, man, I've never seen a look so lethal. She's not happy we're here. We're not happy she's here.

We're one big unhappy family.

Her hair is a little longer than it was the last time I checked up on her, and a pretty flower tattoo covers the top part of one of her arms, but her eyes are still that aquamarine blue I remember. They used to be warm and inviting when she looked at me. Now they're cold, almost like a stranger has taken the place of the girl I used to know. But she's not a kid anymore. She's grown and so are we. I can't find a trace of sadness on her face. She's still strong as hell. I didn't expect to find her weeping like some of the other omegas, but I did anticipate some sort of distress. From all the way in the back of the room, the only thing I get from Kiki is a strong *fuck off* vibe.

Her gaze flicks to our group again, and when she zeroes in on me, I tip my head ever so slightly. The movement could be misconstrued as a result of me fidgeting if anyone were paying attention. I don't want to give any of these alphas a reason to take an interest in her any more than they already have. The bidding is higher than it's ever been. Though, part of that has to do with the mouthy omega at the end of the lineup.

Some royal brat who's used to getting her way most likely. Kiki's lips twitch every time the omega bids, a grudging sort of respect crossing over my omega's face. I miss that, those tiny expressions that hint at a larger reaction. I used to go out of my way to take her almost smile to a full blown one. Nothing's ever compared to the way she grinned at us back when we were thick as thieves.

The bidding for the current omega ends, and one of the guards adjusts the chain the omegas are all linked to before attempting to grab Kiki's arm. She jerks out of reach and glares at him.

"Good girl," Knox whispers, though I'm not sure he realizes he said it out loud.

My chest swells with pride as she marches up to where Eduardo, the douchey alpha, stands. She levels the crowd with a warning look, but it doesn't have the effect she's searching for. If anything, she's issuing a challenge to everyone in attendance, and that's enough to make my dick jerk to attention. Not to mention that pretty flush covering her skin has my mind wondering how she'd look beneath me with another sort of heat surging through her body.

"We'll start the bidding now."

"Five hundred," a dead man shouts from the front.

Crow growls, a soft but vicious sound.

Another alpha bids. I memorize how each one looks. The bids continue at an obnoxiously low price until that same damn omega shouts two thousand like we'll all be surprised by her actions. A large alpha snickers a few rows in front of me and my attention swings to him. He doesn't even have to turn

around for me to know who it is. Lucas, son of the head of the royal council and his merry band of preppy alphas are here. Cory and Marco are on either side of him, and they all appear to be studying the loud omega.

Good. I'd hate to kill alphas from the royal pack because they were stupid enough to bid on Kiki.

Our presence alone should have alerted these alpha assholes that one of these ladies was for us, but they're all too horny to notice our intentions. We allow the bidding to continue past two thousand. There's a slight faltering to Kiki's imperious mask, and she cuts her gaze toward me. Is that disappointment I see?

Can't disappoint my woman.

I smirk and call out, "Ten thousand." My bid effectively trumps every single one that had been called out before, and while it should serve as a warning, someone calls out eleven thousand.

Knox's chest rumbles. "Fourteen," he says firmly, making every head but the royal pack turn in our direction. The prissy alphas don't give a damn what happens to Kiki. We'd bid more, but none of us want to give the Omega Council more money than we have to.

Eduardo waits a few beats before calling it. Indignation flares across her face and her pretty blue irises promise punishment. I lick my lips in anticipation and nod at her, hoping she knows we'd never let her leave with any of these dickwads. She scowls. Maybe she doesn't understand.

You're ours, I mouth to her.

But that only serves to piss her off more.

Shit. Perhaps we're in for more than what we asked for.

Then again, I do love Kiki in all her feisty glory.

The auction ends and Knox glances at me. I nod in understanding and rise, heading to the entrance to watch for the alphas who bid on Kiki while he and Crow grab her. The first omega who was sold, the one in a shiny dress, passes by in a daze. Curtis manhandles her into his van. The first alpha who bid on Kiki walks past and into the night. I follow behind the alpha and give him enough space for it to seem like I'm heading toward my own vehicle. When he reaches for his door, I surge forward and wrap my arm around his neck, loving the surge of adrenaline that follows my attack. He grunts and smacks at me, but I've done this a hundred times.

“I'll only say this once. Kiki is with the Hounds.”

His body slackens and I drop my hold. As much as I want to kill him for even thinking he had a chance with her, I can't. Not with the fucking royal council princes here. The next bidders were a pair of alphas, so I switch tactics, walking up and pretending like I'm looking for some information on where to find another omega. When their guards drop, I slug the first one in the gut. The hit is so hard he bowls over and falls to his knees. His friend comes at me, but my fist is already aiming for his face. Pain flares across my knuckles. I ignore it, blocking it out until these alphas are down for the count and are issued the same warning.

I deal with the last three bidders as quickly as possible, hoping to catch up to my own pack before they get out of the warehouse. The last punch lands and my knuckles crack. My skin pulls apart from the repeated abuse. I glare at the downed alpha laid out between my legs and lift my hand to my mouth, swiping my tongue over the copper flavored blood.

“Are you finished?” Crow almost sounds bored.

I glance over my shoulder and shove my hair out of my face, giving a wicked grin. “It's taken care of.”

The streetlights form a halo around Kiki. She's standing between Knox and Crow, arms crossed beneath her full tits. Are they bigger than before? I wrench my gaze from her chest to meet her gaze, but her eyes are on the alphas on the ground. Her face contorts with recognition and confusion before she

masks the emotions and pulls up that ice-queen facade she was wearing during the auction.

She looks at me. “What’d they do to you?” Her voice is steady and brave.

“I think you know.” I adjust my vest and step over one of the alphas, accidentally kicking him in the ribs. He grunts. My smile widens. Serves them right.

Kiki frowns. She doesn’t say anything else, and part of me is disappointed. I had hoped her tongue was still whip sharp and relentless. Maybe the years past have softened her. She lifts her chin at my scrutiny, and I bite my cheek to keep from chuckling. Nah, she’s not soft. Kiki’s in there somewhere, she’s only hiding herself away from us.

That won’t do.

“She’s riding with me,” I say, not sparing Knox and Crow a look for confirmation.

Knowing Knox, he’s half ready to march inside and take out his frustrations on Eduardo’s face. Crow has been avoiding looking at her for a full minute. Chicken shit. I step closer and Kiki stares at me with all the backbone of a pure blooded alpha. There she is.

“Hey, Kiks,” I murmur, bumping her chin with my fist like I used to.

Her nostrils flare and her eyes narrow even further. “Don’t call me that.”

I press my lips together, keeping in the immediate *I’ll call you whatever I want* response on the tip of my tongue. Kiki’s never liked when someone talks to her like that. I haven’t forgotten. I also haven’t forgotten how soft her lips look. I find myself reaching for her chin. Kiki freezes when my fingers meet her skin. My feet carry me forward of their own accord, and I rub my thumb over her bottom lip, mesmerized by the way it shifts beneath my touch. Knox was the lucky bastard who got to kiss her. I’ve dreamed about what it might be like to press my mouth to hers.

“Are you ready to go home?” My voice is low and gruff, and my scent floods with desire. Her chest expands as she breathes in, those full tits inching toward me. It’s the threat of a junk punch written across her face that keeps me from claiming those pretty lips.

Soon.

I drag my thumb over her lip again, marking her with my scent before stepping back.

The distance helps her regain some of that ferocity, and she huffs. “Your club isn’t my home.”

“Neither is Wrecker,” Knox cuts in. “Not anymore.”

You’d miss it if you weren’t paying as close attention as I am, but a tremor of sorrow races through her. The steel and iron Kiren forced into her at a young age chases away any trace of vulnerability in a matter of a second.

“Let’s get one thing straight,” she says, dropping her hands to her hips and pinning us with a look we’re all too familiar with. The one that says we’re in for a shit storm, and one we’ll all brave no matter how treacherous the waters might get. “I’m not your little sex toy. You may have bought me, but those knots will be cut off faster than they can finish forming. You feel me?”

Yeah. Kiki hasn’t changed. She’s better at hiding the rough edges than she used to be, but I know better than to underestimate her. Kiki’s liable to slice my dick clean off if I’m not careful. I hate what she’s saying, but I’ll never force her to be with me.

We all hope she’ll come around, and then come for us, because if there’s one thing we’ve waited for all these years, it’s to watch the omega we fell in love with at eighteen fall apart while riding our cocks.

My dick presses against my jeans, begging for relief. I’ll deny myself relief until Kiki gives me permission.

CHAPTER TWELVE

KIKI

There's not an adequate word to describe the emotions that swell inside of me as I watch the guys climb on their bikes. Jag holds out a helmet with a black visor. The sun is mostly set by now but I always loved the extra protection even at night; I'm not a fan of wind in my face or bugs getting in my eyes. He twists the helmet to the side as I stare at it, revealing a sticker of an angel with devil horns, one I put there long ago, jumps out at me and my chest tightens. They kept my helmet.

I shouldn't read into it, right? Why would they get rid of a perfectly good helmet?

It's either stand here, or woman up and take the damn thing. I snatch it from Jag's hand and pull it on while the three of them watch me. They're acting like I'm something new and intriguing, and I don't like it. I don't want to intrigue them. I want to make them hurt the way I did when I realized our friendship didn't mean shit and they abandoned me.

I want them to feel the bone deep ache of losing what they thought they cared for most.

Until they hurt like that, I won't be happy.

"Your anger still makes me want hot chocolate," Crow murmurs.

"It smells like a cozy winter day."

I remember the pure look of delight on his face when he first scented my irritation the night we almost got caught breaking into the mall. Ignoring him, I nestle myself behind Jag and rest my palms on my thighs, refusing to hold on to him. I hardly notice pain from the wounds, I'm too busy focusing on keeping my cool.

Jag looks at where I've placed my hands, but doesn't say a word. I've been on a motorcycle since I was a toddler. I can handle a ride through the city without pressing against him. At least, that's what I tell myself as they start their Harleys and pull out of the parking lot. Jag shifts gears, going faster. He shifts again and takes a turn so fast my hands automatically clasp around his stomach. His scent is like diving into a lake on a hot summer's day, shocking, but refreshing at the same time.

Earthy.

Comforting. I want to rub my entire body against him and soak up his scent, making it my own.

The guys keep up as Jag goes faster and faster. Fast enough that I can excuse the way I let my body soften against his. Fast enough I can pretend like the speed is the reason for my heavy breathing and flushed neck. Fast enough that for a moment, I let myself wonder if we can go back in time, sending us all to the moments before they betrayed me. Back to when all I wanted was a second like this with any of them. Back when my heart was whole and hopeful.

Those are the delusional thoughts of an MC groupie. I know my heart still holds some love for my old friends, but my mind is stronger than that weak organ racing inside my chest as Jag takes a turn that has my life flashing before my eyes.

They're not my friends.

They're not my pack.

They're the boys my father warned me about. The ones who wanted to take what wasn't theirs and ruin me. Dad wasn't talking about them specifically when he warned me

about what some alphas are like, but this is what he was aiming to protect me from. I ignored his advice the first time. I won't do it again.

Easing away from Jag, I place a respectable distance between us. He glances back as if to ask *what just happened?* I won't press against him like that again. No matter how fast he turns or how hard he shifts, I keep an easy hold on his stomach but I don't cling to him.

The momentary slip can't happen again.

The Hell Hounds' clubhouse is a lot bigger and a lot nicer than the Wrecker's. Consider an old, off brand car compared to a reliable Toyota. I've never been on Hound's property, that was one line I never crossed, and a little thrill of excitement skates down my spine. Dad is probably turning in his grave, but deep down, I know he wouldn't want me to end up with Axel.

Speaking of, he never made his grand appearance. I'm happy he didn't show up to bid on me, but does that mean something worse is waiting for me? Axel isn't one to let things go. He wanted me. I release my hold on Jag while he parks. His knuckles are red and bloodied from the beating he gave those alphas who bid on me. I'd be lying if I said a little part of me didn't delight in seeing them laid out in such a brutally efficient way.

Jag hasn't changed in that respect. Knox is the starter: the one who'll do what needs to be done. Jag's the escalator: the alpha who will take a simple fist fight and turn it into a battle for death. Crow is the finisher: the guy you can depend on to end a fight. Together they're perfect. Together they're dangerous. Together they should be mine.

I pinch my eyes shut. Stupid, foolish omega.

They're not the same kids from my memories.

After they stopped talking to me, I carefully avoided any discussions of the Hounds. Anytime they were brought up

within Wrecker, I found an excuse to leave. Apparently, a lot has changed. According to their vests, Knox is the Prez. Jag and Crow are holding the next highest ranking positions. They're young—at only twenty-one—but a lot of Hounds have been killed during turf disputes.

Now I wish I would have stuck around for those discussions. Did they kill the old Prez to take control?

Somehow I doubt it.

They never were much like Axel. Aside from the vests and the motorcycles that is. Axel is a level of despicable I haven't seen many alphas reach. My guys, I mean these assholes, are nothing like that.

You don't know them anymore, a whisper of a thought trickles through my mind.

That's true. I don't know them. A familiar and annoying ache fills me. A stupid longing to belong to what I once thought was mine once more.

I hadn't imagined making my way back to them via the auctions. That's an entirely different level of fucked up. Not only are they alphas and I'm an omega, now they fucking own me. All because Axel thought he'd try to force me into my heat and make me his. *Go into heat*. My chest rumbles at the unwelcome intrusion of Axel's voice in my head and cinnamon explodes around us.

Jag removes his helmet and glances over his shoulder. "If you're going to stab me, at least let me take the vest off."

His words shock me and pull my thoughts from what I'd experienced with Axel. I take off the helmet and clutch it in one arm, giving Jag a blank stare. The spice of my anger recedes. Control. I need to stay in control.

"When I stab you, there won't be so many witnesses."

"I look forward to it," he says softly, running his hand up and down my thigh for a quick second. "Are you going to sit on the bike all day or are you going to grow some balls and hop off?"

Not quite knowing how to respond to his touch, I jump off and throw the helmet at him. He catches it with a laugh and sets it aside. The ride cooled me off, but my skin warms at their presence and fresh sweat pebbles on my lower back. Knox and Crow walk over. There's a limp in Crow's gait. It's barely noticeable, but it's there. I purse my lips to keep from asking what happened. A lot *has* happened since the last time we saw each other. The three of us fall into a silent standoff. None of us move. None of us speak. We simply appraise each other, me trying to figure out their motives and them... Well, I don't know what they're trying to figure out.

We used to be able to finish each other's sentences.

Knox steps forward, and I tense, expecting the first demand to slip from his lips, but he grabs my hand instead, turning it over and inspecting the cut.

“What happened?”

“Cut myself on a fence trying to escape from Axel.” I hold his steady stare. “I didn't make it.”

His features darken, and I yank my hand back, not wanting him to be angry on my behalf. I had my mind made up about these alphas, but within only a few hours, they're turning my world upside down.

“Are we going to stand here all day or are you going to show me around?” I finally ask, glancing away and taking in the property.

Much like Wrecker's land, Hell Hounds' is surrounded by a fence, only theirs is iron compared to the flimsy chain-link. The club house sits in the middle of the property with bright lights bathing the lot and chasing away the encroaching dark of the late evening. A small automotive shop is off to the right side, and two other buildings, both smaller than the clubhouse, sit off to the left. There are picnic tables under a tin roofed patio and a few grills for when the club has a celebration. A row of bikes extends from where we stand. Fourteen Harleys, and that's just the members that are onsite.

With the territories they've recently claimed outside of Dolin, Hell Hounds has over a hundred members.

Wrecker only had fifty. We were smaller, but part of that is because of the Hounds. They're no saints, that's for damn sure. A pretty, rail thin woman saunters over. Her pupils are blown wide, and her jaw moves back and forth when she stops in front of us. "Hey, sugar," she croons to Crow.

He merely sighs. "Who let you in, Tina?"

"Motor said it was okay." Tina bristles and slants her gaze to me. "She smells." Her stringy bleach blonde hair hangs down her back.

Jag chuckles, and I glare at him. It's not my fault the pheromones make it their personal mission to embarrass me whenever they get a chance, though I'm thankful for them right now. At least the guys know without a doubt I'm not happy about this situation.

"This is Kiki. She's our omega," Knox says smoothly, as if those words are of no consequence.

"I'm not—"

"She's in denial," Jag interrupts me. "She's not to be fucked with, understood?"

"The kings are finally taking a queen?" Tina checks me out. "She looks soft."

Rude.

"Don't let her fool you," Crow murmurs. "You need to go home, Tina. Get cleaned up."

"I'm fine," she hollers, throwing her hands into the air. "Everyone is always telling me to clean up. I took a damn shower this morning."

Knox steps toward her, and I hold my breath, expecting some sort of violence at her directly disobeying an alpha. He doesn't raise a finger to her. He does raise his voice to say, "Get home and detox, Tina. Stop fucking around with Sneaky's shit." The command isn't for me, and yet I find myself pissed as though he told me what to do and not her.

“Sneaky shit.” Tina cackles and begins heading toward the side gate. The sidewalks are well lit, but I have a moment of worry about her heading out into the night this messed up. Hopefully she lives close.

“It’s like that now?” I ask Knox once Tina is far enough away. “You say the word and people fall at your feet to do as they’re told?”

Knox turns and prowls toward me, body moving with a familiar fluid grace. He’s upon me in three seconds. I lock my legs and tip my head back.

“She’s an addict, and Sneaky doesn’t give a fuck about her. All that prick cares about is getting paid, so yeah, I used my power on her, but you and I both know it won’t last forever.” He heaves a breath.

My cheeks heat. They know what Axel commanded all those years ago, but they don’t know about his most recent demands.

“This is for her own good. There are people out here who don’t care how far gone Tina is. She needs to get sober.” Knox is so adamant it’s hard to argue with him. “You’ve been around Axel long enough to know how his alpha bark works, right?”

How dare he ask that question.

I swallow and stare at his nose. “Trust me, I know all too well exactly how it works.”

Something shifts in the air, a tangible wave of frustration.

“What did he do?” Jag asks.

“Nothing,” I lie. I’ve already said too much about trying to escape. “Why do you care anyway?” Growing the balls he mentioned earlier, I push Knox back a few steps and shake my head. “Why the hell did you come to the auctions? Didn’t you all decide you were done with me three years ago? Is this your final way to get at my dad after his death? Buy his daughter and patch her over as a Hound?”

“It’s not like that,” Crow says. His deep green eyes are hard to read, but there’s a hint of a plea in them.

“Then what’s it like, Crow?”

Before he can answer, a motorcycle tears down the street and screeches to a halt outside their gate. Axel rips his helmet off and tosses it on the ground. My breath catches. His face is beat to hell and his nose is definitely broken. Someone kicked his ass. Guess that explains why he didn’t show up at the auction.

“Kiki, get over here,” he demands, stopping just outside the gate.

Grinding my teeth, I fist my hands and dig my heels in, trying my hardest to resist the pull to submit and do as I’m told.

“Don’t listen to him,” Jag says quietly. There’s no command in his voice.

The door to the clubhouse slams open, and I glance over my shoulder. Five guys strapped with guns march toward us, ready to take care of business if need be. Knox lifts his hand and they all stop in their tracks. I study his profile, but his eyes are set on Axel. Knox is so calm and collected compared to the fuming jerk.

My foot lifts off the ground, my body finally giving in after fighting the command for as long as I could. Crow appears in front of me, placing his back toward Axel and cutting the alpha-hole off from my line of sight. His eyes search my face. I give him nothing. Lifting his hand, he places it on my shoulder before I can take another step. I hate that I’m thankful for his help.

“Get your hands off my omega,” Axel snarls. I shift to the side to go around Crow, the desire to do as I’m bid now almost painful. The longer I resist, the more it hurts. Crow’s fingers ever so slightly tighten. He’s not hurting me, but he is trying to stop me. A shot rings out, ping-pong off the metal at Axel’s feet.

“Stop!” Axel demands. Not at me, but his words hit me all the same, and my body becomes mine once more.

I flinch and take a few steps back. Crow matches me step for step, walking forward, only he doesn't stop when I do, and I'm forced to continue moving or get knocked on my ass. My back smacks into the fence, and I grunt in surprise.

"Are you okay?" he asks.

Am I okay?

"You've overstayed your welcome, Axel." Knox's voice prevents me from answering Crow. "Though I'm surprised you had the balls to show up here at all. How's your face?"

I furrow my brow. "Did you guys do that?" I whisper the question before I can stop myself.

Why does it matter?

Why do I care?

Do they?

Crow doesn't respond. His hands fall on either side of my body, fingers wrapping around the iron bars as he cages me in. Even though I know he's only doing it to keep me from going to Axel if he commands me to, my stomach does a nervous flip. Crow's a lot bigger than he used to be. A lot more sure of himself too.

They were all confident back then. Maybe a little arrogant but confident. Now though, the way they hold themselves tells me they've done things that back up that cockiness. They can be true to their words in a way they hadn't before.

Is it wrong to mourn missing out on the last shred of innocence they finally lost?

Crow drums his fingers next to my head. I glance at his left hand, noticing the smudges of pencil covering the side of his hand. He stops tapping his fingers once he sees me staring.

"She's mine," Axel growls.

"Have you always been this delusional?" Jag drawls. I'd give anything to see his face right now, but Crow's still shielding me from everything.

“Say the word and I’ll shoot this Wrecker dirt bag.” This from one of the guys who burst out of the clubhouse.

“Just like you did to Kiren?”

My eyes fly to Crow, and I gasp softly. He shakes his head. *It wasn’t us*, his face says. Once upon a time, I would have believed him without a second of hesitation. Now? I’m not sure if I can trust them. They ratted on me. They left me. They own me.

My heart trembles in my chest, unable to take yet another betrayal at their hands. I pinch my eyelids shut and breathe, dropping my head back to rest against the iron bars behind me.

“Ki—”

“Don’t,” I rasp, shaking my head. “Don’t.”

Crow doesn’t try to say anything else. His fingers tap against the iron again, the soft thumps filling my head and matching my racing heartbeat. My thoughts are tumultuous as I try to figure out if they truly killed my father or not. It would make sense, them going after him. He’s the second in command and as much as Axel pretends, my dad is a big reason why the MC followed Axel after he murdered the other alphas. If Kiren Malone could stomach the asshole, so could they.

Dad is gone now though. Were they trying to start a war within Wrecker? Disrupt the complicated yet peaceful dynamic of the clubs?

“Yeah, have fun fucking his killers, Kiki. Kiren would be really proud of his baby girl.” Axel hocks and spits on the ground.

Knox and Jag don’t refute the accusations.

Neither do any of their men.

“Tell you what,” Jag says, an edge of madness creeping into his voice. “I’ll give you ten seconds to get the fuck off our property before I see if I can use my bare hands to rip your head off your body.”

“I won’t stop him.” Knox. Serious and unfazed.

“This isn’t over,” Axel warns before the engine of his bike rumbles to life and he speeds away.

Footfalls come closer to where Crow has me trapped, but I keep my eyes closed. If I open them, the tears will fall and that can’t happen. These guys would be too happy to watch me break. I fight the pain tooth and nail, roughly swallowing and breathing through my teeth.

“Leave us,” Knox says without an alpha command. Boots stomp across the concrete, his men leaving without needing to be forced.

I sense them closing in. Jag’s chaotic energy settles around me. Knox’s hand brushes over my arm, but I jerk away, opening my eyes to glare at him. My head hits Crow’s drumming fingers, breaking the cage he’s placed around me. I slip out of his arms and put some space between us.

I could run.

Axel is out there though, and while I don’t want to face these alphas, they’re the lesser evil right now.

Knox shoves his hands into his pockets and widens his stance, taking up more space than he needs. Jag tilts his head and searches my face. Crow’s emerald eyes pierce through my soul. He sees too much. They all do.

“Is it true?” I finally ask. “Did you ki—” I suck in a sharp breath and force the words out. “Did you kill my dad?”

“No,” they say at the same time.

I waver. I may not know them like I used to, but I know their tells. Knox would scratch his eyebrow. Jag would tug his earlobe, and Crow would look to the left. They don’t do any of those things. They stare straight through me, and for a second, I’m not twenty anymore. I’m seventeen and they’re my world.

Finally, hesitantly, I nod. “Okay.”

“Do you believe us?” Crow asks.

“About this? Yeah.” Deep down, I don’t think they’d hurt the only person I care about. They were never cruel. They might have betrayed me, but they wouldn’t kill my father.

“But you don’t trust us,” Jag clarifies.

“Why would I? You’re a bunch of rats.”

“We didn’t rat you out.” Knox grinds his jaw and runs his hand over the shorter brown strands of his fade.

“You left me. I came back and the cop was there. He caught me and you were right there. You drove by while I was arrested.”

“We didn’t rat you out,” he repeats.

“You abandoned me.” My voice comes out strong, but my throat aches as the words leave my mouth.

“It’s complicated, Kiki.” Crow steps toward me and his leg gives a fraction of an inch. You’d never notice if you weren’t paying attention.

“Did you beat Axel up today?” I ask Jag, side-stepping away from Crow.

Crow halts and glances at Jag.

Jag’s blond hair brushes his shoulders and the scruff covering his jaw matches the pale color. He’s gruff and grown and a little scary. His lips tip up. “Heard he needed it.”

“And how’d you hear that?”

The three of them exchange looks, something cryptic passing between them. I frown. I used to be a part of that. The longing inside me to belong once more grows stronger with each passing second. The longer they have a discussion via simple looks, the more I want to be in.

Give ’em hell, Kiki.

I don’t have the strength to fulfill Dad’s wishes. Not after everything that happened today. Heat flushes up my neck and my stomach pangs with hunger. I stiffen a little, surprised by the sudden urge to find a bag of Hot Fries and devour it. Vanilla cloy the air and I nearly choke on my own spit when I realize why my entire body feels too hot and ravenous. The signs have been there all day. The sweating. The aches.

Knox sniffs. “Kiki?”

I'm so hungry.

Fuck.

Go into heat, Axel's voice tears through my mind.

No. This can't be happening.

Maybe it's not my heat though. I haven't had much of anything to eat today. It's natural for my body to want food. I've been through a lot, and I've held myself together, but maybe my body is trying to tell me it needs a break. No more drama, at least not right now.

"I'm hungry and tired." And sad. *That's it*. That's all it can be. I sigh. "Can we drop it?"

"If that's what you want," Knox says.

"It is." I look toward the clubhouse. "Do you guys live here?" The place is big enough.

"We have our own apartment, away from the main area and other rooms."

Privacy.

Maybe that's what I need. A moment alone to process.

To find a way out.

Though, a foolish part of me wonders what it might be like to stay.

They are alphas, and I'm an omega. By nature, we were meant to be together. I want them to want me. I want to feel the way I felt with them right before I broke, how I felt right before they gripped my fragile heart in their hands and crushed it. I want them to look at me like I'm their entire world. It's foolish, but true. I *want*. And that alone will be my downfall.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CROW

We take Kiki inside. I walk next to her while Knox leads the way. Jag brings up the rear. Between the three of us, we form a blockade to save her from prying eyes. No one knew where we went tonight. No one knows we bought an omega. No one knows who she is or what she means to us.

I want to stop and tell them all, *she's ours*. But I don't. She wouldn't like that. She's pissed at us, and I don't blame her. I run my fingers over my thumb and try hard to keep my leg from dipping. We make it all the way to the back hall of the clubhouse before it finally gives a little. Kiki's gaze burns into me.

She noticed.

I don't glance at her. I keep my eyes ahead and pretend like nothing's changed. I pretend like I'm still that guy she used to share blunts with. Alphas aren't weak. We protect our pack and keep them safe. My leg hinders my ability to do that a little, but I can still do what needs to be done.

Some days are worse than others.

Knox stops in front of a big black steel door and pulls out his keys, unlocking it and letting us all pass through to the private hallway that leads us to our apartment. We didn't always live here, but after spending most of our time at the clubhouse, we finally decided to convert half of it into a small but comfortable three bedroom suite.

I pull ahead and unlock the door to the apartment. When I open the door, I wait for Kiki to pass by but she doesn't move. She stares into the open-concept suite. We've never needed much space to call a place home, but with the way she's staring, I kind of wish we had something better to offer her.

Kiki's dad's house was huge. I remember the first time we drove by it to make sure she got in safely after sneaking out. It was at least two-thousand square feet, an unusually large place for a low-pack beta, but if Wrecker is anything like Hell Hounds, he makes good money.

Or he did.

I side-eye her. She's been holding herself together pretty well. Her dad meant the world to her. She has to be hurting. We stand awkwardly, but I wait her out. Knox and Jag are content to wait too. She has to be the one to take the first step. She has to enter of her own accord, though the circumstances are less than ideal. We paid for her like we were buying a damn car.

It makes me sick, but we got her out of there. We saved her from Axel; it was never about owning her.

Kiki can't be owned.

She can be ours, if only she'd let herself.

Her hesitation gives me a chance to study the ink on her arm. My fingers clench slightly, a thread of jealousy rushing through at the sight of someone else's artwork on her body. It's a basic design, nothing special. Nothing that hints that the artist wanted it to mean something to her. There's no reason to be jealous. It's only a flower. A beautiful one, but the tattoo artist was already mated. I made sure of it when Kiki left the studio. He didn't appreciate me storming into his shop, but once he made it clear he wasn't interested, I left.

"Come on, Kiks," Jag murmurs. "Scared?"

Glaring back at him, she takes one step inside. "Don't call me Kiks."

"Why not?" Knox asks.

I step toward her, and she stumbles away from me, moving farther into the apartment to avoid being close. Her scent grows sour with fear. The organ in my chest clenches, but I ignore the pain. She's pissed, and she has every right to be, but to be scared of us? That won't do. I shift to the side so I'm not directly in front of her. Knox and Jag come in, and Jag closes the door behind them. He drops his back against it and stares at her, looking every bit the degenerate that he is.

She probably deserves better than us... but she sure as shit doesn't fit with any other pack the way she does with us.

"You know why," she snarls, turning away from us and crossing her arms.

Drumming my fingers on my pants to keep from going to her, I sigh. "Can we talk about it?" If we can only tell her what happened, maybe then she'd realize we never left her by choice. Maybe she'd trust us again.

She spins on her heel and those piercing blue eyes cut through me. "Sure. Why don't the three of you tell me why you called the cops on me? Why don't you explain your stupid little game where you fooled me into thinking we were friends?" She sucks in a shaky breath, hands trembling as she lifts them to her heart. "Explain how you could leave me like it all meant nothing." Heat flares on her cheeks but she doesn't look away. That's almost worse.

The pain we caused all those years ago is deeper than I thought. It's written on her face, lines of sadness and hurt and betrayal. Indignation flashes over her face. We're fucking trash for leaving her. We should have fought harder. We should have... but we couldn't without risking her. We couldn't without risking a fight with Kiren.

Her lip wobbles slightly. I've never seen her this vulnerable, but with the auctions and what happened to Kiren, it's a miracle she isn't crying.

I glance at Knox, but he's staring at her with a pained expression.

Jag runs his hand through his hair, eyes a little wild at the sight of her pain.

Fuck. Guess I'm the one who has to start this conversation.

“That night when you went to get the bike, Axel showed up with a few guys from Wrecker.”

She grinds her jaw, eyes burning with wariness.

“They wanted to warn us away from you.” I pause, wondering if I should tell her everything. I can't lie to her, not even by omission. “They beat us to hell, Kiki.” I gesture to my leg. “It's how I got this.”

I don't need to say what. She noticed the way I walk. Flinching a little, her gaze drops to my knee with worry. Her eyebrows pinch together. She doesn't believe me. I was hit in the hip with a bat and it had hurt so bad I didn't want to get back on my bike once they were done with us, but Knox forced me onto the Harley. Ensuring Kiki was safe from Axel kept me on the damn thing. It wasn't until we got back to the club when I realized something was seriously wrong. Surgery mostly fixed the issue, but if I work out too hard or do something that aggravates the area—like the fight we had with Wrecker MC only a few days ago— pain flares up and affects my gait.

Before she can protest, I continue. “They told us to leave you alone. Axel said something a little different to Knox.” I cut my gaze toward the Prez and nod.

Knox curls his fingers into fists. “After he kicked my ass, Axel grabbed me by the collar and told me if we didn't leave you alone, he'd force you to take his knot.”

A soft growl fills the room at that. “We didn't leave you by choice, Kiks,” Jag manages through gritted teeth. “We did it to protect you.”

She scoffs. “And you thought leaving me with the man who threatened to do that was a good idea? You didn't think to warn me?”

“Your dad was with you, Kiki. We knew he'd keep you safe,” I say. “What did you expect us to do? If we came to get

you, it would have started a war. He could have died. You would have hated us if it came to that.”

“I don’t—” She cuts off and takes a deep breath. “I don’t know what I expected.” She rubs a hand over her face, then her features crumple and tears fill her eyes.

Damn it.

I move toward her, but she shakes her head and pins me with an angry stare. “Don’t.”

That word stops me in my tracks. “Kiki,” I murmur.

She swipes at her cheeks and pinches her eyes shut. “It’s been a really long day and I want to sleep.”

“You’re not hungry?” I hedge. It’s been a long time since I last cooked for her.

“No.” She shakes her head. “I don’t want that.”

She doesn’t want me to take care of her is what she’s saying.

“You can have my bed,” Jag offers. “I’ll sleep on the couch.”

For a moment, I think she might protest, but the fight leaves her body. She nods and allows Jag to show her the way. Knox and I stare after them. A flutter of jealousy fills my chest, but I stomp it down. Jag is pack.

Kiki belongs with us.

We’ll treat her like a goddamn princess because that’s what she deserves. I wish I had more to offer her. I can only hope my heart, and Knox’s and Jag’s, are enough for her. She has them, she always has.

We lost too much time with her, but starting now, we let Kiki know that regardless of what the auction might symbolize, *she* owns us.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

KIKI

Jag's bed is soft and warm. He doesn't linger, instead leaving me and shutting the door behind him on his way out. I deflate and fall onto my back. His room is rich with the scent of grease from working on the bike, but underneath that are traces of memories. The smell is a reminder of the dangerous things we did together and how much fun we had doing them. I focus on those instead of the ache building in my chest. I kick off my shoes and lay my head on his pillow, breathing in his scent.

"Come on, Kiks," he said with a toothy grin. "Scared?"

"Screw you." I snatched the rock from his hand and turned toward the liquor store. Only a dingy yellow light lit the parking lot. It was nearly midnight on a Sunday, and the store had closed hours ago. "Why are we here again?"

"For the tequila," Crow quips.

"Because the manager thought it would be a good idea to date a fifteen-year-old." Jag scowls at the building.

Ew. "And how does stealing tequila make that better?"

Strong arms band around my waist as Jag pulls me against him. "Throw the rock and I'll show you."

"We'll get in trouble," I say like an idiot.

"Only if we get caught. We'd never risk that with you, Kiks."

And I believed them. The window shattered easily, and while Knox and Crow went to snatch some bottles, Jag and I went to the counter at the front. He extracted photos from his pocket and spread them out. Twelve of them. All showing the manager kissing a child.

Fucking pervert.

The guy is still rotting in prison.

I trusted them so much back then. Part of me wants to go back to that without asking any questions. Their explanation is plausible, but convenient. And Crow's leg? I swallow and bury myself beneath the blankets.

I wish Dad were here. Moisture pools, and I pinch my eyes shut, counting my breaths and fighting the tears. I lose and a few track down my cheek. I grind my teeth and curl my fingers into fists. Burying my head into Jag's pillow, I focus on his scent and use it to keep me calm.

My stomach pangs with hunger and my skin grows uncomfortably hot, but I don't kick the blanket off. I wrap it tighter around me and cling to it.

I can't keep fighting the grief. I know that, but I don't want to fall apart. *Be tough, Kiki*. Dad would sit and stew in his grief, letting it turn to anger rather than tears. I don't think I can do that. I don't know that I *want* to. A thick lump lodges in my throat and heat flares across my face. I swallow and bite my cheek to keep a sob from escaping as the tears are finally unleashed. The ache in my chest grows and takes over everything. I fight to breathe as reality roundhouse kicks me in the jaw.

How the hell am I supposed to live without the only person who ever cared about me? What's the fucking point?

That thought rips a sob from my throat, shredding my control with wicked sharp talons, leaving nothing but tears and pain behind.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

KNOX

She's only in Jag's room for five minutes before I want to shove inside of it and force her into my arms. Her anger I can take, but that bone deep keening? The goddamn fragility in her cries? I can't handle that. Pacing across the living room floor, I shoot furtive looks at the door, wishing like hell I had laser vision or something to let me know she's okay.

Crow is banging around in the kitchen, distracting himself in the only way he knows how. Kiki said she wasn't hungry. That won't stop him from making food for her. When she's ready, he'll have food waiting. Jag is sitting unnaturally still on the couch. His chest heaves, and he doesn't even try to hide what he's staring at.

"How long until we go in there?" Crow grumps from the kitchen.

Now.

I shake my head at that and run my hand over the scruff on my chin. "She's not ready for that." And that's the goddamn truth. If I thought she wanted us in there, we wouldn't be having this conversation. "Grief is personal," I finally say. "And she's still pissed at us."

"We shouldn't have left her." Jag picks up the butterfly knife on the coffee table and flips it open and closed. "We should have texted her back."

Gritting my teeth, I ignore the not so subtle accusation hidden in his words. *We shouldn't have listened to you.* There

was no good choice in that situation. Axel's not right in the head, and as much as I wanted Kiki, I couldn't risk something happening to her. I knew that as long as Kiren was there, she'd be safe.

"We all agreed," I begin with a growl, but Jag points the knife at me.

"That's your own guilt talking. I'm not blaming you, Knox. I only wish things weren't like this." He holds my stare, malice filling his gaze. "Axel's going to regret touching her."

"I've already planned his death." Crow brutally chops an onion.

One guess as to who he's imagining under his blade.

"We'll have to be smart about it." I run my hand over my jaw. "Wrecker can't be a part of the plan." While they did take part in the attack on us, that was on Axel's command. He's using his alpha influence over his people, and we can't punish them for that. I'm not dumb enough to think all those guys are innocent. Axel is the only one who hurt Kiki. Then again, if they stood by and let it happen... "Or we can have another plan for the rest of them. Only Axel dies."

Jag hums in agreement. "It's as good as declaring war."

I glance at him, a cruel smirk tugging at my lips. "It's only war if the soldiers fight." And my plan is to make sure that doesn't happen. An open act of violence against Wrecker won't go unnoticed, but the other MCs in the area aren't brave enough to go against us. At least, they won't be once they see what we've done.

No one likes war. A good Prez makes sure his crew is protected. The only way to keep Kiki safe is to deal with Axel.

As much as it pains me, I stay out of Jag's room. I know better than to force my presence on Kiki. It kills me a little on the inside each time she starts crying, but it's the silence that follows the bout of tears that worries me more.

What is she thinking?

While I didn't like Kiren on principle, by all accounts, he's a good guy. A criminal, for sure, but otherwise good. Nothing like Axel. My phone rings and cuts through the quiet, filling the living room. Jag glances up from the worn paperback book—some weird dragon story. He's been reading the same book for years, never able to get much further than a dozen or so pages before giving up and finding something better to do like working out or throwing his knife. I admire his tenacity though. He's never given up trying to get through the behemoth of a book.

Crow closes his sketchbook and tucks it back inside his backpack at his feet. He, on the other hand, has gone through several drawing pads. He can lose himself for hours if he has a pencil and paper.

A familiar name flashes across my screen. "Yeah?" I answer and put the call on speaker so the guys can hear. I turn it down a little so the conversation doesn't bother Kiki.

"We've got a problem." Stocky, a prospect, releases a hard breath. "It's Nova."

I sit a little straighter. "Nova Thornhill?"

Jag closes his book and Crow's eyes narrow.

"Yeah," Stocky says. "She's been working for Curtis."

"How long?"

He pauses. The only reason for that pause is if he knows he did something wrong. My grip tightens on the phone.

"You know I don't like repeating myself." I may not be like Axel, but I don't tolerate bullshit either. Stocky answers to me.

"A while, Prez. She's strung out on something." Air crackles over the line and I picture him sucking on a cigarette, using it to help carry him through the conversation.

"What was your job, Stockton?"

Stockton Moroni came to us at seventeen. A high school drop out with a penchant for stealing. He was thick headed and stubborn, but I saw potential. Crow and Jag did too. He must've reminded us of our younger selves.

"Monitor Curtis' club," Stocky mumbles. I never liked Curtis, but I never really had a reason. I put Stockton on him to keep tabs on what the fucker got up to. Apparently, I should have asked someone else to do it.

"And what exactly have you been doing every night?" Jag asks. Strands of his blond hair fall across his face. He needs a damn haircut.

"I've been watching. I never saw her come or go." There's a slight panic in his tone now.

"Did you go into the club?" Crow asks, giving me a look.

We never should have trusted him.

At the end of the day, Stocky was the only guy in our crew Curtis wouldn't recognize. We couldn't send a patched member. It had to be Stocky. Unsuspecting and young. Curtis wouldn't know why the kid was hanging around aside from thinking he was there to watch the women dance.

"I couldn't go in with my vest." Stocky huffs, like he's annoyed with us for being dimwitted.

"Goddammit, Stocky. Did it never occur to you to take the fucking vest off?" I growl.

"I can take it off?"

"Jesus fucking Christ," Jag mutters. "Do you sleep in the damn thing?"

Silence answers us. It's so dumb. Never in my years with the club have I heard of a guy not taking his vest off. Yeah, we have the whole spiel about the vest being a form of protection, but it's not like we're ordering our guys to live in them.

"I didn't know, man."

"Talk to me about Nova. Is she okay?"

“They’re taking her to the hospital. She couldn’t even stand on her own. There are cops everywhere, Prez. It’s some sort of bust. I heard some chatter about another omega and some drugs he’s been pushing.”

I pinch the bridge of my nose. Never send a prospect on an important job. That’s one of the pieces of wisdom the former Prez gave to me, and now I’m paying the price for not listening.

Nova is Kody’s younger sister. She’s an omega and right before Kody died, he made us promise to protect her. He’d been shot by some idiot at a bar and bled out before we could get him back to the doc. The only thing he ever asked of the club was that we take care of her. She was matched with a low pack a few years ago and it seemed like they’d be good to her.

We hadn’t heard from her for a while though, and I stupidly assumed she was too busy with her new guys to spare us any attention. Not to mention, the alphas wouldn’t take too kindly to another alpha checking up on their omega.

“Which hospital?” I finally ask.

“Uh—”

“Stocky, you’re starting to piss me off.” I grind my teeth to keep from going off on him for being an idiot. “Find her and report back.” I hang up and toss the phone aside. My eyes cut to Jag’s door. Kiki has been quiet. Maybe she’s asleep. I want to tell her what we’re going to do, but I don’t want to wake her. Sleeping is better than crying.

“We’re going after her.”

I scowl at Jag. “Of course we are. You think I’d leave her there to rot.”

He shakes his head. “No. Who’s going to stay with Kiki?”

“Crow can, he’ll be here to make her food or whatever she wants. He’s better with that shit than you are.”

He’s not wrong.

“That means you’re with me. Can you go get Punchy and Hammer?” I ask.

Two aptly named assholes who don't mind a good fight. I don't exactly want to catch heat, but there's no way Nova is staying in that hospital. I don't trust Camila or her pack, wherever they are.

We take the Tahoe to the hospital. Something tells me Nova won't be able to stay on the back of a motorcycle. We left our vests behind and we're wearing face masks, about the best cover we have given the short notice. The vests would be a dead giveaway as to who we are, but face masks are actually better at deceiving facial recognition software. I head to the main nurses station. Jag steps beside me while Punchy and Hammer stand at our backs. I don't have to look to know they're doing their jobs. Unlike the prospect, they know what needs to be done.

"We're here to see Nova Thornhill."

The woman with thick rimmed black glasses peers up at me, her glossed lips puckering slightly. "You're her pack?"

"Yeah," I lie. She can think we're assholes so long as it gets us in to see her.

There's a stretch of silence where the nurse, Tammy based on her name tag, clearly debates on letting us in to see her. She flicks her gaze to Jag and he winks at her. That look right there has gotten him out of a lot of trouble, and it seems Nurse Tammy isn't immune to his charm. Some of that judgment fades a little and she relents.

"She's in room 118." Tammy points toward the wall. A sign shows which direction to head to get there. "Don't cause any problems." There's a hint of *or else* in her words. Sometimes I forget how badass nurses are. They put up with more shit than they deserve day in and day out.

"We'll behave," I say even though what we're about to do is going to break all sorts of protocols. No sense in tipping her off to that though. I rap my knuckles on the desk and we head toward the right, cutting around another corner before we

reach room 118. The door is mostly closed and the monitor inside is steadily beeping. I glance at the guys. Maybe she should stay here. If she needs continuous monitoring right now, we could be doing more harm than good.

“It’s what Kody would have wanted,” Jag reminds me.

He looked out for Kiki when we couldn’t, and we promised to keep an eye on his little sister. I hate that we didn’t know something was wrong, but we’re here to help her now though, here to keep her away from Camila.

I push the door all the way open. The sight of her laid up on the bed nearly knocks me on my ass. This is the kid who used to shoot spitballs at me and the guys when she’d come to visit Kody. She’s older now, twenty-three if I’m remembering right, four years younger than what Kody would have been. She’s malnourished, skin paler than it should be, and her hair—dyed darker than it was the last time I saw her—looks like it hasn’t been washed for days.

It isn’t until the guy stands that I realize someone is in the room. Not just anyone though, a cop. I stiffen and narrow my eyes right as he does the same. His close cropped brown hair and perfectly starched uniform scream Boy Scout. What the hell is he doing here? Is he one of her pack?

“You’re not her pack,” he says after taking each of us in. His attention drops to our waists. The shirts cover the guns, but he knows they’re there. Any cop worth their badge would recognize the bulkiness.

“Are you?” I ask.

“No. I’m waiting for her pack.”

I glance back to Nova. She looks fragile. Kody would hate it. “Why?”

“Because they’re facing jail time for trafficking their omega.”

Humming, I step into the room followed closely by Jag. The cop’s shoulders bunch together.

“Isn’t that a bit... hypocritical?” I ask.

Punchy and Hammer post up outside the room.

“How do you mean?” The guy doesn’t take his eyes off of us.

“Charging their pack for trafficking when the Omega Council does the same thing. Is it because you all want to keep the money for yourselves?”

Jag cracks his knuckles, a habit that the cop zeroes in on.

“Killing me won’t get to them.”

I bark out a laugh. “Relax, man. What’s your name?”

“Hayden,” he says stiffly.

“I’m Knox, but I take it you already knew that?”

“Hell Hounds isn’t exactly on the right side of the law,” he says with a bored look.

“Who’s to say what’s right and wrong when the law was corrupt to begin with?” Jag moves to the wall and leans against it, crossing his arms over his chest and managing to look tough even with the stupid mask he’s wearing.

“The Omega Council is the legislative body over omegas. I can’t change what they do.” Hayden grinds his jaw. “It doesn’t matter that I agree with you.”

Hm. Maybe we can work this angle.

“She doesn’t belong with the pack who sold her.” I step toward the bed and pick up her chart. Most of what’s written I don’t understand. Vital signs are scribbled down, but I’m not smart enough to be a nurse. The parts about heroin and detox are all I need to know for now.

“I agree with that.”

“Good. Then you’ll stand down and let us do what needs to be done.” I step around the bed and ease the tube of oxygen out of her nose and up over her head.

“What are you doing?” Hayden goes to take a step, as if to stop me, but Jag advances, blocking him from reaching me.

“Step back.”

“Get out of my way.” Tension chases Hayden’s words, filling the room with static electricity. One wrong move and this all goes to shit.

Sighing, I scrub my hand over my face. “Listen, man. You said her old pack doesn’t deserve her. Leaving her here will only seal her fate. Camila,” I spit the vile woman’s name, “will send her to the auctions. Have you ever been to one of those?”

He doesn’t answer, but some type of understanding flashes across his face.

“She’ll end up in the same situation or worse. All I’m asking is for you to take a coffee break. By the time you come back, we’ll be gone.”

“The law—”

“Fuck your law,” I growl. “She’s my friend’s little sister, man. Go get a coffee. Let me help her.”

His eyebrows pinch together and he side-eyes Jag. We wanted to do this as clean as possible, but we’re not leaving Kody’s little sister behind. The guy’s shoulders drop, a sure sign of defeat, and he lowers his head with a stiff nod.

“You have ten minutes.” He pushes past Jag.

“I only need five,” I call after him. Once he’s clear of the room, I nod at the guys and they help me disconnect Nova from all the machines. I put a call in to the doctor the MC has on payroll. It takes fifteen minutes to get from here to the club. That better be enough. I scoop my arms under her body and pick her up.

We head from the room and make it all the way to that front nurses’ station before anyone bothers to pay attention to us.

“Hey!” Tammy shouts.

“Keep walking,” I mutter.

“You said you wouldn’t cause any trouble! Security!” she screeches, but we’re already passing through the door. By the time the rent-a-cops make it to the parking lot, we’re already

speeding away with Nova lying across the third row seat. Jag and I hold her in place while Punchy tears down the road.

“Garage this SUV for a while and change the plates, Punchy.”

“Sure thing, Prez.”

The current plates are fake, but I don't want to take any chances. The face masks might have saved us from the cameras, but the cop knew exactly who we were. He can't say anything without admitting some sort of guilt. That has to be enough to keep us in the clear.

“How do you think Kiki is doing?” Jag whispers.

“As well as she can be,” I murmur.

“I hope she's not mad at us for leaving,” he says.

“Crow's there with her.”

Punchy snickers.

Lifting an eyebrow, I kick my foot at the back of his seat. “You have something to say, Punch?”

He glances at me in the rearview. “You guys are worried about her being mad at you for leaving, but I think you might want to worry a bit more about that omega's scent being all over you.” He jerks his chin toward the back.

“She'll understand.” I can say that as much as I want, but I'm suddenly worried Kiki will be mad. Omegas can be territorial, sometimes more so than alphas. She's been pretty cold to us so far. Maybe she won't even care. Or maybe she'll get pissed and go for Nova. A twisted smile tugs at my lips. I don't want to see Nova hurt, but at least if Kiki does get mad, we'll know she still cares.

I'll take her wrath over nothing any day of the week.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

KIKI

I wake up to a door slamming. The bedside table reads a bit past one in the morning, about the time I usually make my way to bed. I managed to cry myself to sleep and now I'm too wired to rest. Being no stranger to being up late at night, I release a soft breath and roll out of bed. My hair is a little messy, but I don't care. Just like I can't bring myself to be bothered by the way my teeth feel against my lips.

Self-care things feel a little pointless tonight.

Past experience tells me I should force myself to brush my hair and teeth, but the guys are banging around in the kitchen and I think I smell bacon. My stomach grumbles and a wave of irrational frustration surges through me. Why the fuck are they being so loud? Why are they cooking?

A spike of cinnamon perfumes the air. *Chill out, Kiki. You're acting unhinged.* Growling softly under my breath, I clench my fists and force the anger down. I leave Jag's room and quietly make my way to the kitchen. I notice three things all at once. One: There's a woman passed out on the couch. Two: Her scent is everywhere. Three: It's omega.

"Oh, hey, Kiks." Jag smiles at me from where he stands near the fridge, blue eyes lit with mischief.

Hey, Kiks? *Hey. Kiks.* That's all he has to say? They brought a fucking omega back to their apartment, knowing full well I'd be here. That anger I had managed to bottle up explodes like a rocket, and a haze of red clouds my vision. My

feet try to move in her direction, the omega hormones telling my body the easiest way to deal with this situation is to eliminate the threat.

No, no. She's not the problem.

I spin on my heel and head directly to Jag. His gaze is curious, but as I pull my arm back, palm splayed open and ready to smack that dumbass smile off his face, there's a flash of concern. Before my hand can hit its mark, he catches me by the wrist and tugs me closer. I shove against his chest but he captures that arm too and spins me around, pinning my front to the cool stainless steel.

"Get the fuck off of me," I snarl, bucking against his hold.

"Why are you mad?" he asks, mouth brushing over the shell of my ear.

I slam my head back and he barely dodges the hit. "Fuck you."

"Why are you mad, Kiks?" he asks again, gripping both wrists with one hand and pressing his other to the back of my head to keep me from head butting him. He presses his front against my back. A ripple of desire rushes over me. My body likes this. Can't say the same for my brain.

Clamping my mouth shut, I ignore his question and try to twist out of his hold. That doesn't work, so I bring my foot up and stomp on his instep. He hisses in pain and loosens his grip ever so slightly. I take advantage of the space and shove my arms apart, breaking free from his grasp and slam my fist back into his junk.

"Shit," he wheezes as he falls to the floor.

I move away from the fridge and glare at the other two alphas in the room. Knox is full on beaming at me. Crow is watching me with a silent, unreadable expression. The omega on the couch moans—straight up moans—only she sounds pained. I narrow my eyes at the alphas.

"There she is," Knox whispers.

The fire alarm suddenly blares and Crow jolts, lunging for the stove top where a pan of bacon is sizzling. He turns on the air vent and flips the bacon. I edge toward the couch, lip curling as that god awful lilac scent invades my nostrils. Under that is a trace of antiseptic. She better not be sick.

“Kiki.” Crow’s deep voice rumbles over my skin.

The omega whimpers.

“Don’t talk.” I glare at the back of the couch again. “Did you hurt her?”

No one answers me. I turn and level all three of them with an annoyed look. Knox holds up his hands and mimes zipping his lips. Crow’s mouth is clamped shut. Jag is still recovering from the junk punch. Maybe the other two should join him since they think they’re so funny.

“No! Stop!” The omega’s scream rips through the air, and I flinch at the violence in her cry.

“What the hell did you do to her?” I step closer to the couch. She’s a mess. Covered in fading bruises. Her hair is filthy. She’s wearing... “Why is she wearing a hospital gown?”

“She was at the hospital.” This from Knox.

It’s almost like they’re trying to piss me off.

“No shit, dickbag. Why?”

“Dickbag?” he asks with a chuckle, smoothing his palm over his short beard. “That’s a new one.” I step toward him, and he flinches, probably scared of getting hit in the nuts. “She’s high.”

“I’m not stupid, Knox. You don’t go to the hospital because you’re high.”

“She’s Kody Thornhill’s little sister.” Jag’s voice is slightly pained. “She wound up in a bad situation and we got her out of it. She’s only here because the doctor got a flat tire. Once he gets here, she’s gone.”

Kody. That name is familiar, but I can't place where I've heard it before. My perfume is rank with bitterness. There's no hiding how I'm feeling. I scowl at the three men responsible for my foul mood then move around the couch. The woman is covered in sweat and there's a slight tremble to her body. She's not in good shape. The hospital identification band is still secured to her wrist. The guys move to stand at the back of the couch, wisely giving me a wide berth.

I lift my gaze to meet Knox's. "She should be in the hospital."

"No."

"She's not safe there," Crow adds. "Her pack sold her to a shit bag who owned a strip club. He drugged her."

"How do you know that?" I furrow my brow. Is she someone they keep tabs on? That thought makes me a little too close to jealous, and I think I've shown my ass enough for one morning, thank you very much.

"She wasn't using the last time we saw her."

"And? When was that?"

Crow studies my face. "A few years ago."

Somehow that confession soothes the last of my anger. I still don't like that her scent is all over them. I still don't like that she's here, but if they just got her out of the hospital... nothing happened between them tonight. I sniff a little, pleased to find no traces of cum lingering. It doesn't smell like sex either.

I shouldn't care if they have sex. They—I stop before I complete the thought. They didn't leave me. At least, not like I thought they had. According to them, Axel forced their hands, making them promise to stay away from me. Do I trust that story? I absolutely trust that Axel would have threatened some vile acts like they said.

"She's not a threat," Knox says. "She's someone we promised to keep safe. "

“You did a shit job of that. Why am I not surprised?” The words are out of my mouth before I can stop them. Bitter much?

“I know.” Knox clenches his jaw, rich brown eyes filling with frustration.

“I’m sorry,” I sigh and step away from the omega. “I’m pissed. Her scent is everywhere. I’m hungry. You guys are assholes, and I’m not sure if I forgive you yet, but I shouldn’t have said that.” I don’t bring up my dad. I’m not sure I can say the words out loud without falling apart, and I’m not going to do that in front of these guys.

“Bacon,” Crow mutters, rushing back to the kitchen. He leans slightly to the left. That injury must’ve been bad to still be bothering him so much all these years later.

“The doc—” Jag begins but someone knocks on their door. “Is here, I guess.” He goes to talk to the guy.

“Sorry, I’m late. I didn’t expect a flat tire. Bring her to the conference room.” The guy doesn’t come into the apartment, and for that, I’m thankful. One less witness to my state of disarray and irrational emotions.

“What’s going on?” The omega struggles to sit up, blinking awake. She startles when she sees me, eyes going wide.

I narrow my gaze.

“Who are you?” she asks, glancing around.

“This is Kiki,” Knox tells her.

I growl, one-thousand percent unreasonably angry with him for so much as speaking to her. Sharp and spicy cinnamon perfume cloys in the air between us. Sensing my rage, she shrinks into the cushions.

“Please, no.” The words are a soft whimper and pitiful enough the anger rushes from my body. She’s scared. Her entire body is trembling now and she swivels her head. “I’ll go. I’m sorry, please. Just let me go.” She starts to stand but her legs fall out from under her.

“Nova.” Knox advances and that jealousy spikes again. I know he should help her, but try telling my hormones that.

“We’ll be right there.” Jag shuts the door and returns to Knox’s side. “The doctor is waiting for you, Nova. He’s going to help.”

“No,” she whines, shaking her head. “Please, let me go.”

The guys trade grimaces, but firm resolve settles across their faces.

“The doctor will take care of you.” Knox hoists her up and she tries to push out of his hold, but she’s so weak she can’t even hold herself up. “You’re safe,” Knox murmurs in a soft voice.

A growl rumbles in my chest. He shoots me a look that’s accusing and pleased all at the same time. I bite my cheek and force myself to look at Crow working in the kitchen, ignoring the way he cradles her. They’re being so gentle with her. My hands curl into fists, even though I should be happy about that. I should be proud of them for rescuing her.

They’re helping her and she’s obviously been in some sort of trouble.

And yet all I can seem to think about is ripping their heads off for even daring to touch another omega, and that is one-thousand-percent not a healthy—or reasonable—expectation considering they’re not fucking mine. They exit the room, and I stand there, chest heaving as I grapple for control of my emotions. Seconds tick by. Crow begins to hum, and I focus on the sound instead of my anger. I turn when he reaches the chorus.

“You know I hate that song,” I mumble.

“I was wondering if you still did. Come sit down. We were all starving and I made extra.” Crow drops a plate on top of the little kitchenette table. There isn’t enough room in this apartment for a formal dining room, but the clubhouse isn’t exactly a formal dinner type of place.

“I know you’re hungry,” he says during my hesitation.

On cue, my stomach makes a god awful sound. My digestive system has never been quiet, and it's always been embarrassing. Crow's lips twitch a little.

"Not a word." I head to the table and sit down. I'm not *that* stubborn.

He heads back to the stove to prepare the other plates. By the time Knox and Jag get back, their plates are on the table and Crow is sitting across from me. I'm halfway through my toast and eggs. The semi-burned bacon is begging for attention but I'm saving the best for last. I've had midnight breakfast with them a few dozen times, usually after a night of debauchery.

I missed Crow's cooking. There's something special about it.

Lifting my gaze from the food, I wrinkle my nose. Her scent is all over them, and I hate it. The two of them stop before they reach the table and take in my displeasure.

"We'll go shower." Knox pulls Jag down the hall.

"Do you like the food?" Crow asks once they're gone.

"It's good." It's amazing, but I'm not quite ready to compliment him yet. "So you still cook."

Crow nods. "Never stopped. No one likes my cookies as much as you, though."

What am I supposed to say to that? I'm at a loss, so I focus on eating. Silence never bothered Crow like it does Jag, so he simply sits next to me, keeping me company.

"I'm so hungry," Jag says a few minutes later, bursting into the kitchen with dripping wet hair. Knox follows after him, his shorter hair not quite as wet. The two of them don't smell like her anymore, but there's traces of her scent lingering in the air that I'm pointedly ignoring.

"What did the doctor say?" Crow asks once the guys sit at the table.

I knew it was small, but I hadn't realized exactly how tiny the damn table was until now. They form a semi-circle around

me, and like an idiot, I picked the spot near the corner so I'm somewhat caged in. Jag's leg brushes against mine and butterflies erupt in my stomach.

"Sorry," he says before taking a drink of water. It's a sin to have coffee with midnight breakfast.

"She'll be fine. She needs to come down and detox. He's going to do a full examination once she's in the right state of mind." Knox takes a bite of the bacon and hums. "I love it extra crispy."

So do I. I finish my toast and grab the first piece of bacon.

"Maybe she can stay with Rita."

I don't know who that is and a sudden spike of jealousy floods through me. There's so much I don't know about them now... are there other women? Once again, my scent blooms through the room, betraying me and letting them know I'm annoyed.

One of them purrs, a deep, husky rumbling that makes my core clench. I lift my gaze from my plate to see all three of them staring at me, eyes lit with intrigue.

"Don't read into it." I take an aggressive bite of my bacon.

Jag's leg brushes mine again. "Rita's mate is in the club."

And as simple as that, the possessiveness subsides and I breathe a little easier. We eat for a bit in silence; my little display hangs over me like a dark storm cloud. I eat my bacon but don't enjoy it as much as I should.

What the hell is wrong with me? I'm acting like a damn fool.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

JAG

Her jealousy is a welcome bitterness. I'm a bastard for savoring the taste of it and relishing the way her cheeks flame with embarrassment when she realizes the three of us very much like her little possessive display. It means something, and I cling to the hope it inspires. She's sitting at our table fuming at the mere mention of another. It would be fucked up to continue provoking her, but I love knowing she would be pissed if we had someone else. We don't. We never have.

She hasn't moved her leg from mine again. I had expected her to jerk away like she did the first time. A couple times I swear she pushes her thigh into my knee, but the pressure is gone before I can be sure. My instincts are telling me to toss her over my shoulder and throw her on the bed.

An image of Kiki laid out on the bed with my face between her thighs has my dick hardening. Her perfume has always been like crack to me, but something tells me as soon as I make her come, that scent is going to fuck my life up. I won't be able to live without it. Another reason to hold myself back while Kiki realizes what she wants.

Our collision is inevitable. I've always known it. Knox has sworn she was our omega since we were teenagers. Crow sketches pictures of Kiki in his little drawing pad. He'd be pissed if he realized I know what he spends so much time drawing. We built a damn nest for her even though we weren't sure she'd ever actually be ours. *Consumes*. That's what Kiki does to us. She consumes our minds and hearts.

“Who was Kody again?” she finally asks.

“You met him at a party once; he saved you from that brawl.” Knox stands and grabs her empty plate. He carries both over to the sink before returning for mine and Crow’s. Kiki arches an eyebrow as he goes to wash them, her eyes naturally flitting to mine to ask *what’s that about?*

“Crow cooks. Knox cleans.”

“And what do you do?”

“Annoys the shit out of us,” Crow mutters.

“Fuck you.” I flip him off. “I clean the bathrooms.”

“No maids?”

“No one is allowed in our apartment aside from us.” I pause. “Nova was an exception.”

“That’s why the doctor didn’t come in.” She gives the space a skeptical once over. “You’ve never brought chicks here?”

“No,” Knox says sharply.

“Yeah right.” She shakes her head. “I know how MC life works.”

Crow rests his arms on the table and leans forward, strands of his black hair falling across his face. “They’re not allowed here. Ever.”

Kiki stares at him, blue eyes wary. “And how often do you deny them entry?”

“Are you asking how often we’ve fucked other women, Kiks?”

“No,” she snaps. Her attention shifts to the living room. “You still have the same PlayStation?”

One time when Kiren was out of town we’d brought it over to her house and stayed up all night playing racing games. Kiki had to use two whole bottles of super powered deodorizer to get our scents out of her house before her dad got home. That was the only time we went there with her. Most of our

time spent together was on the road, at parties, or doing stupid shit that could get us arrested.

“You’re avoiding the question.” I bump my knee against her thigh.

She swings her head in my direction, a line forming between her eyebrows. “So are you.”

“Never,” I admit. A few groupies have tried to come on to us, asking the three of us to take them at the same time, but none of us were interested. They weren’t Kiki. We couldn’t stomach trying to fuck someone else, so we lost ourselves in the thick of the Hell Hounds.

There it is again. A little bit of relief. A little bit of forgiveness. Her eyes lose some of their frustration and she swallows, throat bobbing. What I wouldn’t give to feel her swallow my cock.

Unexpectedly, or probably entirely expectedly given the nature of my thoughts, my scent explodes around us. Years, I’ve been waiting for her for years. Kiki focuses on the TV again but she breathes me in with a sharp inhale, and there’s no missing that damn flush crawling up her neck. Fuck, she’s going to give me a raging case of blue balls.

“I want to play,” she whispers.

“All you had to do was ask.” I reach for her, but she moves away, sliding out of her seat and pointing to the gaming console.

“The racing game, idiot.”

“You know I love it when you insult me.” I smirk at her, standing and stepping close enough to breathe her in. She rushes to the living room. “So eager to play.” My dick is straining against my pants now, begging for her to pay attention to it.

“Screw you, Jag.”

“I wish you would.” The words are out of my mouth before I can stop them, and she whirls around, planting her hands on her hips and scowling at me. Her scent fills the room,

sweet and needy. Almost too tempting to resist. God, has her perfume always been this strong?

“Stop doing that,” she finally says, waving her hand in my general direction.

I stop far too close to her. She doesn't budge though, and her tits brush against my chest as she sucks in a sharp breath. “Doing what, Kiks?”

“You know what.”

“Leave her alone.” Crow elbows between us and plants his ass where I had planned to sit.

Kiki recovers from our little standoff and safely tucks herself into the corner of the couch. I take the other corner, glaring at Crow who stretches out in the middle seat like a king. The tap in the kitchen turns off and Knox joins us, grabbing the remotes we all managed to forget and handing one to Kiki. He takes the other and turns on the TV.

“Try not to wreck your car,” he tells her.

“Try not to be a dick.”

He chuckles. “It's good to have you back, Wrecker.”

“Don't call me that,” she says while the game loads. “I'm not part of that MC anymore.”

“What should I call you then?” He stares at the screen while he waits for her answer, pretending not to be interested.

Kiki doesn't answer. They load the two player game, picking out cars and selecting names. Kiki picks Angel and all three of us burst out laughing.

“It's not that funny,” she growls.

Knox gives her a wicked grin. “You're no angel, baby. But we'll be your devils if you let us.”

At first she doesn't respond. Her gaze travels around the room, heavy like the tension making itself at home in the air between us. The longer she goes without saying anything, the more the hope sprouting within me wilts.

Her features harden, something within her deciding we're not worthy. "Shut up and race."

Knox and Crow are on their third round of a race. Kiki and I lost, and they've been battling for the win. I glance over at her, watching her eyelids droop. She must be exhausted. Her head drops forward and she startles awake. I quickly avert my gaze, pretending I wasn't paying attention. I wait a few minutes and look back over. She's passed out.

"Fuck you," Crow whispers as Knox is crowned winner.

"This is my game." Knox sets the controller down and glances at her. "We should put her in a bed. Her neck will be sore in the morning if she stays on the couch."

"I'll do it." I stand and scoop her up before either of them can protest. Neither of them are brave enough to fight me over it either. Good. Kiki mumbles into my shoulder but doesn't try to push me away. For all the hardness of her personality, she's soft in my arms. I cradle her a little closer and use my foot to push my door open.

"What are you doing?" she murmurs, keeping her eyes closed.

"Putting you to bed." I gaze down at her. "I thought maybe I'd snuggle with you."

She shakes her head.

Disappointment floods me but I nod in understanding. She's not ready. That's okay. I've waited years for her, what's another few days? Slowly, I lower her to the bed. She hums in approval and pulls the blankets around her. My cock jerks when she burrows into my comforter and takes a deep breath.

"Smells like memories," she mumbles, still half asleep.

"I'm sorry we left you." I cover her toes with the blanket and run my hand over her leg. Soft snores fill the room, and I bite back a smile. Kiki Malone snores.

And it doesn't bother me one bit.

I watch her sleep for a few seconds then force myself to leave the room. She's safe now. She's exactly where she should be. Home.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

KIKI

Soft sunlight filters through the small gap in Jag's black out curtains, casting a buttery warmth about the room. Last night I hadn't taken time to appreciate the ambiance, but this morning, the dark grayish blue colored walls and white trim are comforting. Peaceful despite the intensity of the darker color and the turbulent emotions within me.

What happened early this morning was confusing. Things had been... strange. One minute I was rabid with anger because that omega was on the couch, the next I felt bad for her. Then when they went to carry her out of the room, I went back to that same untamable anger. Midnight breakfast seemed to help most of my sour mood. Once we started playing the game, I forgot about all the strange tension between us. It almost felt normal.

Almost, but not quiet. I pretended not to notice when their gazes lingered on me, pretended not to care when Crow shifted on the couch and our thighs pressed together. I also pointedly ignored the raging hard on Jag was sporting. He liked my jealousy. I think they all did. My core pulses, a deep ache pulling a groan from my throat. I cannot be sweating over these guys. No way.

Even if they are charming as hell, I have to be strong. They're so... so... hot? Funny? Dare I say, horny? My lips kick up. For a moment, I had enjoyed their reaction to my crazed state. Reality wasn't kind enough to let me forget everything that had happened between us. If the bitch had only

given me a few more minutes, the morning would have played out a little different.

We'll be your devils if you let us.

The temptation was strong. It would be easy to give in. Falling in with them would be as simple as picking up a bicycle and riding it. We were good together, weren't we?

They paid for you, Kiki.

There it is again. Reality. Brutally honest and right. They own me. Only it hadn't felt like that earlier. For a moment, I had felt like the one with the power. I had owned them all.

Rolling over, I heave out a breath. Day three without Dad. That's enough to obliterate any demented happiness I'd felt while hanging out with them. There are things to be done. Funerals to arrange.

Axel never mentioned anything about a body. They buried him before coming home. Of course they did. They couldn't risk someone finding the body and tracing it back to the club. Somewhere out there, Dad is rotting in some poorly dug grave.

He deserves better, but even if I figured out where they buried him, it wouldn't matter. Dad's soul—if he ever had one—is already gone. He does deserve a tribute of some sort though. He'd want that at the very least. I don't know if Wrecker MC has anything planned, and I don't really care. I'll have my own service. Something meaningful.

The idea gives me purpose, and with that, I climb out of bed and use the en suite bathroom, doing my best to tame the rats' nest of hair at the nape of my neck. At some point I'll need to get clothes and toiletries. That can all wait though.

The doors to the other bedrooms are closed when I open Jag's door. There are two extra doors in the hallway as well, and I pause, wondering if I should take the time to explore while they're all asleep, but rustling in the living room reminds me where Jag decided to sleep. Saving my explorations for another day, I pad down the hallway with a yawn.

The three of them are sitting on the couch, and I stumble to a stop when they all turn to look at me. Jag with his playful smirk and mid-length blond hair. Crow with his curiosity and that swath of dark hair across his forehead. And Knox with his controlled and precise focus. The beard—if it even qualifies with how short he keeps it—is the only thing that seems out of place, but even then it’s well kept with clean lines.

“What?” I ask.

Crow snaps his notebook closed, pencil smudged on the outer edge of his left hand. Drawing? Writing? I’m curious, but I don’t ask.

“We have something to discuss.” Knox gestures to the chair. “Will you come sit with us?”

Not come sit. Not sit down. *Will you come sit with us?* A question, not a demand. *No* is on the tip of my tongue. There’s already a strange itch crawling over my skin; impatience. I should have demanded to find my father as soon as the Hell Hounds had me on the back of their bikes. I didn’t, and now every second that passes without giving him a proper sendoff seems disrespectful.

“Okay,” I concede, taking the seat. A fat stack of cash sits on the coffee table. I stare at it before turning to the guys. “What’s this?”

“Yours.” Knox pushes it toward me.

“For?”

“It’s what... it’s what we paid for you. We’re giving you the same amount.”

I clench my fingers. “Why?” I grind out, though I suspect what they’re doing. Getting rid of me. So much for being my devils.

Crow drums his fingers on his pants. “Because we don’t want to own you.”

There it is. The dagger I’d been waiting for. That old wound in my chest—the one they gave me when they abandoned me—rips wide open. I’m so fucking naive. *They*

don't want me. I bite down on the inside of my cheek and pinch my eyes shut, shoving that vulnerability down.

“Why would you say it like that?” Jag growls.

I open my eyes in time to catch him smacking Crow on the back of the head.

“I thought she'd know what we meant.” Crow glares at him before looking at me. “We don't want to own you, Kiki. We want you to choose us.”

Now they're being cruel.

“Angel,” Knox purrs. “He's not lying.”

“You don't know me,” I snap. Heat washes over me. Anger like I've never felt before simmers close to the surface. They make me so mad.

He scoffs. “Like hell I don't.” He's so sure. So confident. So *fucking* alpha.

“You don't,” I snarl, grabbing the stack of cash and throwing it at him. The bills aren't banded together. They scatter in the air, fluttering and raining all around us. “If you knew me better, you would have known how much you hurt me! You would have known giving me cash is no better than buying me. You would have fucking known” —I stand and step toward them— “that *I* don't want you.”

The lie hurts me. It's ugly and wrong. My arms tremble, and I make fists at my side to hide it.

“Kiks,” Jag says softly. “You don't mean that.”

I don't respond, because he's right. I didn't mean it. I'm confused and angry and grieving. I'm lashing out, but at the same time, how dare they think it would be this easy.

“I know we're nowhere near earning your forgiveness,” Knox cuts in quickly, *knowing* me all too well. “But this is a start.” He slides off the couch and drops to his knees in front of me, placing his hands on the back of my thighs and gazing up at me.

“What are you doing?” I whisper.

“Begging, Angel.” He tightens his grip. “We messed up. We hurt you. I don’t know that anything would have changed us leaving after what happened, but you deserved an explanation.” He rests his chin on my leg, somehow commanding me more in this position than if he were looming over me. He licks his lips. “Please.”

“Please what?” My eyes bounce between his. “What are you asking me, Knox?”

His eyes flutter closed when I say his name. “For a chance.”

“And if it doesn’t work? You’re going to let me go?”

“No,” he growls. His reddish-brown eyes glow with something close to madness. “You’re *ours*.”

“Then what’s the point of all of this?” I reach down and grab his chin, shaking him a little. He purrs, and I grip his chin tighter. “I’m. Not. Yours.”

His eyes flash with challenge and my core clenches with need. He’s so close to my cunt he immediately scents the arousal stirring within me. The fingers pressing into the backs of my legs inch higher.

“You’ve always been ours, Angel.” He presses his cheek into my palm, burrowing into my hold.

Those words make my heart sing.

“You know, I would have believed that then.” I drop his chin and step out of his hold.

“What do we need to do?” Crow meets my gaze.

“I don’t know,” I confess. “I know why you did it now, but that doesn’t change the way it made me feel. The explanation doesn’t magically fix years of pain. I’m not even sure I can trust you guys.”

You can, my heart whispers. *They’ve always been your pack.*

“We’ll do whatever you want.” Knox is still kneeling, gazing up at me with his hands resting on his thighs. Him

down there on the floor, begging for forgiveness, gives me the strength I need to ask the next questions without falling headlong into my grief.

“Will you help me get some things from my dad’s house?”

“Of course,” Knox says. “We can go now.”

I don’t really know what I expected, but the three of them jump into action. Knox gathers the money all around him, carefully placing it back on the table. He casts his gaze in my direction. *That money is yours.* Crow snatches their vests off a little coat rack hanging on the wall next to the front door. Jag appears in front of me with a small mug of coffee.

“It’s warm-ish, but I figure you might want some.”

He’s not wrong. I guzzle it, noting the subtle burst of cinnamon. One day I’ll have it fresh and piping hot. For now, I hand the coffee cup back to him.

“Good?”

I nod.

“It reminded me of you. When you’re angry, you smell like cinnamon.”

“Oh.” I sound so put together.

Lightly bumping his fist against my chin—a gesture that makes my chest ache—he grins and turns to put the mug in the sink. It takes them all of three minutes to get organized. I slip into my shoes and follow them through the club house. Last night I pretended not to care about the other members of the MC. Today though, with everyone sober, the discontent slithering through the room raises my hackles. Not everyone is hostile. I spot a few friendly faces. A few leering ones too but Knox sends them a warning glare, and they quickly turn their attention to the half-naked women making coffee behind the bar.

I’m no stranger to seeing random ass hanging out, but a little growl slips past my lips. A hand rests at the small of my back, and Crow crowds my space, blocking those females from my line of sight.

“Groupies,” he murmurs. His hand slides around my waist and pulls me close. The shift in position fills my nostrils with whiskey and amber, and I breathe it in.

Who the women are doesn't make me feel better. But maybe I don't need to worry. Jag said they hadn't been with anyone.

“Hey, guys,” a soft, high pitched voice calls.

Another rumble works its way through my chest and Crow digs his fingers into my skin. It's cute he thinks that would stop me.

“Ignore her. She's screwing Mountain.” Crow presses in closer.

The tension between my shoulder blades loosens as soon as we're out in the fresh air. I need to get a handle on my instincts. They've never been this out of control. The only thing that makes sense is that I've finally reached my mental capacity for bullshit. That or my heat is coming.

I can't think about what that means.

“Where's Nova?” The other omega had nearly made me lose control. Granted, I did junk punch Jag, but I was half ready to set fire to their place as payback so one might say I had perfect control over my emotions seeing as I didn't do that.

“Resting at Rita's.”

I don't react to her name as violently as the first time I heard it, but a sudden urge to mark my territory rushes through me. I brush my wrist over Crow's hand and play it off like I was trying to fix my top. His fingers pulse against my side and I suck in a breath, thinking he caught me.

“Who do you want to ride with?” His hand leaves my side as he asks the question.

Jag and Knox are already sitting on their bikes. Both of them study me a little too closely. I should demand my own bike, but the morning is going to be heavy and I shouldn't be riding with my brain this twisted up. It's dangerous. Does it

matter who I pick? Will I hurt someone's feelings by choosing one over the other? I've already marked Crow with my scent, and I've already ridden with Jag. I step toward Knox and his lips kick up.

"I knew you'd come for me, Angel."

The innuendo isn't lost on me. A shiver races down my spine as I make my way to him, my body suddenly flushed with need. He catches the helmet Jag tosses at him—*my* helmet they kept for three years—and holds it out for me. His eyebrows lift a little when I hesitate. He thinks I'll chicken out. I snatch the helmet, and he presses his lips together and looks away.

He doesn't tease me like he could as I settle in behind him. No jokes about taking me for a ride. I'm relieved he doesn't. There's only so many emotional outbursts I can handle in such a short amount of time. I'm not proud of the way I've been behaving. From here on out, I'll do better. I'll be stronger than my omega instincts.

But if my heat is really on the way, I don't know how much I'll be able to resist the inherent desire to be claimed. According to everything I've learned, there's no rationalizing when the heat fever sets in. There will be no hiding how I really feel; and I fear soon enough they'll find out exactly what I need.

The bikes rumble to life, and I slip my arms around Knox, rubbing my wrists over his shirt as I do it. He leads the others onto the road, and when he hits a speed fast enough to justify me pressing every inch of my body against his, I do just that. He doesn't react. Maybe he does know me as well as he says he does. If he responded to my touches in some way, I'd instantly pull back. But here on the ride, he gives me the illusion of being oblivious, and I take full advantage. I might be pissed at them, but there's no avoiding the truth.

My heat is on the way.

I want them.

I'll need them.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

KIKI

The guys wait outside for me, and for that, I'm thankful. It would be embarrassing for them to witness the way I pause at the base of the stairs, staring up at them and willing Dad to appear. Of course, he doesn't. The longer I'm in the house without him, the more unsteady I get. Shaking off the sadness, I take the world's quickest shower, not bothering with washing my hair, and brush my teeth. I get changed into a pair of shorts and a simple top and make quick work of filling two backpacks.

Ten minutes later I lock up the house with my bags in tow. One is filled with my clothes and a picture of my parents I wrapped in a shirt. I couldn't find my favorite beanie—another thing I carelessly misplaced, but I can always buy another one. The other bag has essential toiletries. A cigar, a bottle of whiskey, and a lighter are in the second backpack too. Dad's favorite straight cutter weighs down my pocket. Jag and Crow take the bags from me and I settle in behind Knox once more. He hands me the helmet and watches as I secure my hair before slipping it on.

"Ready?" he asks. My scent is all over him, but he's not complaining.

"Sort of. Can we go to Tiny Pier?" It's a forty minute ride from Dolin, but it was Dad's favorite fishing spot. It's lesser known and peaceful. Plus, Axel never knew about it. Dad would leave his phone at home and take me up there from time

to time, leaving the Wrecker world behind if only for a few hours.

Knox nods and pulls away from the house. I don't look back. There are other things I'd like to grab, but I'll wait to go back for that stuff when the time comes. The world still thinks my Dad is alive. His death won't be reported. The home is paid for. We owe a small chunk of property taxes and insurance each year, but for now there's enough money in the bank to cover the recurring expenses.

I lean into Knox's body, soaking up his scent and losing myself to the rumble of the bike and the world rushing by. It's a warm day, but there's only one person fishing when we arrive. He's set up on the other end of the pond and sitting on the bed of his truck. The guys park and nod at the man, who merely dips his head in acknowledgement before going back to enjoying the scenery.

The pond itself is more like a tiny lake. It's big enough to take out a small paddle boat, but most people set up somewhere along the edge and cast their lines. The pier—my favorite spot—is blessedly deserted. I grab the bag with the things I need and make my way over the worn planks. The pier bobs a little, but I'm not worried about it breaking. The Parks & Rec crew reinforced it about a year ago and even if it did break, the water isn't that deep.

I sit down and take off my shoes and socks, setting them aside before scooting to the edge and sticking my feet in. The dock jostles as the guys join me. I don't bother glancing back. One by one, they sit on either side of me. Crow on my right, Knox and Jag on my left. A little grin breaks across my face when Knox slips off his Doc Martens. He stuffs his socks inside the boots and tests the water.

“Scared?” I tease.

“You can never be too careful,” he says.

After rolling their pants, Jag and Crow plunge their feet in without hesitation. Some geese fly overhead and honk to one another while a soft breeze rolls over the pond. The water

ripples around my ankles, and I swing my feet back and forth, watching the way the liquid breaks around me.

“He loved to bring me here to fish.” I turn and unzip the backpack, extracting the cigar and lighter. I sense them watching me as I prep it. This is as close to a funeral as I can get. Dad wouldn’t want a traditional one anyway. Aside from me and the MC, fishing and smoking cigars were some of his favorite things.

“I can’t picture you with a worm in your hand.” Crow takes the cigar from me and holds his hand out for the lighter. I place Dad’s zippo in his hand with a warning look. “I’ll be careful.”

I believe him. Sighing, I grab the bottle of whiskey and unscrew the cap while the lighter flicks to life. I take a shot and swallow it without reacting. I swallow another before passing it to Knox. His fingers graze over mine, and my stomach flutters and warms in response to his touch, or maybe it’s the alcohol.

“I never used worms,” I finally say. “He laughed at me, but I only ever used corn.”

“Did it work?” Knox grimaces after his shot and hands Jag the bottle.

“Not really. I didn’t catch much, but I was more interested in spending time with him than getting fish.” I glance around. There’s a weeping willow to our left, a mature tree with long wispy branches that skim over the surface.

Crow nudges me. “I’ve never been fishing.”

“You’re not missing much.” I take the cigar and puff at it, letting the smoke coat my mouth. Dad’s favorite cigars smell like an old library and leather. Unappealing to some, but to me it’s like coming home. Releasing the smoke through my nose, I hold it out for Knox and take the bottle he’s handing to me. I give the alcohol to Crow.

“This is a catch and release pond.”

“What’s the point of fishing if you can’t keep them?” Jag asks.

I lift a shoulder. “It’s an experience. The city is so far away, all you can hear are the birds and insects.”

“And the bees.” Crow flinches away from one and swats his hand at it. “Fucker.”

Laughing, I shake my head and lean forward to dip my fingers into the water. “It’ll leave you alone once it realizes you’re not a flower.” I flick the water from my hands and dry them on my shorts.

“Do I look like a damn flower?” He hands me the bottle and I set it aside for now.

I’m not looking to get wasted. I only wanted to take the edge off.

“You are kind of pretty,” Knox says as he exhales.

“Get fucked.” Crow runs his hand through his long black strands. Knox isn’t wrong. Crow is handsome. His skin would make models jealous and that charming smile of his has always made my knees a little weak. His eyes lift to meet mine. “Do you have something to say?”

I bite my lip and glance away. “I never understood why he liked Axel,” I say, changing the subject.

“Did he actually like him?” Knox hands me the cigar.

“It seemed like it. There were a few times when I thought maybe he hated the guy as much as I do, but they were always together.” I wrap my lips around the cigar, careful not to wet the paper. Nothing is worse than a soggy cigar.

He would have told me if he didn’t like Axel, right?

“Kiren was the VP. He had to be around Axel.”

I shoot twin streams of smoke from my nose. “Maybe.”

“I remember this one story,” Jag says as he leans back, “when Kiren was really young, like nineteen. I guess he had broken into the Stop ’n Shop to get some beer, but he was already wasted and ended up falling asleep at the coolers.”

“He wasn’t too proud of that one.” I grin, trying to picture the wild and crazy Kiren.

“I bet not.” Knox chuckles, and we fall into a comfortable conversation, me telling stories from growing up with Dad, and them telling the rumors they heard within Hell Hounds. Dad made a name for himself, but no one hated him quite like they did Axel. That man is his own brand of vile, but I try not to think about him as I remember Dad.

“I’m going to miss you.” I stare across the water and the guys are smart enough to know I’m not talking to them. “Say hi to Mom for me.”

Silence stretches between us, somehow soothing and exactly what I need. We pass the cigar around until it’s gone. The man across the pond leaves, tossing a wave in our direction. Knox lifts his hand in response, and I watch the truck take off with my heart in my throat.

“Goodbye,” I whisper, imagining my dad taking off inside that vehicle. Knox wraps his arm around me and I sink into the hold, refusing to cry. I’ve done enough for now.

My skin begins to feel tight from all the sun. With a harsh exhale, I turn and pack up the bottle. The warmth from Knox’s body slowly seeps away and my lips pull down. We take our feet out and let them dry before putting our shoes back on. This morning was nice. They were nice. Then again, they have been ever since we left the auction house.

They haven’t been cruel. They haven’t demanded my heat. They haven’t tried to take what I wasn’t willing to give. They haven’t done any of the things that Axel did. But of course they wouldn’t. Despite how much my chest aches when I think about what happened all those years ago, deep down I know they would never cross those lines. I trust them. They’re safe, and perhaps a little dangerous for my heart.

Or maybe I need to believe what they’ve been trying to tell me. We’re all meant to be together. I’m theirs. The way I reacted this morning at the sight of other women around them is proof that in my head, they’re mine.

Give them hell, Kiki. I have given them a little bit of hell. Not as much as Dad would have wanted, but I’m tired of being hard. I’m tired of being so controlled. I’m tired of pretending I

don't care. It only makes me look stupid when my scent reeks of desire and want. If my heat is almost here, I don't want things to get worse between us. We need to settle the past here and now. I don't want to play games. I just want the truth.

"Do you guys mean it?" The three of them shift their attention to me. I clench my fingers into fists. "Am I really yours?"

Jag chuckles under his breath. "I think it's more accurate to say that we're yours, Kiks."

"How can you be sure?"

"We've been sure since the night you told us off at that party." Knox smiles a little. "We were all so young, but it's always been you."

"I still have dreams about you," Crow confesses. "It's the same one every time. I'm waiting for you to show up and I hear your footsteps. My heart pounds, and I wait for you to open the door, but you never do."

My throat constricts. "I want to trust you."

"You can," Knox says.

"I'm scared." If we're doing this, I have to be honest too. "All I wanted was you and when you guys never came back to explain... when you left... it fucked with my head. I thought maybe I imagined the tension between us. I thought I was a lovestruck little girl."

"We should have tried to get a message to you." Jag runs his hand through his hair and sighs. "I knew you were mad, but I didn't realize how much we hurt you. I'm sorry, Kiks."

"Me too," Crow and Knox say at the same time.

"We never meant to hurt you." Knox holds his hand out. "Let us make it up to you?"

My fingers twitch, desperate to agree. My mind is only a few seconds behind my body. I slip my hand in his, and he squeezes it.

“Trying to give me the money back was dumb.” I shake my head. “So stupid.”

He winces. “It was pretty dumb, but I didn’t know what else to do. I wanted to give you the freedom to choose, but with how things went down at the auction, I was worried no matter what we did you’d feel forced into it.”

“The auctions were messed up, but I’m glad you came for me.” I shudder thinking about where I might’ve ended up. “The money doesn’t mean anything to me. I’m letting you in because the truth is I’m tired of pretending not to care.”

“Good.” He releases my hand. “All we ever wanted was to take care of you.”

“There’s something else,” I begin, glancing at the water. “I think I’m going into heat. I thought maybe my body was out of whack from everything that’s happened, but I’m pretty sure it’ll be here soon.”

They don’t say anything, so I continue with a grimace.

“Right. So. I’ll need some help with that, but if we’re really doing this, and you’re not lying to me about your intentions, I want it all. No kids though. I’m on birth control. Everything else though? I want that. The claiming. Your knots. Ruttin. I want—”

“Fucking hell,” Jag says with a chuckle, adjusting himself. “You’re going to give me the worst case of blue balls.”

I grin a little. “Sorry, but we needed to talk about it. Heats can be unpredictable.”

“We’ll do whatever you want.” Knox holds my gaze. “You set the rules, and none of us wanted kids.”

That’s a relief. “Okay, but is everything else what you want? The claiming is—”

“Everything we’ve ever wanted,” Crow interrupts me. “We want it.” Jag and Knox nod in confirmation.

I blow out a breath. “Okay. Good.” Some of the heaviness leaves my body, their willingness to go all in for the heat means a lot to me. I’ll officially be theirs once they claim me.

The seventeen-year-old inside of me is squealing with delight. I bite my cheek to hold in a goofy grin and finish zipping the backpack. Crow hands me the lighter. I tuck it into the front pocket of the bag, keeping the cutter in my short's pocket. I like having Dad's things with me.

"We need food." Crow stands and offers me his hand. "Ride with me?"

I turn to check with Knox, but he's already heading toward his bike. I bite my cheek, hating that I'm frustrated he didn't fight to keep me to himself. Then, as if my thoughts were projected into his mind, he turns and walks backward.

"I don't mind sharing, Angel, but if you want me to keep you for the day, all you have to do is say so." His eyes move to Crow, and he nods, letting his friend know that whatever I say goes.

My chest tightens. "I'll ride with Crow."

A flash of disappointment washes over his face, but it's there and gone before I can react to it. I didn't want to hurt Crow's feelings, but I also don't want Knox to feel rejected. Part of me wonders if I should hop on Jag's bike since he has no stake in this, but when I glance back at him, he's watching me too. Fuck. They all want me to ride with them.

"It's okay," Jag says. "Ride with Crow. I won't be a sore loser."

"You're not a loser."

He smirks. "I know, Kiks. I'll get my time with you soon enough." His eyes darken with the promise of pleasure. My cheeks flame again and Crow wraps his arm around me and his mouth finds the shell of my ear.

"The blushing is new," he purrs. "What's going on in that filthy mind of yours?"

I place my hand on his chest and push him back slightly. "Nothing."

"You're a bad liar, Kiki Malone."

"You're an asshat, Crow De Luca."

He moves his arm and catches my hand, pulling me toward his bike. I grab my helmet from Knox as we pass and hand him the bag. He slides it onto his back, casting his attention in my direction as I climb on the bike behind Crow. I put on my helmet and flip off Knox. His eyes shine and a smile I haven't seen for years cuts across his face, the sight of it enough to steal my breath.

I missed them so much. Now that we talked about what happened and I decided to let go of my hurt, I can truly enjoy basking in their presence. Crow slips his fingers around the back of my knees and pulls me closer, forcing my core against his bubble butt. I squirm, and he tickles me a little. I grab a lock of his dark hair and twist it.

“Don't do that.”

He holds out his hands to show he's done. I release his hair but stay right where he put me. What? His ass is comfortable and this position accomplishes what I had planned to do anyway: mark him with my scent.

CHAPTER TWENTY

CROW

Her sweet pussy is pressed right up against me and it's taking all my willpower to keep the bike on the road. The death grip I have on the handlebars helps too. Every dip and swerve in the road slides her body over mine, and I torture myself with what it would be like to have her cunt wrapped around my cock. She said she wanted our knots. She wanted to be claimed. She wanted us to rut into her. Fuck, I don't think I've ever been so hard. Her hands are clasped low on my belly. I intentionally take a turn a little too tight and her hands jostle with the movement, brushing over my erection.

Her fingers hesitate on my length, tightening ever so slightly before she moves her hands back to where they were. My dick strains against my jeans in protest, and I grind my jaw. Maybe I should have let her stay with Knox, but I wanted her wrapped around me, rubbing her scent all over me like she had with him.

It was clear when we got to the pond what she'd done. None of us commented on it because we don't care. Just like she wants to mark us as hers, I want to fill her up with cum until it's dripping between her thighs and coating her skin. I want her drenched in sweat and whimpering for more. I want those lips to beg to suck me off. That's the only thing that'll truly satisfy me.

That's all I want.

We roll up to our favorite roadside diner. Betty's is a hidden gem. Most high packs refuse to step foot in a place like this, which is fine by me. Betty's has the best chicken fried steak and eggs. The high packs can keep their avocado toast bullshit.

I leave the bike on for a minute, pushing back against Kiki as I set the stand down. Her legs squeeze a little. Is she trying to stop me or ask for more? I cut the bike and take my helmet off, checking over my shoulder. That damn flush is going to be my undoing. It makes her look innocent, and I know she's far from it. I've never had her in the way I want. I ache for her in a way that's probably not healthy.

Kiki's scent covers me and nothing has ever made me happier. She is studying the menu, chewing on her bottom lip. The guys and I pretend to look too. We've been here enough that we know exactly what we want. She finally lifts her gaze and flicks it around the table.

"I think I want the chicken fried steak and eggs."

"You're trying to steal my heart, aren't you?" I take her menu and set it on the edge of the table. The waitress who has been hanging around behind the counter heads in our direction.

Kiki is looking at me with a line of confusion between her eyebrows, but Jag makes some stupid joke and distracts her. Knox kicks my shin and I glare at him. He wants me to back off. I probably should. I can still feel the way her body pressed against mine on the ride over here. No way in hell am I backing off.

"What can I getcha?"

Pop.

I cringe. I hate gum. The way it sounds skeeves me out, and while Kiki orders the waitress loudly chomps on it. I stare at the waitress, watching her work the gum over like it

personally offended her and she's trying to teach it a lesson. My muscles tense the longer I watch her.

How can anyone be okay with chewing gum like that? The least she could do is close her mouth so I don't have to hear the noises.

"Any for you?" She freezes when she sees me staring at her.

I avert my eyes. "Chicken fried steak and eggs. Sub the biscuits for the toast. Orange juice and two coffees, please."

"I can bring you a pot if you want."

Knox nods and I say, "That would be great, thanks."

She pops her gum and grabs the menus. "I'll have that out to you all soon."

"The gum?" Jag takes the paper roll off his silverware and wraps it around his finger.

"Did you hear it?" I shake my head. "Obnoxiously loud."

"At least no one has an apple." Knox glances at Kiki. "He gets a little twitchy when people eat them in front of him."

Kiki shifts beside me. "I like apples."

"I wouldn't mind if you did it," I say before fully thinking about it. Jag and Knox exchange knowing smirks. "Fine, I probably wouldn't like it but I wouldn't be mad at you for it."

"He saves all that irrational anger for strangers."

The waitress drops off our drinks and we all act like we weren't discussing her poor chewing habits. Knox dumps two creamers and three sugars into his coffee. I take one of each and doctor mine up. I don't like the diner coffee either, but it isn't that bad. Knox is a wimp. He takes a sip and reaches for another sugar.

"Would you like some juice instead?" Kiki asks.

His fingers hesitate on the packet. "Are you talking shit, Kiki Malone?"

“I do *not* talk shit.” She almost sounds serious. “All I’m saying is if you’re going to be a little bitch about the coffee, you may as well order an orange juice.”

He scoffs. “You sound like Crow.” Grabbing two sugar packets instead of the one, he rips them open with his teeth and pours them into his coffee, staring at her while he does it.

“It can’t be that bad.” She lifts the mug to her lips, takes a sip, and immediately spits it back into the cup. “What the fuck?”

“If you’re going to be a little bitch about the coffee, maybe you should get something different,” Knox says in his best impression of her.

She crumples a napkin and tosses it at his head, a megawatt smile bursting across her face. God, I’ve missed that smile. When was the last time I saw it? This is the first real one she’s given since we got her back.

“Children,” Jag warns. “I want my food. Don’t screw this up for me.”

“I hope the food is better than the coffee,” Kiki mutters.

“It is.” I drop my arm on the back of the booth, mere inches from holding on to her. I wish I had my sketch pad; this moment is worthy of documenting. She’s so pretty. I drum my fingers on the seat pad. She glances at my hand but doesn’t comment on the tick. “You smell as good as I remember.”

Her cheeks flame again. God I love that. Jag and Knox both rumble with approval, and their purring turns her face tomato red.

“I need the bathroom,” she says quickly, shoving at me.

I slide out of the booth with ease, catching her hand before she can rush away to hide. I spin her around and she crashes into my chest. Running my nose up the column of her neck, I nip it softly and whisper, “That damn blush, baby.”

“Stop teasing me.” Her voice is breathy and her chest heaves. She tugs at her hand and I release her, dropping back into the seat as though nothing happened.

“Asshole,” Knox says.

“Hey, you kissed her first.”

“Three years ago.”

I shrug. “Still.”

“Fuck both of you.” Jag watches her until she disappears into the bathroom. “She’s riding home with me.”

“Good,” Knox and I say at the same time. Let her mark him like she did us.

“We made a lot of progress today.” Jag starts shredding a napkin. “But that doesn’t mean we stop trying to make up for leaving her.”

Knox nods. “I have every intention of making it up to her in every way I can.”

“Same,” I say. “I’ll do whatever it takes.”

And that just might be enough.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

KIKI

My hands tremble under the cold water pouring from the faucet. Their teasing is too much to handle. The three of them staring at me sent my mind straight to the gutter and I had to get out of there before my desire ran rampant through the diner.

We stayed out in the sun too long. I'm so hot. My skin is warm to the touch and my neck and cheeks are still flushed. A deep, needing ache pulses within my core and all I can think about is one—or all—of them inside of me. A cramp rocks through me and I gasp, gripping the edge of the worn porcelain sink. My thong is drenched in anticipation. Thank fuck my shorts are dark.

A woman pushes through the door, stumbling to a stop when she sees me. I'm acutely aware of how strong my scent is right now; the typical vanilla perfume is peppered with hints of rose.

The woman pinches her nose shut. "Oh my god. Are you okay?"

"Fine," I say through gritted teeth, wrenching the faucet off. "Just hungry." My hands shake and I shove them behind my back.

"Oh, hun. My sister is an omega." Her voice sounds ridiculous with her nose plugged. "You need your pack, sweetie. Are they here?"

This is embarrassing.

I'm going into heat in a fucking diner.

"They're waiting for me in the car," I lie. "I don't need help."

Sure you don't, her expression says. "Okay then." She leaves the bathroom, completely forgetting she needed to go in her rush to get out.

Dammit. I can't go back to the booth. Not like this. I don't have a phone to message the guys with. Shit. Shit. Shit.

"Get it together, Kiki." My core pulses again, drenching my panties with slick. I run out of the bathroom, making a beeline for the exit before too much of my scent can flood the restaurant. As the heavy glass door starts to close behind me, one of the guys shouts my name. I make it to the bikes right as the guys burst out of the restaurant. With trembling hands, I grasp the handle of Jag's bike and get on.

"What happened?" Knox makes it to me first. The moment my scent hits him, his nostrils flare and his pupils dilate. "You're in heat."

"Not fully there yet," I grind out through another cramp. Soon though, and that explains all my erratic reactions. Pre-heat floods the body with hormones and can make an omega a touch more sensitive depending on the situation.

Knox grabs me around the waist and pulls me off the bike, enveloping me in his arms. His hands run over my body and I hum in appreciation. The simple touch relieves some of the ache.

"Kiks, what's—" Jag inhales, and his body goes rigid. "Fuck, that smells good."

Crow, the most rational of us all, says, "We need to go home."

No. Not home. I need somewhere safe for all of us. Somewhere that's protected and enclosed; somewhere that's only ours.

"Nest," I rasp as Knox's fingers move dangerously close to my cunt.

“Taken care of.” Jag yanks me out of Knox’s arms, holding me tightly against his chest and purring as I nestle into the hug. “I don’t know if I can ride with her like this.”

“You have to,” Knox’s voice is gravelly. “Let’s go before we lose all sense and spend two days rutting in Betty’s parking lot.”

Alphas can lose control as much as an omega can.

Jag tries to pull away, but I tighten my grip on his shirt. “Please don’t let me go.” The pain is too much without their touch.

“We need to get on the bike.” He pulls me off of his body. The moment Jag lets go of me, my body protests. That god awful heat sweeps over me and the ache in my core doubles. Before he’s even adjusted himself on the bike, I climb on and wrap myself around him, pressing my cheek into his back.

“Helmet,” he growls.

“I’ll do it.” Crow eases my helmet on. I want to protest because I love the feel of Jag’s back on my cheek, but they won’t let me ride without one. His fingers brush over my neck and I sigh in relief. “Be careful,” he tells Jag.

I writhe against Jag, desperately trying to relieve the pressure building between my legs. It hurts. It’s uncomfortable. I need it to stop. I need them.

“Hurry,” I whimper.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

JAG

I am not careful. I break speed limits all the way home, racing to get Kiki somewhere safe. But it's not only her we have to worry about. The moment her heat hits full force, we'll be fucked. The sooner she's in the nest we built for her, the safer we'll all be.

The gate to the clubhouse is open and we screech to a stop once we're inside. We ignore everyone and head directly to the apartment. When we were building out the suite, we had a secret room added and told the contractor it was going to be the panic room. The guys and I have spent the past three years adding to the nest. Sometimes it's a pillow we find when we're out shopping. Sometimes it's one of our shirts. Sometimes it's sentimental decorations that reminded us of her.

Sometimes it's things we've stolen from her—like the beanie I took last week before the auctions.

There's a shrine of her things inside the nest and I can only hope she doesn't think it was weird of us to take her things. Even I can admit it was creepy, but what else were we supposed to do?

We head into Crow's room and he holds his closet door open, pushing the hidden door behind his clothes. Knox shoves the hangers aside and I drag Kiki in after me. Her eyes flick around the room, taking in the double bed, mounds of pillows and blankets, the stack of shirts we all set aside for her, the half-moon lights lining the top of the dark blue-gray walls,

and finally the shelf of random things that belong to her. The hat. A necklace. Thongs. A CD from when she was little. Her favorite book. We've taken enough over three years for the shelf to be overflowing.

The nest was built specifically with her in mind, and when she turns around to face us, I know we've hit the mark. She's not mad. Her eyes mist and she reaches for us. We wrap her in a giant hug, bathing in her scent. A purr rumbles in my chest, and I run my hand down her spine, delighting in the way she writhes at my touch.

Without speaking, she drops to her knees and reaches for my pants. I catch her hands with a growl, and she gazes up at me with wide eyes.

"As much as I want my cock in your mouth, you come first." I pull her to her feet and grab the bottom of her shirt. "Help me out, fellas." I take her shirt off, revealing full breasts in a simple black bra.

Knox pulls down her shorts and Crow undoes the bra, sliding the straps down her arms while Knox helps her step out of her bottoms. Kiki clothed is a damn sight, but Kiki naked? She's a fucking work of art.

"Damn." Knox runs his hand up her leg, teasing his fingers over her slick covered thigh. "She's soaking wet."

Kiki arches into his touch and he indulges her, dipping his finger into her heat. She sucks in a breath and reaches out for me.

"Put her on the bed," I tell them, ripping off my clothes. Knox was the first to touch her. I'll be the first to taste her, and Crow can be the first to knot her. As her pack, we'll share all of her firsts.

Her body is flushed crimson, breasts heaving as the guys help her lie down. Knox claims her nipple and Crow takes her mouth. I palm my cock and drop to my knees. Her skin is soft beneath my touch as I wrench her legs apart. She opens beautifully, baring her cunt for me.

“Such a pretty pussy.” I run my finger through her slick. Her thigh tenses beneath my other hand when I caress her clit. I tease her with my fingers for a moment before running the flat of my tongue over her slit. Has she ever been touched like this? A growl rumbles in my chest at the thought and she releases a strangled sound.

“Yesss.” She lifts her hips, urging, grinding, needing. I don’t think she has experienced this before, and that only makes me work harder, relentlessly flicking my tongue over her clit. She tastes like heaven on my tongue, sweet and perfectly mine.

I slip two fingers inside of her and stretch her walls, preparing her for Crow. Her thighs clamp around my head and lock me in place. I smile against her and then set to work, curling my fingers while I torture that sensitive bundle of nerves.

Her hips start to rock. I gladly let her take control, loving the way her slick covers me. I should have let her sit on my face. Next time. I scrape my teeth over her before taking her clit into my mouth and sucking gently. Her walls tighten around my fingers and she screams. I look up at her, catching the way Crow devours her cries with a kiss. Her cum coats my tongue, and I swallow it, cleaning her before nibbling my way up to her other nipple.

My thigh presses between her legs, and she shamelessly writhes against it, soaking it with her slick and chasing another orgasm. So damn needy. I bite down on her nipple and ignore my pulsing cock. It’s Crow’s turn.

CROW

Witnessing her break as Jag goes down on her is a special kind of torture, but as soon as she comes and he moves out of the way, she’s all mine. My cock is already leaking in anticipation. Gripping her chin, I kiss her one more time. Her

slick sings as it coats her thighs, a siren's song that I can't deny.

I switch places with Jag and stand at the edge of the bed. The guys move back as I drag her down the mattress, bringing her cunt straight toward my cock. I run my length over her pussy, soaking it with her sweet juices.

A chest deep growl rumbles through me, the alpha instinct within me is demanding I fuck her hard and fast, rutting into her with abandon. I grapple for a shred of control as I press inside of her. She sucks in a sharp breath and I wait, letting her adjust to my thickness. She rocks her hips after a moment, and I go a little deeper. Those silky smooth walls glide over me inch by fucking glorious inch until I'm balls deep inside of her.

"Fuuuck," I groan and try to fight the knot that's begging to form. She has to come first. I drop my hands to the bed and slowly rock my hips, learning how every inch of her feels. The guys move out of my way when I growl a warning. They're blocking my view. Her hooded gaze meets mine and I pull back to the tip before slamming into her for the first time. Kiki's eyes roll to the back of her head, and she hooks her ankles around my waist.

"Again," she rasps.

With her heels digging into my ass, I fuck her hard and fast, pounding into her over and over until she makes a noise that's not quite human.

It's angelic.

I slow a little but continue thrusting. Her walls clamp around my cock. Digging her nails into my arms, she yanks me on top of her and our lips collide. Our bodies move together and her pussy drags across my lower stomach, seeking relief. I grind against her and slam into her again, hitting the glorious spot deep inside of her. She squirts all over my cock, and I lose the fragile grip I had on myself. Relinquishing all sense of control, I fist her hair and wrench her head back. Her lips tear from mine and part on a cry. I

watch her throat constrict around the sound and the way her eyes slam shut as my knot locks us together.

Her greedy cunt welcomes me with another rush of slick, drenching me as she pulses around me. I rut into her, grunting and grinding and fucking. My cock jerks, filling her up.

“You’re doing so good, Kiki.” I thrust into her again, earning a tiny squeal. “My cum is going to drip out of you when I’m finished. That pretty little cunt is going to remember me when you wake up tomorrow.”

She gasps and moans, too lost in the fervor to understand a word I’m saying. I keep my promise though, filling her with my cum until my knot gives one final, violent pulse. A shout rips from me. I cradle her head and drop my forehead to hers. My dick is spent, but I linger, slowly easing in and out of her. She hums in approval and locks her legs around me. Our bodies are soaked with slick and sweat and I breathe it in, savoring the perfume.

Her eyes are closed, and her lips are slightly parted as she catches her breath. I brush my lips over hers.

“You took my knot so well, baby.”

“Mmm,” is all she says before her breathing evens out. I stare at her for a moment before laughing softly and kissing her cheek. She won’t be down for long.

KNOX

I stroke my cock as Crow finishes, knowing I can’t find release until she’s ready for me but needing to relieve some of the ache. My eyes are riveted on Kiki’s face. Her eyelids flutter and her tongue dashes out to wet her lips. Pink stains her cheeks and her breathing grows steady. Crow rolls off of her and I crawl onto the bed, wrapping an arm around her and pulling her naked body against mine. She’s so soft against me. I smooth her hair and bury my face in her neck, breathing her

in. Vanilla. Sugar. Hints of rose and something bitter—like a fine chocolate.

What I wouldn't give for a candle that smelled like this, or better yet, a cologne. I'd douse myself in it.

Crow and Jag lie on the bed too, taking rest while they can. Their hands move toward Kiki. They need to touch her too. I want her so bad but she needs to sleep. We'll be at this for two days and I'd be a bastard to take the rest from her.

We lie there for what seems like hours but is really only twenty minutes or so. Slowly, Kiki begins to stir. I press into her side and inhale, purring as she softens in my arm and rubs herself against my erection. Her body is hot to the touch. I'm not worried about that though. It's normal for her to be feverish.

Her hand wraps around my cock, and I thrust into her hold, nipping her shoulder and palming her breast. A pained sound escapes her lips. That won't do. Heats can be hard if omegas don't have a knot.

I get on my knees and flip her over, propping a few pillows beneath her hips to keep them at the right angle. She won't make it through my knotting without a little help. Her ass arches, and I run my hands over the luscious globes, squeezing gently and lining my cock up with her slick coated center.

Pressing back against me, she tries to rush me into it. I ease inside of her and wrap myself around her, holding her around the middle and resting my head against her shoulder as I languidly pump into her. Those velvety walls fit like a damn glove around my cock, tight and stretching around me.

"This pussy is so fucking good, Angel." I pinch her nipples and work her over my length. Each drag of her cunt over my dick is like a stroke of ecstasy.

"Mmm," she hums, sitting back every time I thrust up.

I'm too close to knotting her. Gently easing her onto the mattress, I place her hands by her head and grab onto her hips. The pillows give me the perfect position to beat that sweet little kitty up. My balls tighten, but I fight the knot, fucking

Kiki until she fists the blanket in her hands and starts to make those damn divine sounds. Half-keens, half-screams. Whimpers and moans. Desperate sounds that make my dick swell with pride.

“There it is. That’s a good girl.” Thrust. “Drenching my cock like a pretty omega should.” I slam into her even harder, earning a scream of approval. “So. Fucking. Perfect.” I slip one hand between the pillows and her body, teasing her cunt as I keep the same angle, hitting her g-spot over and over until a guttural moan rips through her. Her body shudders under me, but I don’t stop. I hit that place over and over, patiently waiting for my prize.

Kiki sucks in air. “More,” she pants.

“I’m not stopping,” I grind out, continuing to fight the damn knot. I don’t think I can last much longer with those noises she’s making. “Give it to me, Angel.” I pull almost all the way out and slam into her, burying my cock deep inside of her.

“Yes,” she gasps.

I do it again, this time pulling her hips back to meet my thrust. Her ass smacks against me and I grunt, jerking my hips up before doing the same thing again. My finger circles her clit, and I move my other hand to her ass, brushing my pinky over that sweet spot.

“I want to hear you scream.” I pick a steady pace and gently ease my pinky into her ass. She bears down on me, the pressure coaxing my knot to fully form as she releases a cry. Slick and cum coat my thighs. Her cunt stretches around my knot, her body supplying the lubrication to keep her comfortable while mine locks us together.

I wiggle the finger in her ass, and she squeals, coming again as my first orgasm hits me. Panting, I grind into her, desperately trying to go as deep as I can, filling her with my cum with every slight thrust.

“You can come again.” I press my palm over her pussy, letting her grind against it while I thrust. “Just like that. Show

me how bad you want to come.” She’s soaking and her cunt slides over my skin as she grinds herself against me. Her walls clamp around me. Pressing my palm harder against her, I purr and add another finger to her ass.

She whimpers and rolls her hips a little faster. I jerk into her and she gushes, giving me exactly what I wanted. I release a moan of my own and drop my head back and pinch my eyes shut, memorizing the way she feels.

If there’s a god, he’s given me the best damn gift of all.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

KIKI

Waking from the heat is what waking from the dead must feel like. I come to covered in god knows what. The men are surrounding me, snoring like freight trains. They're all naked. Their bodies are too hot. Holding my breath, I quietly wiggle out of the Hell Hounds sandwich.

My ass hits the floor, and I release a soft *oomph*. I'm not as sore as I expected. Actually, I feel pretty damn good. I guess a few dozen orgasms will do that to a woman. I stand up and stretch my arms over my head, closing my eyes and biting back a moan when an after pang hits my core. As if it hasn't spent the last two days being abused, my cunt pulses, searching for something to lock onto.

"Angel," Knox says around a yawn. "Get that pretty ass over here."

All three of them are wide awake now, erections all present and accounted for. I lick my lips as a bead of pre-cum spills down Crow's length.

"If you keep looking at it like that, I'm going to push it down your throat."

Fuck. Yes.

Sex is amazing. I don't remember much from my heat, but that sensation, that pleasure when their cocks fill me, I want more.

I run my palms over my breasts, tweaking my nipples where I stand and pull my bottom lip between my teeth. “What if...” I trail off. Asking for all three of them at once isn’t too demanding after two days of them fucking me senseless, right?

It’s then I realize they didn’t claim me. My throat is free of their bite marks. That won’t do. They gave me everything else I wanted.

“Use your words, Kiks. Do you want something?” Jag fists his cock.

I was too gone to really appreciate his thick length, but fresh out of the daze of my heat, all I can think about is riding him and getting acquainted with how it feels.

As if sensing my thoughts, he releases his dick and lets it swing free. “Maybe if you say please we’ll give you exactly what you want.” He flexes and moves it.

In any other circumstance I’d tell him to fuck off for asking me to say please, but here in the bedroom, I don’t mind playing along. I’m arguably disgusting with two days of sex coating my skin. None of them seem to mind though. I strut toward the bed, placing my hands between Jag’s legs and crawling up the mattress.

My hair falls in a curtain around us as I lower my lips toward his. “I want all three of you inside of me,” I rasp, tugging his lip between my teeth as my nipples scrape over his chest. “I want you to bite me. Claim me. Take me in every filthy way possible.”

“I told you she’s no angel,” Knox says with a chuckle. “Are you sure you’re ready for this?”

“I’m ready.” I take turns looking at all three of them. It seems fast, but this is something I’ve wanted since I was seventeen. Now that it’s within my reach, I can’t wait any longer. “Don’t make me beg for it.” Grabbing Jag’s dick, I sit up and brush the head of it through my slit before lining him up with my center. I hold his gaze and sink onto his length.

“God, that’s the hottest shit I’ve ever seen,” Crow mutters.

I glance at him, rolling my hips and adjusting to Jag's girth. "I want you in my mouth." I drop my hands on either side of Jag.

He lifts off the bed and sucks my tit into his mouth. I ride his cock and hum in appreciation. Crow moves toward us and Jag grabs me by the hips and scoots us down the bed to make room.

"I've been thinking about that pretty mouth," Crow confesses, grabbing my chin and forcing me to look at him. "Wondering how much you can take before you choke on my dick."

I swallow. I can choke on it?

With false bravado, I say, "Guess we're about to find out."

His hooded eyes take me in and he runs his thumb over my bottom lip. "I'll go easy on you."

I want to protest, but I am a little out of my element here. Knox is waiting patiently for his turn, and I'm not even sure how that's going to work. His palm skims over my ass, and he smacks it, massaging away the pain in the next instant.

"You'll need a little prep, but I think you can handle it if I'm gentle." A warm liquid drops onto my ass, and I glance back to see a dollop of lube on my cheek. He swirls two fingers through the lube and holds my gaze. "Crow first."

I nod and turn back, coming face to face with Crow's dick. My tongue darts out to wet my lips. Crow tsks and grabs himself, rubbing his head over my lips, painting them with pre-cum.

"Open that sweet mouth."

Obediently, I relax my jaw and part my lips. He places his cock on my tongue and leaves it there. I look up at him through my lashes and he smirks, as if that's what he was waiting for.

"Eyes on me." He slides into my mouth and Jag thrusts up, startling a gasp out of me. My mouth closes around Crow, and he curses, grabbing a fist full of hair in his hand. "Easy, baby."

“Okay,” I say, but his dick muffles the sound and he closes his eyes.

“No talking or I’m going to come too soon.”

“Breathe through your nose.” Knox’s fingers rub the lube over my asshole. I inhale, and on my exhale he slides one finger into me. “How’s that?”

I hum and Crow tightens his hold on my hair.

“She can take it.” He pumps his hips, sliding his length in and out of my mouth. I hollow my cheeks and press my tongue against his shaft, earning a purr of approval.

Jag gently thrusts into me from below, teasing my nipple with his tongue. They keep me suspended between them like that, nice and gentle until Knox thinks I’m ready for another finger. The pressure makes me buck against Jag and his hands find my hips, keeping me steady. Knox stretches me and gets me ready while Crow and Jag pick up their pace, matching each other thrust for thrust. Crow is still holding back, but I focus on mastering my breath before asking for more.

Someone’s finger swirls over my clit and presses down hard. I roll over Jag’s length, savoring the way my walls wrap around him and how the pressure from Knox’s fingers increases the pleasure I draw from each movement. The muscles in my back slowly begin to relax, my body finally adjusting from being filled in every way.

“Now she’s ready,” Knox murmurs, carefully sliding his digits out of me before squirting lube between my ass cheeks. “Is this your first time having someone back here, Angel?”

I hum my answer, and Crow’s cock pulses inside my mouth.

Knox’s chest rumbles. Using the head of his shaft, he gathers up the lube, knowing I’ll need all the help I can get to get through this. It is my first time, but I’m not scared. They’ll take care of me.

“Breathe through your nose.” He presses against my hole, edging inside of me. It’s nothing like normal sex, and there’s a tiny bit of pain. I brace myself for more. That finger on my clit

traces slow circles, drawing my attention to the teasing. Crow pushes inside of my mouth.

Knox goes a little deeper, and I squeal around the cock in my mouth. Holy fuck that's intense. Jag thrusts into me and teases my nipples, pinching and tugging at them. Crow moves again, easing his cock to the back of my throat and forcing me to focus on my breathing.

"Almost there." Knox groans and pushes even further inside of me. "Fuck."

My body begins to tremble. I dig my nails into the sheet, gathering it in my palms and clinging to it. A hand runs down my spine. The tension ebbs and Jag slams into me. A startled gasp has me swallowing around Crow's dick, and he growls, gripping my hair even tighter. I quickly glance at him to make sure I didn't hurt him, but his eyes are riveted on me.

"Again," he demands.

I'm confused for a second then realize exactly what he wants. I swallow. His eyes fall half shut and he gently rocks himself into my mouth.

"Swallow my cock again. Show me how good you can do."

Not one to disappoint, I do as he commands, taking him deep into my mouth and working my throat around his length. Knox seats himself all the way inside of me, and I whimper in pain. Someone's finger pinches and presses on my clit, quickly chasing away any discomfort with their quick and sure touches.

"I'm not going to last much longer," Crow pants. "You're stealing my soul, Kiki." He eases out of my mouth a little before setting a faster, harder pace. I collapse my cheeks against his length.

Jag and Knox move at the same time, a blinding wave of pleasure and pain crashes over me. I suck in a sharp breath through my nose and pull more of the sheet into my hands. All thoughts cease as they take over, controlling every movement

and motion. Tingles work down my spine and my hips writhe on their own, chasing after those teasing fingers.

Maybe not knowing whose hand is torturing me should bother me, but it doesn't. I don't give a damn who it is so long as they don't stop. That damn touch is the only reason I'm not asking them to slow down. With every pump of Knox's cock in my ass, my pussy weeps all over Jag. Every tweak of my nipple has me surging over Jag's length, his tip grinds over my g-spot.

I whimper, but this time it's not from pain.

Crow moans and cum spurts against the back of my throat. I greedily swallow it all, relishing the salty taste. He pulses inside of my mouth, and I swirl my tongue over his length. Knox and Jag are relentless. My tits sway with every thrust, swinging near Jag's face.

With a small growl, he lifts his head and captures my peak between his teeth, biting down. My body tenses, and at the same moment, the finger on my clit presses down hard and they both thrust into me. My core clamps down on Jag, and the dick in my ass adds just the right amount of pressure. The delicious spot deep inside of me pulses and gushes, stars blasting across my vision as Crow slides out of my mouth and releases my hair. I suck in air and collapse on top of Jag, crushing him with my body.

He doesn't stop slamming into me. He and Knox work together, chasing me to the top of a cliff, pulling me along the way as my body starts to seize at the hands of the best orgasm I've ever had. They slam inside of me once, twice, three times. All at once they shove me off that cliff and I freefall through oblivion. My hips jerk and I shout, dragging more of the sheet toward my body in an attempt to ground myself. The two of them give one final thrust and come together inside of me, setting off another mini-orgasm.

"Fuck, Angel," Knox says with a breathless laugh. "That's the best thing I've ever experienced in my entire life."

Crow grabs my chin and pulls me up for a kiss before dropping his mouth to my neck, teeth sinking into my tender

flesh. Marking me, claiming me. It doesn't hurt, instead the best sort of ecstasy floods through my veins, demanding more. My cunt clamps around Jag and he groans. Crow releases me and before I can even take a breath, Jag bites me almost in the same spot. Stars burst across my vision and I dig my nails into his chest.. Knox claims me last, sealing us all together. Making us all a pack. Making me theirs.

“You did so good, Kiks.” Jag’s lips close around my nipple again, gently sucking on it while Knox kisses the wound. It’s already healing, turning into a permanent reminder of what’s been done.

“Mmm,” is all I can say.

Crow runs his thumb over my bottom lip, pulling my attention toward him. “You took my cock so well.”

I grin, but then groan as Knox inches out of me. “Fuck, that’s worse than it going in.”

“Breathe.” Knox waits until I do as I’m told before continuing. “I think you know how I feel about it, but did you like it?”

“It was... an experience,” I say, not yet sure if I’m totally in love with it. With Crow and Jag there to distract me, it wasn’t awful. It did fucking hurt though.

Knox drops a kiss on my spine. “A good one?”

“I think I came like six times.” Jag’s tongue swirls over my nipple, and I sigh in contentment. “I think I liked it.”

“Well, until you know for sure, we don’t have to do it.” I glance back at Knox, and he smiles. “Don’t go anywhere.” He exits the room, and I furrow my brow.

Where’s he going?

“He has to clean up a little. We can’t have you getting an infection.” Crow drops onto the bed beside us, causing the mattress to dip and Jag’s mouth to tug on my nipple. His cock is still fully inside my cunt and it stirs to life, already ready for another round.

“Jag,” I rasp, driving my hips down. “I need you to be the one in control if you want more.” I’m too tired to be on top.

His mouth comes off my breast with a pop. “Do you want to be my pillow princess, Kiks?” He jerks his hips, sending a ripple of heat through my core.

“Fuck me, yes, please.”

Crow tuts. “I thought I fucked the filth out of that mouth. Next time I’ll have to do a better job.”

Jag rolls us over, keeping himself buried inside of me by some miracle. “Maybe I’ll have to try next time,” he whispers before diving for my neck, kissing and biting it. “Would you like that?” he asks, nipping my ear. “Do you want my cum spilling down your throat too?”

His filthy words fill me with all sorts of devious thoughts and my pussy aches in affirmation.

“Yes.”

“Maybe tomorrow. Right now you’re going to take my knot, aren’t you, baby?” He withdraws and surges forward, his thick shaft driving to the top of my cunt. “You’re going to take it all until I say I’m done with you.”

I bring my knees up and wrap my arms around him, angling my body so he can go as deep as he wants while I do minimal work. A deep, rumble of approval fills the room and the door to the nest snaps shut.

“I shouldn’t have left.”

“Yes you should have. Hygiene is important.” Crow releases a soft sigh. “Let’s go make some food.”

“But—”

“Come on,” Crow cuts off Knox’s protest. “Jag’s about to put her back to sleep anyway.”

Jag fists my hair and wrenches my head back, teasing his teeth over my new mark. I moan in approval and hang on for dear life as his knot blooms and stretches inside of me. Each

spurt of cum that pours from his cock fills me and when he moves his hips again, another orgasm is wrenched from me.

The door closes.

“It’s just you and me, Kiks. Give me another one.” Jag tugs on my hair and grinds into me. “Let me hear that sweet little whimper.” His knot is thick and pulsing. With another devastating roll of his hips, my cunt throbs around him. I dig my nails into his back and a tiny peal of pleasure tumbles from my lips.

Jag thrusts again. “Good girl.”

Again and again, shock wave after shock wave, he makes me come. Each passing orgasm is harder to handle. I can hardly breathe as he takes me. I can’t think. All I can do is hold on to him and give him everything he asks for.

He asks for everything. He takes every last bit of pleasure he can get until my muscles give out and my legs collapse back onto the mattress. My nails have bitten into his skin but Jag doesn’t seem to mind. If anything, the harder I flex my fingers against his back, the more he likes it.

The final climax takes the longest. He works me through it slowly, edging me until I plead for mercy. With one last thrust, he gasps my name and spills the last of his cum inside of me. My final orgasm rocks through me, and this time I release a cry of pleasure, one that’s a half sob of relief and a half scream of delight.

“You did so good, Kiks,” he purrs, capturing my mouth with his.

I hum and lazily kiss him back, spent from the effort of taking him again. My mind is blank save for the heavy desire to fall into another deep sleep. I try to lift my hand to cup his face, but my muscles won’t budge. I don’t think my body is built to take this many orgasms. Jag gives me a final, chaste kiss and pulls out of me. I moan in protest and relief, and he chuckles.

Dropping onto the bed, he wraps his arm around me and tugs me into his side. I murmur unintelligible words and he

shushes me.

“Let me take care of you.”

You already did, I want to say, but I can't seem to form the words. Instead, I nuzzle into his hold and breathe him in. His hands stroke over my body, lulling me into a deep, peaceful sleep.

God it's good to be an omega.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

KNOX

Even after a shower to wash away two plus days of being in the nest, we all still smell like Kiki. I love it. Her heat was a defining moment for me. I don't know that I've ever enjoyed anything the way I enjoyed pleasing her. I'm glad we told her the truth. She asked the questions and we gave it to her straight. Lying never crossed my mind. You can't lie to the person who has your heart.

I suspect the only reason she finally let us back in is because she knew we hadn't deceived her. Like Jag said though, we're a long way from making things up to her. It hurt me to leave her, but at least I knew why. She was left to wonder, and I can't imagine how I'd feel if she disappeared on me. No calls. No texts. Not even traces of her scent.

She has no idea that we snuck into her house. We covered our scent and only ever went in while she was away or sleeping. Maybe if she had known what we were doing, it would have eased some of her pain.

There's no point in wondering about the past, I know that, but my mind keeps trying to find ways to take away her hurt. But that's the thing, I can't take back what we did. Now, I can only give her every piece of me. I marked her as mine. As did Crow and Jag. She's pack, and nothing has ever felt more right.

Kiki is still sleeping when someone knocks at our door. I nod at Jag and he opens it, revealing a grave-faced Rukus. He

glances inside but smartly doesn't comment on the way the apartment reeks of omega.

"We found the rat."

"Where was he?" Jimmy went into hiding right after Kiran was killed, probably because the idiot realized we would find out he was feeding Wrecker information about our business. One thing about rats is they don't stay hidden for long. They'll always come out searching for food—or in Jimmy's case, drugs.

"Holed up with Sneaky." Kiki stirs in the bedroom and Rukus stiffens. "I can wait outside." He's a beta and knows how alphas can get around their omegas.

I'm not so mindlessly possessive that I'd hurt Rukus for being in the same room with her, but I might lose it if she comes out half-dressed and the probability of that is high considering I took all the clothes from the nest to start a load of laundry. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

I clench my jaw. Rukus takes note and backs up.

"I thought Sneaky was in jail. I heard he got picked up for some tainted drugs." Crow side-eyes me.

Usually I'm more in control, but when it comes to Kiki, I lose all sense of what it means to be sane.

"He made bail. He's in with Jimmy." Rukus takes another step away from the door.

"Where you going, Ruk?" Jag is such an asshole. He knows exactly why Rukus is ready to tuck tail.

The beta stops his retreat. "I, uh—"

The door to the bedroom opens and Jag, and Crow, and I all jerk our heads in that direction.

"We'll be there in a minute." Jag slams the door in his face, taunts forgotten.

It's good to know I'm not the only one who was about to alpha-out.

“I’m so hungry.” Oblivious to how each of us are practically vibrating with the need to rush over and scent mark her, Kiki shuffles into the kitchen with a squeaky yawn. She’s completely naked.

It only slightly pains me to admit Rukus would have definitely gotten his ass beat if he had stayed and peeped her like this.

“How are you feeling?” Jag asks.

“Wonderful,” she murmurs with a little grin. “Oh, I love breakfast pizza.” She grabs a slice and takes a big bite. “Mmm.”

Crow bites his lip and covers his smile with his hand. He grew up really poor; most of the time he didn’t have enough food. Taking care of us, cooking meals, baking, keeping our bellies full, that makes him happy. The grin on his face isn’t about that though. Just like the way my fingers curled into fists have nothing to do with anger and everything to do with needing to touch her.

Jag settles his back against the door and watches her like a man starving. Me? I’m out of my seat and on her in less than a second. My arms wrap around her waist, and I rub my cheek over her shoulder, my chest rumbling as she relaxes into my hold.

“I’m too sore,” she warns when my hands inch down her stomach.

I flex my fingers beneath her belly button but relent. Maybe later tonight. “You’re naked,” I say by way of explanation.

“Someone stole my clothes.” She tips her head and looks at me through her eyelashes. “I don’t think they’ll fit you.”

“I like them better on you anyway.” I run my palm up her body, cupping her breast and dropping my mouth to her neck, kissing her mark. I’ll never get tired of seeing it on her.

She hums in approval, jaw working as she finishes the last of her slice of pizza. “Who was at the door?”

“Rukus.”

“Oh.” Her forehead lines with confusion.

“The treasurer.” I pinch her nipple, and she swats my hand. “Then there’s Royce, Marve, and Orlando.”

“Stop it.” She presses her bare ass into my pants, forcing me to take a step back. She slips away before I can grab her. “I need something to wear.”

Crow takes his shirt off with one hand and holds it out to her. Her mouth drops open. Crow’s a big guy, more soft than hard, but even I can admit he looks good. His arms are the most cut with bulging biceps, but there’s still a bit of definition around his torso. Kiki still hasn’t said anything, the sight of her mate rendering her speechless.

I’m only a little jealous that I didn’t think to give her my shirt.

He prowls toward her, much like I had, only his eyes remain on her face. “Take it.”

“I didn’t mean the shirt from your back.” Still, she reaches for it, her delicate fingers closing around the dark cotton material. “Thank you.”

Crow’s gaze drops to her tits, trailing over her body as she slides the top on. So he is an asshole just like me. I cut my attention to Jag, and sure enough he’s been checking her out too. Crow’s shirt fortunately—or unfortunately for my dick—covers her ass and that pretty pussy.

“That’s a damn shame,” I mutter. Jag and Crow grunt in agreement.

“You literally were inside of me in all ways possible. Shouldn’t it be less distracting by now?”

“Angel, if anything, that makes everything worse. I distinctly remember how that cunt clamps around me.”

Her cheeks flame. “Never mind. What did Rukus want?”

Right. There’s a rat to take care of.

“Pest control,” I say.

“Don’t do that.” She places her hands on her hips and glares at me. “Whatever it is, I can handle it. It’s not like Axel went out of his way to hide MC business from me. Dad tried...” She trails off and quickly blinks back tears.

The frenzy of the heat distracted us all from her father’s death. I continue with the conversation, making a point to talk through her struggle to compose herself. If I stop to ask if she is okay, that would be worse. I’m not in the habit of making her cry, at least not when I can prevent it without the threat from Axel looming over us.

“Jimmy, some tech whiz, gave us some information on a rival crew, but it turns out he was double dipping.”

“Who was the other crew?”

Lying would be easier, but fuck that. Kiki is here to stay, and I’m not going to fuck things up because I’m protecting her from the truth. I did that once before and all it did was put me through three years of complete fucking misery.

Looking her straight in the eye, I say, “Wrecker.”

Kiki sucks in a sharp breath. Out of my peripheral, I notice Crow and Jag tense where they stand. How she handles this information could open a shit storm between the four of us all over again. We already told her we didn’t kill him, but even to me the way it sounds is suspect. Kiren just so happened to die the day we planned to mess with their supply? Yeah, that’s sketchy.

“And what information did you want?” She picks her words carefully, but the wheels are spinning inside of her head. Kiki Malone isn’t an idiot. She’s already thinking over every possible *what if*.

“We were going to intercept a shipment of drugs. Jimmy gave us some intel, only the truck never came. Axel and Wrecker did though.”

She swallows. “And when was this?”

“The day your dad died.” I pause and give her a second. “I promise you we didn’t kill him.”

Glaring, she bristles. “I never said you did.”

“You thought it.” I glance at the guys and shrug. “It’s okay. We would have too, but we’d never cross that line.”

“I know,” she says it with all the confidence in the world. “I know you wouldn’t do something like that. I already told you I believe you.” Her eyes skate across the apartment. “I don’t want to talk about that anymore.”

Fair enough.

“We have to go deal with Jimmy... but we’ll be back. Are you good to stay here alone?” Crow asks.

She sighs. “I’m a big girl, Crow.”

He grabs her hand and tugs her toward him. “I know. I don’t want to leave you alone if you need us.”

Hesitance passes over her face, but she shakes her head. “I think I can survive a few hours without you guys. I need to shower anyway. I’m pretty sure I’m disgusting.”

“Nothing about what happened during your heat was gross.” I grab a mug from the cabinet and pour the last of the coffee in it while Crow slips into his room to grab a new shirt. It’s just before lunch time, but it’s morning for her. “But a shower did feel nice. The wi-fi password is on the router and there’s a spare laptop on my desk if you need to do anything. You can text—” I cut off and glance at Jag. “Did we get her phone?”

“I already ordered one just in case.” He glances at his device. “It should be here tomorrow actually.”

“Axel has my phone.”

I don’t like the way that prick’s name sounds on her lips, but I keep that thought to myself. Or I mostly do. There’s no stopping the deep rumbling warning building in my chest. Kiki gives me a pointed look.

“You’re such an alpha,” she teases me like she used to.

“And you’re a brat.” I hand her the coffee. “I’ll have Rukus spread the word that no one fucks with you. Do

whatever you want while we're gone, but try not to stir up too much trouble."

"Me? I'm an angel." Her blue eyes sparkle with mischief.

I steal a quick kiss and make my way toward the door. "I may be pussy whipped, Angel, but I'm not a fool. Don't burn the place down."

"Maybe tomorrow," she murmurs.

I grin and the guys and I head to take care of the rat, even though I know damn well we all would rather stay locked up in the apartment with Kiki for the rest of our lives.

Jimmy and Sneaky are restrained in the middle of the garage. Rukus used rough rope to tie their hands behind their back. Makeshift gags muffle their shouts as the guys, and I enter the large room. Sneaky is trying to talk sense into us, whereas the sounds Jimmy makes are desperate pleas. He knows he fucked up.

Rukus stands in front of them both with his arms crossed. The rest of the council members stand behind him. They all look to us for direction. I walk around the two men, taking stock of the puddle beneath Jimmy's chair and the lack of one under Sneaky's. Only one of them has committed a crime against the MC. There is no code for criminals, but not being a snitch is implied.

Snitches don't get stitches. Snitches get ditches. That's the way of the world. I've only let one snitch go, and that ended up costing lives the club will never get back. That won't happen again.

I stop in front of them but glance at Rukus. "Go spread the word that Kiki is our omega. No one touches her. No one talks shit to her. She's a Hound now."

"On it, Prez."

Good. No protests or questions. It would be natural for them to think what we're doing is dumb... she was born and bred Wrecker, but the Hell Hounds trust our judgment.

"Now what are we going to do with you two?" I raise my voice to be heard over Sneaky's incoherent mumbling. "One of you is a snitch. The other is plain stupid." I scowl at Sneaky. "Shut up."

I don't use my command, but I don't need to. Sneaky isn't as dumb as I thought.

"Start with the snitch." Jag hands me a mini-blow torch.

Jimmy bucks against his confines and starts rambling. A stronger man wouldn't give in at the mere threat of torture. Jimmy is self-serving. He has no loyalty except to himself. To drag it out a little longer than necessary, I pretend not to notice his sudden eagerness to spill his guts and light the torch. A roaring flame bursts to life and the guy starts bawling. Sneaky's eyes are as round as saucers and his face has gone sickly.

"Come on, Jimmy. You had to know this was coming." I take a step toward him, and he flails so hard his chair topples over right into the puddle of piss. Cutting the flame, I release a hard sigh and hand the torch back to Jag. "Guess the fun will have to wait."

Nothing about physically torturing someone to talk is fun, and usually it never comes to extreme violence. I've only had to deal with this situation a few times. Most people are more than willing to talk once they're restrained and their mind has had time to run through the worst case scenarios.

"Help him up." Two of the guys rush forward to pick him up. Once his chair is fixed, I drop to a squat in front of him, a few feet away from the puddle of piss. "This doesn't have to be hard. You fucked up, Jimmy. I need to know how badly. Tell me everything and it'll be quick. Withhold information and the torch comes back. Understand?"

He quickly nods.

“Take the gag off.” Royce is there in an instant to do as I asked. “Talk,” I say to Jimmy.

“I didn’t have a choice. Axel made me. He said if I didn’t —”

“Stop.”

Jimmy’s mouth hangs open, taking my word as a literal command to stop everything.

“Axel didn’t make you do shit if he threatened you. You made the decision to tell him, didn’t you?”

“He threatened to turn me in for my gambling stuff.” Jimmy has a pretty steady side business cheating people out of their money with the application he developed. He’s a smart guy.

It’s a shame he has to die.

“But he didn’t command you to tell him.”

Jimmy hesitates. “No.”

“Continue.” I steeple my pointer fingers and rest my chin on them. “What did you tell Axel?”

“If I had known what was going to happen...”

“Cut the shit, Jimmy.” Crow snaps. “You knew what Axel was going to do with any information you gave him. You thought we’d all be dead and there would be no consequences.”

Jimmy’s gulp is audible.

“I’m getting impatient,” Jag says with a sigh. “Let me torch his ass.” He takes a menacing step forward.

“Okay, okay!” Jimmy sobs. “I’ll tell you everything.”

“From the beginning.” My legs start to burn, but I stay in my squat. I have to see how he reacts to the things he says. I need to see the guilt. It’s the only way I’ll be able to sleep tonight.

“He wanted to know about the deal with the McGraths.”

“He wants our guns. That’s no secret.” Crow taps his fingers against his pants in a steady rhythm. I block out the sound so it doesn’t drive me crazy.

“What else?” There’s more and Jimmy knows it.

“I hacked into your bank accounts and personal emails. I figured out the code you were using and translated it for him.” Jimmy winces as he says, “He knows everything.”

Someone kicks a cabinet full of tools behind me. The metal clanks around and the sound has Jimmy weeping. I pinch my eyes shut. This is bad. The deal with the McGraths could go sideways if we don’t patch our shit up.

“I’m—I—I’m sorry,” Jimmy blubbers. “I didn’t mean—”

I slap my hand on my leg, opening my eyes and letting him see just how truly pissed I am. “Shut up.”

He drops his gaze and trembles, tiny hiccupped sobs escaping his lips every so often. I clench my fists and breathe. I could throttle him but that would only delay the inevitable and it wouldn’t make me feel any better about what has to be done.

“When we came to you for intel on the drug run,” Crow leads him into a full confession.

“I knew he’d come to attack you guys. I didn’t know he’d kill Kiren too. I wasn’t trying to start a war.” He was only trying to save himself.

“How do you know he killed Kiren?” Doubt fills Jag’s question and I cover my mouth with my hand and glance at him. Jag’s gaze slides to meet mine. If Axel killed Kiren, there’s a reason. Did he do it for Kiki? Because he wanted what he couldn’t have? “Why’d you say that, Jimmy?” Jag asks again, this time lighting the torch as he advances.

I hop to my feet and place my hand on his chest. Jag cuts me a look, one that would make a weaker alpha back away. I narrow my eyes and shake my head. His features harden, but he knows I’m right, and he shuts off the torch, letting the hand holding it drop to his side.

Once the threat has passed, Jimmy says, “I was there.”

“Get your phone,” I tell Crow. Crow points the camera at Jimmy, ready to record. “Say it again.” The phone beeps and the video begins without my voice in it. Evidence in case we ever need it. It’s inadmissible in court, but that’s not what I’m saving it for.

“Axel killed Kiren before he sent everyone to come attack you,” Jimmy says in a rush. “I can tell the cops. I’ll tell them everything if you let me go. I can help you guys. Please.” He jerks against the restraints. “*Please!*”

Crow ends the recording and nods at me. It’s safe to talk now.

“No, Jimmy. We don’t need your help.” And unlike him, we’re not snitches. Ratting on Axel would only end up with him in prison and that’s not good enough for me. I think the guys and Kiki would agree.

Royce clears his throat. “Same place?”

I shake my head. “No. Take Jimmy up state. Find him a nice hole in the middle of nowhere.”

“Knox!” Jimmy starts fighting to get free. “Don’t do—” The gag distorts the last of his plea.

I clench my jaw and look at Sneaky. “Take him with you.”

His nostrils flare, and he tries to break free too. Through the gag I can make out his general confusion.

I bare my teeth and point at him. “You’ve killed more than your fair share of people. Don’t think I haven’t heard about that shit you’ve been selling.” He cuts all his drugs with fentanyl. My parents were addicts, but the drugs back then weren’t nearly as bad as the shit out there now.

Maybe all his clients will find a new connection, but I have the opportunity to get rid of him, and I’m not going to waste it. Maybe it’ll be enough to save a child from suffering through what I did. Probably not. But maybe for a few days they won’t have to wonder if their parents are coming home. Maybe they won’t have to wake up at 3 AM to chaos. Maybe someone will

save them from the wreckage before it's too late. Maybe. No one saved me and my life didn't have a purpose until I met the guys.

My pack gave me something to protect. Something to live for.

So yeah, I'm going to kill Sneaky without remorse. He tries to protest, and I'm happy I can't hear a word his pathetic ass is saying.

"Not in my city," I tell him.

"He's not the only one," Prat says. "Killing him won't take care of the problem." I look at the Captain. His face is calm and his hands are relaxed at his side. He's not arguing so much as stating facts.

I can appreciate the logic, but that doesn't change my mind.

"Maybe not, but it'll be a start." I'm not naive enough to believe our MC can get rid of all the shitty drugs out there, but I can take care of Sneaky. He's Tina's supplier and he gave Curtis the drugs to give to Nova. I look at Royce. "Take him."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

KIKI

After I finish nursing my coffee, I head back into the nest to clean up but stumble to a stop when I see the shelf on the far wall. I hadn't noticed it yesterday.

“What the hell,” I mumble to myself as I wander closer. The beanie I'd lost—my favorite beanie—is lying next to the necklace I'd lost. Scrunching my eyebrows together, I take it all in. I had lost so many things over the years, and I'd written it off as me being careless. I'd thought the washing machine at home had somehow eaten my underwear. Turns out the guys are a bunch of rotten thieves. A flutter of annoyance simmers inside of me. They could have left a note or something. But I quickly shove that aside.

They told me why they never reached out to me, and while I don't particularly like that they left me in the dark for so long, I get why they did. I can either choose to continue getting pissed at them, or I can let it go. Hanging out with them at the pond the other day was amazing, and I'm not ashamed to admit that I more than enjoyed being claimed this morning. I've spent enough time being angry. For now, I want to be happy.

I grab the necklace and put it on, then gather some of the dirty linens to start the process of preparing the nest for my next heat. Keeping myself busy will help me avoid thinking about things that make me sad. Taking a shower and finding clothes that are comfortable for a lazy day distract me for a little while. I grabbed a handful of outfits when we stopped by

the house. Shorts, jeans, various tops, and my favorite—leggings. I tug a navy blue pair on and grab my longer cream colored t-shirt. Some might say leggings aren't real pants. Some are stupid assholes.

I braid my hair and play some music from the laptop Knox told me I could borrow. The lead singer of the band screams and shouts through the song. His voice is loud enough to drown out my own thoughts. It's perfect. After I brush my teeth, I grab the laptop and make myself at home in the oversize chair next to the couch.

The stack of cash is still sitting on the coffee table. I smile. It was a strangely sweet but also incredibly stupid gesture. Even so, I respect their willingness to give me the choice. They don't get extra points for doing the bare minimum, but they're so much better than Axel.

Crossing my legs, I heave out a breath and stare at the screen. Social media isn't going to help me stay positive. I guess that means I'm logging into my favorite interactive site. The computer whirs as I type in the address and hit enter. I usually play on my phone, but there's no way I'm going to ask Axel for it. The guys are getting me a new one anyway. Hearts and deep violets and pinks bloom across the webpage. An animated woman appears and asks if I'd like to start where I last left off.

"Time to see if Tonya can get it on with the orc." The images shift, moving me from the home screen into the cute coffee shop scenario. Tonya is sitting at a table with a coffee cup, animated steam swirls above her mug.

The bell dings and Draven, the orc, struts through the door. His character is buff and drawn to look more human than others, but it's passable. I haven't found a good interactive app that really captures monsters in their drawings. Tonya gasps and the screen pops up with a prompt.

>Stay and chat with the orc.

>Run away.

I'm not really sure who would choose to run away, but I guess some people like to draw out that tension before they finally hook up. I realize that online smut games being my idea of a good time might be unusual, but we all have our vices. Tonya and Draven flirt over coffee, but the stupid story forces another woman into the mix. The screen pops up with prompts for Draven.

>Say hi and chat.

>Get up from Tonya's table to carry on the new conversation.

"Fuck you," I mutter, snapping the laptop shut without closing the site. They ruined a perfectly good story with that shit. I guarantee Tonya is going to be mad about either option and then a whole spiral of miscommunication lines will ensue until I can actually get the two of them into bed. I've been a little sensitive to miscommunication ever since what happened with the guys. They've been nothing but honest now, and I love them all the more for it.

Love?

I loved them back then, but is one heat enough to rekindle those feelings? Had the feelings ever truly left? I don't think so. Part of me held onto that love, saving it in hopes of them coming back.

Drumming my fingers on the computer, I glance around the apartment. I could watch a show but I'm not in the mood. Maybe I can eat again?

I set the laptop aside and trudge into the kitchen, searching through my options. Red licorice. Disgusting. Vegetable chips. Who the hell bought those? Milk chocolate. Ugh. There isn't even a tiny square of dark chocolate anywhere in the pantry. If I had my phone, I'd place a grocery order and get good snacks, but alas, Axel strikes again.

Fucker.

Thinking of Axel instantly brings my mind back to dad. I've been trying hard not to go there. I need some space from my grief, if only for a bit. I'm not going to deny it completely,

but it won't consume me today like it had a few days ago. The only option left that will truly distract me is venturing out of the apartment. The guys didn't tell me to stay put, and even if they did, I wouldn't listen to them.

I'm allowed to explore and do what I want and I don't need permission for that—well, I would if they had used their alpha bark on me, but they didn't. I pull on my shoes and ease the heavy front door open. I'm pretty sure it's solid steel. The safety measure isn't unusual given what the guys do. MC life can be deadly.

It's a little after two in the afternoon, so there's some activity in the main part of the clubhouse. Voices and laughter filter down the hall, chased by a rift from a guitar of a familiar heavy rock song. Pool balls clack together. Linger near the safety of the apartment for a few seconds, I take a few steadying breaths.

I'm about to walk into a room full of rivals. Technically I'm a Hound now, but I was a Wrecker for so long. I would be wary of me.

Show no fear. Dad's reminder echoes through my head.

Nope. Can't think about him. Marching down the hall, I all but run away from the way my thoughts want to spiral. There isn't a dramatic record screech when I enter the room. In fact, the people standing around the bar and pool tables don't immediately notice me. I'm not spotted until a beta female older than me struts to the electric jukebox on the wall next to me. The people she left behind continue their conversations and games.

Her brown eyes are scrutinizing and her lips purse as she takes me in. She doesn't miss a step though, continuing on her intended path until she stops a few feet away from where I stand. She taps on the screen, glancing at me with a raised eyebrow.

“Are you going to stand and stare all day?”

“I haven't decided.”

She smiles a little at my honesty. “So you’re the omega.” She keeps her voice low and selects a few songs. Her hair is done in long, thick box braids that stop at the middle of her back, and the leather pants she’s wearing contrasts nicely with her bright red top. She’s too put together to be a groupie. Too aware.

“Royce told me the guys had finally found one. I’m Monica.”

“You’re with Royce?” I think I remember him as being on the council. There’s that Rukus guy too. Too many R names to keep them straight.

“Yup.” She turns and props her toned arm on the top of the machine, resting her head against her hand. “Want a shot?”

“It’s two in the afternoon,” I point out for some reason.

“And?” Monica lifts an eyebrow. “Come on, I’m one of four old ladies and the other two don’t like coming to the club house. I need a woman’s company.”

I bite back a grin. “Maybe one.”

“That’s all I need.” Turning back to the machine, she hits play and the heavy music switches to an upbeat song. Everyone groans and turns to face us. I brace for harsh words, but they’re all hurled at Monica.

“This song is the worst.”

“Turn it off!”

“Really, Monica?”

The beta beside me bristles and drops her hands to her hips. “What exactly is wrong with a song about finding yourself and leaving the haters behind?”

Silence.

“Exactly. If you don’t like it, go outside.” She turns back to me. “Come on.”

I follow her to the bar and she walks behind it like a seasoned pro, grabbing shot glasses and pouring a higher end tequila into them.

“To new friends.” She holds her tiny cup up.

I clink mine against it and shoot the liquor, hissing as a trail of fire chases the liquid. “Damn.”

“Yeah,” she rasps. “I never get used to it. Do you want a margarita?”

I shouldn’t, not when I’m in this fragile emotional state, but the hopeful look on Monica’s face has me agreeing.

“That’s my girl.” She wiggles her shoulders and winks at me.

I watch her mix the drink, admiring the smooth confidence she holds behind the bar. I’d probably make a mess, but Monica is clean and efficient and in no time we’re sipping on margs and watching the games of pool. We fall into an easy conversation. Monica sticks to superficial questions but that doesn’t bother me. Not today anyway.

Someone misses an easy corner pocket and I huff. “Come on.”

“Like you can do better.” Monica bumps me with her elbow. She tips her chin toward the people shooting. “They’ve been playing for years.”

“I can.” Dad and I played all the time. I’m no shark, but I’m better than the current players.

“Is that so?”

Rolling my head in her direction, I nod with an easy grin. Maybe I’m a little buzzed. That only makes me more confident. Without the nerves that come with being surrounded by Hell Hounds, I can play a solid game.

“I’m hearing you say you want to show these fuckers how to really play pool.” She drains the last of her drink. “I’ve been playing for twenty years. Let’s kick their asses.”

“We could put money on it.”

Her eyes flare with delight. “It’ll be like taking bottles from babies.”

“You mean candy?”

She shrugs. “Fuck if I know. I’m not about the crotch goblin life.” Grabbing my arm, she hauls me off the barstool.

I set my near empty glass down as she drags me toward the game, almost missing the bar top altogether. “Slow down, woman. They’re not going anywhere.”

One of the games ends and the guys who lost groan, dropping their heads in defeat.

Monica clears her throat. “Kiki and I are next. Winner takes the pot.” She extracts three one-hundred dollar bills from her pocket and places them on the table. “Who’s game?”

“I know you’re good, Monica, but can you really carry the omega through the game?” This comes from a gruff, burly dude with a shaved head.

“Worry about yourself,” Monica snaps and presses her finger into the cash. “Any takers?”

“I’ll play.” A beta with dyed blue hair that’s shaved on either side steps forward.

“Hey, Lor.” Monica shoots me a quick look. “They’re good. Who’s your partner, Lor?”

“Fuck it,” the burly guy mutters. “Royce can’t kick my ass for taking your money in a fair game.” He places his own money on the table next to Monica’s. He and Lor grab their pool cues while Monica shows me to the other rack of cues.

“Mountain, the big one, is good, but you have to watch out for Lor. They’ll play like they’re not good, but then out of nowhere you’ll be left with all your balls on the table and theirs in every pocket.” Monica makes her selection. “I’m not worried though. I’m good, let’s just hope you’re as good as you say you are.”

“I’m good.” I try a few sticks before finding one that’s the right height and weight. “My dad started teaching me when I was nine.” I say that without choking up and quickly focus on the wooden rod in my hand.

“Good man. All right, let’s show them what happens when they mess with us.”

Monica and Mountain talk shit to one another during the set up. Lor shoots me a curious look. If you were to go solely on looks, they're slight and unassuming. They hold themselves with sureness though, and I know without a doubt they're a solid player.

"We'll let you two go first." Monica snatches the cash from the table and pockets it.

"Hey now," Lor says, their voice comes out deeper than I expected, but it's fitting.

"I play fair." Monica winks at them. "If you win, you'll get your money."

Lor squints but doesn't protest more than that. They go first, breaking the rack with a solid strike, but like Monica predicted, they pull a silly face to throw us off. If she hadn't warned me, I would think Lor wasn't very good. Lor steps back and catches me watching. They offer up a grin.

I arch an eyebrow to say *you're not fooling me*, but smile back to let them know I'm not being a bitch. Monica takes our first turn and I focus on the game rather than evaluating the opponents.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

KIKI

The ball shoots across the table, knocking the last solid into the corner pocket. I drop the butt of my cue stick to the ground and grin. Monica hoots. Lor scowls and Mountain all but growls at me as he bends over to try and save the game. They have five left on the table.

“Shit, Little O. I didn’t think you’d be this good.” Monica chuckles when Mountain sends her a heated glare. “Not my fault you underestimated the tiny thing. You probably should have known better. She *is* from Wrecker.”

“Are you calling me a cheat?” I pretend to scowl at her. Over the course of three games—each of which we won—Monica and I have bonded. Kicking ass at pool has a way of bringing people together. The fourth game is shaping up to be ours too, and despite trying to play it cool, a smug smirk tugs at my lips.

Lor’s mostly been a good sport. They don’t look nearly as mad as Mountain. I get why he’s frustrated though; he and Lor are out a lot of cash. Mountain shoots and the balls clack together. Number fourteen sails by the side pocket he was aiming for and knocks the eight ball into a better position for Monica to sink it in.

“Damn,” he curses, walking back to where Lor is standing.

“This is probably our last game,” Lor says with a chuckle. They push a strand of vibrant blue hair out of their eyes.

“Bunch of sharks,” Mountain mutters to himself.

The people watching the game laugh at his expense and Monica makes the shot with ease. Her eyes light and she winks at Lor before glancing at Mountain.

“Come on, Mountain. Are you really going to be a sore loser?” Monica places her pool stick on the table and grabs the cash from her pocket. She counts out loud, much to Mountain’s annoyance. “Here you go, Little O.”

The nickname is cute, but I didn’t miss the raunchy jokes a few guys dropped during the game. Nothing nefarious, just a bunch of bikers talking shit.

I take the cash. It’s over a grand, and I do feel pretty bad about taking their money. I split the cash evenly and drop it on the pool table.

“You can have it.”

Monica scoffs. “You’re too nice.”

I shrug. “I didn’t play to take their money.” I gesture to the big guy. “He looks like he’s about to faint and we both know ambulances are expensive.”

“You’re such a shit.” Lor shakes their head.

“Man, who invited this Wrecker chick into the clubhouse?” Mountain’s chest is puffed but his eyes dance with mirth.

“That would be us,” Crow’s deep voice slices through the easy humor. His arms wrap around me from behind, pressing himself against me. “Do we have a problem?”

Mountain stiffens and takes a few steps back with his hands raised. “I was joking, Crow.”

“Didn’t Rukus tell you not to mess with our woman?” Jag struts right by where Crow has me held hostage and advances on Mountain.

Fucking hell.

I shove out of Crow’s hold and race after Jag, stepping between him and the biker. “Stop.” I put my hand on his chest.

“We were playing a game. He was nice, but he’s a sore loser. He’s not actually being a dick to me.”

Crystal blue eyes study my face. “You’re a Hound now.

“What’s going on?” Knox snaps from behind us. Crow quickly fills him in. Meanwhile Jag holds my gaze, nostrils flaring slightly when Mountain grumbles something about possessive alphas under his breath. I flex my fingers against his chest and shake my head.

“—gave her a hard time for being Wrecker,” Crow finishes.

Mountain groans. “I was joking, Prez.”

“Oh, leave the poor prick alone,” Monica says. “Your omega took all his money.”

“He wasn’t being rude to me.” I raise my voice so Knox and Crow can hear what I’m saying too. “Please, leave him alone.” I squint at Jag. “If you hurt him, I’m not sleeping in your bed tonight.”

Jag bristles. “Are you threatening me?”

“What are you going to do about it?” I fist his shirt and yank him toward me. “Leave him alone, or else.” I let the rest of the threat hang in the air.

“You’re a mean woman,” he whispers. I nod and wait him out. Finally, he relents and steps back. “Fine. He’s free to go without an ass beating.”

“Good.” I glance at Mountain over my shoulder. “Sorry, they’re dicks when they think someone is being mean to me.”

The three of them release little growls, sounding like tiny little chihuahuas. I bite my cheek to keep from teasing them. For all of Mountain’s frustration about losing the game, I don’t think he’s really that mad at me so much as himself and I haven’t felt threatened by him. Right now I’m worried about my guys losing their cool because they feel the need to protect me.

I’m about to tell them we should head to the apartment when a loud boom shakes the clubhouse. On instinct, everyone

drops to the ground as another explosion sounds. Glass explodes and rains down. Jag covers me with his body.

My ears ring, screams and shouts fading in and out, like someone is messing with the volume on a TV. Putrid smoke fills the space.

What happened?

Jag's on top of me, but where are the other two? I try to wiggle out from under the alpha on top of me. My hearing returns at full volume. People are shouting. Monica screams and my heart jumps into my throat. Is she hurt?

A fire whooshes to life somewhere nearby, crackling and popping.

Oh my god. We're all in danger. Where are the guys?

"Knox! Crow!" I yell. They don't answer. I move again.

"It's not safe." Jag tries to keep me pinned. I understand why, but there are no gunshots. Whoever hit the club isn't here with guns, or at least, I hope not. Regardless, I need to lay eyes on Knox and Crow. Rolling onto my back, I dig my knee into his upper thigh, placing enough pressure to get my point across. He releases a harsh exhale and gives me the space I need to crawl out from beneath him.

"Stay low," he warns me.

Like I'd be stupid enough to stand up. I keep that biting response to myself. He's only worried, and I'm arguably being stupid by leaving the safety of my alpha shield.

Knox and Crow are covering their heads with their hands, stomachs pressed against the ground. They're safe. Glass litters the stained concrete floor. I scan the room from my vantage. The windows are blown out. A few tables are destroyed, but everyone seems okay.

At least there's that.

I turn back to Crow, fisting my shaking hands. "Are you okay?"

His head snaps up. “Kiki.” He breathes a sigh of relief. “I’m good.”

“Who the fuck was that?” Knox asks, pushing himself off the ground. He *is* dumb enough to stand up. Scowling, he stares out of the now glass free window.

“Get down,” I growl.

His eyes swing to me. “It’s okay, Angel. There’s no one outside.”

“Where’s Royce?” Monica swings her head side to side, searching for her mate.

“Taking out the trash.” Crow helps her stand.

Her face is bloody, some glass cut her across the cheek, but she’s otherwise unharmed. She puts on a brave face, but I don’t miss the way her hands tremble at her side.

“He left well before the explosions,” Crow adds.

“Oh thank god.” She sucks in a deep breath and pulls out her phone.

While she calls to check on him, I quickly check on the other people in the room. Lor slowly gets to their knees. I nod at them and check in with Mountain. His dark cheeks are bright red and his chest heaves as he takes in the destruction. His gaze meets mine for a moment and he nods. He’s okay too. Then he turns and runs toward the door.

“The bikes,” he yells in explanation.

“Fuck,” someone says.

“I swear if anyone touched them,” another person snarls. Together they rush after Mountain.

“No guns!” Knox calls after them.

Jag’s arm brushes against mine. “We don’t have much time.”

“Time for what?” Lor asks.

“That explosion is going to draw attention, and not the good kind.” Crow grimaces and glances at the Hounds who

didn't run out to check on the motorcycles. "Sweep the clubhouse. Lock everything up." Grabbing keys from his pocket, he nods at Lor. "You know how to get into the cellar?"

"I broke the last load of guns."

"Good." Crow tosses Lor the keys and glances around the room. "Get all the shit that could get us arrested into the cellar. The cops won't know to look for it."

There's a moment of hesitation.

"Now!" Knox demands. Everyone scatters, not an ounce of extra influence needed. "Keep her safe," Knox tells Jag before he and Crow storm out of the clubhouse to investigate the damage.

I spin on Jag. "Don't you dare try to keep me inside," I warn before following after the guys.

"I swear you like to piss him off," Jag mutters. To his credit, he doesn't grab me and force me back inside. I knew I liked him.

"Maybe I—" My words cut out.

Almost every bike on the lot is damaged. Fire roars around more than a few. Mountain and a few other Hell Hounds use fire extinguishers, giant plumes of white pour from the nozzles and douse the flames. The motorcycles are destroyed. Whoever did this wanted to hit the club hard. New bikes aren't cheap.

My stomach knots as I take in the wreckage. There's only one person I can think of that would want to come at the Hounds this hard. Axel. Sure, the club probably has other enemies but the timing is suspicious.

The guys have me.

The guys have the rat.

"Where's Jimmy?" I turn to Jag.

"He's not here." His face is blank, giving me nothing to go on.

"Does anyone know he was here?"

Jag shakes his head. “We had Sneaky too. I don’t think anyone knew they were here.”

“Good.” I pause and try to find a way to ask what I’m wondering. Rats don’t live for long once they’re found.

“Does it bother you?”

Of course he knows what I’m thinking.

“Probably not as much as it should.” Honestly, snitches make life more complicated. They put everyone in danger, especially if they’re working with the cops.

Jag nods, and his eyes flash over my head. “She wanted to come out.”

“We don’t know that it’s safe,” Knox says.

I pivot. “Then why are you and Crow out here? If you guys get to put yourself in danger, so do I.” Lifting my chin, I stare up at him with a defiant wrinkle between my eyebrows.

“I guess you have a point,” he finally says.

Sirens whoop in the distance. He pinches his eyes shut and grinds his jaw. Crow tells a few people to go inside and help Lor out. The club is notorious for being the local arms dealer, but just how many weapons do they have on sight?

“How worried should we be?” I ask quietly.

“There’s a deal next Wednesday. It’s enough to put us all in prison for life.”

I’m not sure the guns are any better than the drugs Wrecker’s known for distributing, but part of me is relieved there are no heavy drugs around. After seeing the shape Nova was in, I don’t want to be anywhere near that stuff.

Blue and red lights flash over the sunset-shadowed clubhouse. Knox sucks in another calming breath before pasting on a nonchalant look. It’s a little disconcerting to watch the emotion drain from his face. Crow and Jag do the same. I’ve had years of practice and my face draws into a hard mask of *fuck around and find out* in under a second.

I guess the only good thing about the situation is I know I won't be going to jail. I haven't done anything wrong.

Silver linings are everywhere if you know where to find them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

KIKI

“You know lying about what happened can land you in jail, right?” the lady cop squints at me.

After the cops arrived, everyone was brought in for questioning. It took seven squad cars to get us here. The guys went into questioning first, and shortly after I was pulled into my own room. I’ve been grilled for the past twenty minutes about the incident.

I sigh and give her the same answer as last time. I give her the truth. “All I know was that I was playing pool and then all of a sudden there were explosions.”

“And who would want to hit the Hell Hounds like this?”

“I don’t know, I just got here.” I lift a shoulder. “I’m sure you know they wouldn’t tell an omega about club business.”

“You expect me to believe you don’t know what these guys get into? Your dad’s Kiren Malone.”

His murder was never reported, so she doesn’t know he’s dead.

“All the more reason for them to keep me out of club business, don’t you think?” I place my hands on the table. “Are we done here?”

“You don’t think your dad would do something like this, do you?”

I scowl. “No.”

“Are you sure about that? His daughter—no, his beloved daughter being auctioned off to the rival gang?”

“Motorcycle Club,” I snap. “It’s not a gang.”

Semantics. It’s essentially a gang.

“Spare me, Malone.”

The door to the holding room swings open and in walks the captain himself. “Valdez, take a break.”

She looks ready to protest, but one stern glance from her boss has her nodding and slipping out of the room. Captain Riley sits across from me. Back when I met him, he wasn’t in charge. He wasn’t a dick to me either. That I can appreciate.

“Ms. Malone.” He drums his fingers on the metal table. “How’ve you been?”

“Let me guess, you’re the good cop? I was told I needed to provide a statement. I did that. No offense, Captain Riley, but we’re not friends and you’re not entitled to know how I’ve been.”

His lips press together, and he nods, sitting in silence for a stretch.

“So am I free to go?”

“I have a few more questions.”

With a heavy sigh, I sit back. “I already told your officer ___”

“Where’s your father, Kiki?”

My mouth snaps closed. What? Why is he asking that? “I don’t know. Probably at the clubhouse.”

“He hasn’t been home.”

I lean forward and study his face. “Have you been keeping tabs on Wrecker, Riley?”

“It’s literally my job to keep an eye on criminals.”

“Then you should know the Hell Hounds bought me at the auctions, which means I haven’t seen my dad since they brought me home.”

“You haven’t talked to him?”

“They threw my phone out.” Lie, lie, and lie some more.

“Your dad wouldn’t accept not being able to contact you, Kiki. If you’re protecting him—”

“I told you, Riley. I don’t know where he is.” I clench my jaw and hold his gaze. “Why are you looking for him? He didn’t do this.”

“I believe that,” the captain says. He tosses a contact card onto the table, and I pick it up and stare at it.

“What am I supposed to do with this?”

“You let me know if you hear from your dad. Tell him I’m looking for him.” He stands and opens the door. “You’re free to go. Thanks for coming in.”

“Thanks for inviting me,” I snip, shoving out of the chair. “You know how much I love it here.” I slip the card into my pocket. I have no intention of using it, but I’m not about to throw it away in front of him.

“Still sour about facing the consequences of your actions?”

I pause next to him in the doorway. “I almost liked you. Should have known better.”

“You get the tattoo after your stint?”

“Are we done here?” I ask, not bothering to answer his question. My tattoo has nothing to do with the night I stayed in jail and everything to do with the men waiting for me.

“Don’t let me catch you back here, Kiki. You’ve been given a second chance. Don’t waste it.”

“A second chance?” My eyebrows pinch together. “You’re joking right? I was literally auctioned off like a fucking cow.”

His head rears back. “You know that’s not what I meant.”

“I haven’t been given a chance at anything but doing exactly what the omega council thinks is right for the alphas, Riley. Don’t act like you and Camila did me some favor.”

Dropping his gaze, censure pulls his lips into a thin line. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

“Keep your apology,” I mutter. “It won’t do me any good.”

The guys are waiting for me outside. Relief washes over me. I half expected someone to end up arrested even though the guys didn’t do anything wrong—this time. It seems Lor and company did a good job sweeping the clubhouse. Things might’ve gone a little differently had the police found the guns. I join them, glaring back at the police station as Knox pulls me into his side.

“Are you okay?”

“Fine.” I let him hold me for another second before extracting myself from his hold and giving Jag and Crow a hug too. “Are you guys?”

“Yeah. Same old shit. They’re going to investigate what happened but we all know they won’t find who did it.”

As much as he’s a bastard, Axel is good at covering his tracks.

“Can we go home?”

Crow grins. “Home?”

“Yeah.” I give him a funny once over. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

“I’m good, even better now that you called the apartment home.”

My chest tightens. “You know what I mean.” I play it off.

“Uh-huh.” He smiles at the guys. “Did you hear her?”

“Yeah, dude.” Jag rolls his eyes. “We can’t go to the clubhouse tonight. I rented a hotel room for us.”

Knox uses CatchaRide to call a car. The motorcycles are all trashed and it’ll take a few days for the guys to get new ones. Since the cops brought us in, we’ll have to go back to the clubhouse to get one of their spare vehicles first.

I wrinkle my nose at the thought of a hotel and Jag notices. “What? You don’t like hotels?”

“Why wouldn’t I want to sleep where bed bugs breed?”

“If the place has a good cleaning and inspection crew...” Jag lifts a shoulder. “How many people do you know who’ve actually gotten bed bug bites?”

“Three.” I know I sound like a prissy, picky bitch, but the fear is real.

His face falls. “Well, damn. Okay then. What about a vacation rental?”

“Just as gross. We can stay at my house.” I guarantee a cruiser will roll by tonight. A little activity would go a long way to easing whatever it is Captain Riley suspects.



Coming home isn’t as hard as I thought it would be. Maybe it’s because the guys are here. They’re giving my brain something to focus on as they discuss possible retaliation. There’s no solid evidence Axel is responsible for the explosions. It would be a bad look if the Hell Hounds responded and the police found a different culprit. As much as I want them to go after Axel, I’m glad they decided to hold off.

I don’t want to stay in this house alone.

Turning off the burner, I grab the boiling pot and dump the noodles into the cauldron, keeping my head out of the way of the steam. The meal is nothing fancy. I found some frozen ground beef and dad always kept tomato sauce and paste on hand. Finding two bottles of wine in the liquor cabinet is the only reason the sauce is any good. The timer for the garlic bread—leftover white bread covered in butter and garlic salt—beeps and Jag comes over to grab that while I take four bowls from the cabinet.

“It smells good, Kiks.” He bends over, and I do my best not to stare at his ass.

Maybe I take a tiny peek.

There's something about men with nice butts. Crow's butt is bigger, but he's larger than Jag to begin with. Jag's is perky and while not huge, there's definitely definition that I can appreciate. Knox's isn't half bad either.

"Are you objectifying me?" Jag straightens and sets the pan on the towel I laid out earlier.

I quickly avert my eyes. "I don't know what you're talking about." The drawer for the utensils sticks and my cheeks burn as he comes to stand beside me.

"This," he brushes his knuckle over my cheek, "is my new favorite thing."

"Stop," I whisper, yanking on the drawer again. This time instead of sticking, it flies out. "Shit." I catch it in time to avoid disaster and shoot Jag a warning look. "Not a word."

He tugs his bottom lip between his teeth.

I almost liked it better when they were actively trying to earn my forgiveness. Now that we've reconciled, they're back to tormenting me. I kind of love it.

"What's this, Kiks?" He lightly tugs on the necklace I reclaimed from the shelf in the nest.

"It's mine." I glance at him. "You guys are creeps, you know that, right?"

He shrugs. "You're not mad?"

"No." I wrinkle my nose. "It's strangely endearing, and I'm pretty happy my things aren't actually lost. How did you get them anyway?"

"We were always with you." Jag wraps his arms around me. "We were always watching."

"Definitely creepy," I say with a little grin, tipping my head to the side. "Like next level Edward watching Bella."

He tightens his hold. "Did you just compare us, bad ass bikers, to the sparkling vampire?"

“If the boot fits.” I lean into him. “Maybe later we can bedazzle your cock.”

Purring, he teases his teeth over my mate mark. “With your mouth?”

Maybe.

“We need to eat.” I swat his arms and extract myself from his grip.

Knox yawns as he enters the kitchen, oblivious to the way my body is coiled tight from Jag’s teasing. “I’m so hungry. How can I help?”

“You can grab the drinks,” I say to Knox. “I’ve got the bowls.”

“Guess that means I’ll bring the sauce and noodles. Don’t worry, fellas, let the muscles take care of the heavy stuff.” Crow cracks a shit-eating grin and rifles through the cabinets until he finds the one with the giant bowls.

“You take care of the sauce. I’ll make sure to give the chef our thanks.” Jag winks at me and drops his gaze down my body. “Maybe dinner can wait.”

“No,” Knox snaps and sets the final glass on the counter.

I scrunch my eyebrows together. “That was rude.” I push past him and set the bowls at each spot, avoiding using the head of the table. That’s Dad’s spot.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean it to come out like that.” Knox carries the cups to the table. “There’s something we have to talk about.”

“I swear if you’re breaking up—”

“We’re not breaking up with you, but Knox is right.” Jag brings over the tray of garlic bread and sets it on the table. “There’s been a development.”

They don’t say anything else while Crow gets the dishes of noodles and sauce ready. Knox and Jag grab beers and a pitcher of water, carrying them over to the table before they

take their seat. Crow joins us a moment later and places the bowls and the serving spoons in the middle of the spread.

Paranoia and anticipation get the better of me.

“Someone please tell me what’s going on.”

Crow grips the back of his chair. “You’re probably going to want to sit down.”

With a scowl, I drop into my seat. “There.”

Crow and Jag glance at Knox, diverting the conversation to their leader. Knox narrows his gaze and shakes his head, muttering something under his breath before pinning me in place with those serious eyes.

“You know we questioned the rat earlier.”

I nod.

He chooses his next words carefully. “And you know that he gave Wrecker information about the Hounds.”

Another nod. This is going to be painful, I can already tell. Anything to do with Axel is guaranteed to be bad news.

“Right.” He releases a breath and clears his throat. “The rat told us something while we were interrogating him. He told us something about Kiren.” Knox pauses again, taking time to warm me up to whatever he’s about to tell me.

“Okay.” I don’t recognize my voice. It’s small and full of fragility. “What did he say?”

Knox runs his hands through his hair. “Fuck. I’m not sure how to tell you without hurting you, and I don’t want to do that.”

“I wish you would say whatever it is,” I say. “You’re making it worse by drawing it out.”

“You’re right. Okay. Jimmy said he didn’t know Axel was going to shoot your dad. If Jimmy’s word can be trusted, which he’s a rat so take it with a grain of salt, Axel is the reason Kiren is dead.”

“That’s all Jimmy said?”

He nods. “He didn’t have much else to offer. Only that he was there when it happened.”

“He’s a rat, Kiki. I don’t know if we can trust what he said, but...” Jag trails off and glances at Crow and Knox. “I don’t think he was lying about that.”

Is it weird that I’m not surprised?

“Okay.” I use the spatula to scoop a small helping of noodles into my bowl. One of the noodles hangs over the rim, and I carefully push it back into the dish. Ignoring the concerned looks from the guys, I add a big heap of the sauce and snatch a piece of garlic bread. “You should eat before it gets cold.”

“Are you—”

“Drop it, okay?” My words are sharp as barbs and I immediately regret the tone. I suck in a breath and close my eyes, shoving every frantic thought racing through my head back, back, back.

I don’t want to think about what that means.

I don’t want to wonder if what Jimmy confessed is somehow related to what Captain Riley was asking me.

I don’t want to suspect that Axel got rid of my dad so he could try and take me without a fight.

No. I don’t want to deal with it. So, while maybe it’s not the most rational response, I push it all away.

“I’m sorry,” I tell Crow. “I shouldn’t have used that tone. It’s not your fault.”

“I know you’re not mad at me,” he says with a gentle smile. “We can talk about what Jimmy said, if you want.”

They’re so worried. They’re too nice. I can’t handle it.

I can’t.

I won’t.

Not tonight.

“No.” I give a hard shake of my head. “No,” I say again, biting into the garlic bread.

“Okay, Angel. Whenever you’re ready.” Knox reaches for the spoon, and as simple as that, they let it go. Relief crashes over me, and I focus on eating, pretending like my favorite meal doesn’t taste like ash on my tongue.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

CROW

The guys and I do our best to keep the conversation light and flowing. Kiki is barely hanging on. She nods as we talk, but she's not really here. I don't think she's working through what Knox told her either. Her expression is vacant. Numb, maybe. I try not to let my worry show and crack a few stupid jokes. Jag and Knox laugh and play along, but we're really only focused on one thing.

"Should we watch a show? Maybe the dragon one?" I nudge Kiki with my elbow. "I know there's incest and stuff, but I can't wait to see which dragon wins."

"Sure," she says without a grin or a snarky comment. "I'm going to go to the bathroom."

Pushing out her chair, Kiki stands and shuffles out of the room. I wait until the door closes before rounding on the guys. "What do we do?"

"We wait," Knox says.

"Wait? She's not okay." I don't want her to suffer in silence. We're here for her.

"No, she's not but you can't force her to confide in us. She'll let us know when she's ready."

That's the thing though. I don't think she will. I think she'll bottle it up and try to keep that pain from us. I don't want that. I should go check on her. No, no I shouldn't. Knox is right. I can't push my way into her grief. All I can do is be

here for her, and whenever she's ready, I'll listen. The guys and I will find a way to deal with Axel, hopefully one that won't cause a war between our clubs. Whatever she wants. Whatever it takes.

She doesn't come back until the food is put up and Jag is finished rinsing the dishes and loading them into the dishwasher. I push away from the counter and walk toward her, keeping my hands firmly by my side. I want to touch her.

Her eyes lift to meet mine. "Please don't treat me like I'm fragile." She toys with her necklace.

"I'm not. I don't want to pressure you."

"Don't treat me differently because you're worried. I don't want that. Maybe I'm not ready to talk about... things right now, but I need those hugs, Crow. I need them more than anything in the world."

My chest swells. I give damn good hugs, but only for her. I open my arms, and she rushes into them, molding her body to mine. She's soft and warm, and my chest rumbles with approval when she snuggles even closer. Her vanilla scent invades my senses, only slightly tainted with her sadness. She's doing a good job hiding it. I've never lost someone really close to me, but my brief meetings with death were hard as hell.

Even imagining losing her or one of my brothers makes my body tense and revolt. Nothing about this is easy. This isn't something you move on from. No, death is something you learn to live with. There is no leaving it behind; it follows you like a lingering storm cloud and all you can do is figure out how to wade through the torrents of rain when they come.

Kiki isn't fragile at all.

"I think it'll be the little dragon. I always love an underdog," I say instead of telling her all of those things.

She scoffs and lifts her head to glance at me. "That's the worst theory you've ever come up with. The big one is literally the size of a castle." Her blue eyes shine with the tears she's holding back, but I ignore them.

“Maybe. Guess we should go find out, huh?” I side-eye Knox and Jag. “Bring some beer and popcorn.”

“Who the fuck do you think you’re talking to?” Knox growls, but he reaches into the fridge all the same.

“Chill out, Prez, and while you’re at it, can you make that popcorn?” Jag asks. Knox flings a spatula at him, and Jag ducks, racing out of the kitchen with a laugh.

Kiki smiles a little. “I’ll make the popcorn.” She tries to escape, but I tighten my hold.

“You’re not going anywhere.” I reach down, placing my arm behind her knees and scooping her up bridal style.

“Crow!”

“Don’t be dramatic, Kiki.”

She growls but it’s half-hearted as she fully relaxes and lets me carry her into the living room without another protest. That’s what I thought.

We binged all the available episodes of the dragon show. Kiki wasn’t ready for bed, so I pick some random suspense flick and half-way through, Kiki falls asleep. Her soft snores are adorable and I’m more than a little smug that she fell asleep resting against me. I had to move once to get comfortable, but she didn’t even notice. How long has it been since she had a good sleep?

Knox keeps shooting salty looks in my direction. Jag is fully absorbed in the plot, so much so that when I ask for the bowl of popcorn he rudely shushes me. He always gets like this when the TV is on. He hates spoilers.

“I’m only asking for the snack,” I whisper.

“This is the good part.” He shoves the bowl in my direction, not taking his eyes off the screen as a new plot twist is revealed.

Taking it, I gently rest it against Kiki's arm and use my other hand to grab a handful of popcorn.

The obnoxious actor tries to come across as shocked but he ends up looking half-constipated. This is what happens when streaming channels try to make their own movies. Sometimes they're good... other times they suck.

The main character is in a car now, racing into the danger and not away from it.

"Come on, dude. You know you're only going to die," Knox mutters.

"Quiet," Jag grunts.

When the camera pans to the side, zooming in on the driver's face, Knox groans.

"Ten bucks says he's about to crash."

"I'm not taking that bet." I shake my head.

"Will you—" As predicted, a big truck T-bones the main character's car. "Goddammit." Jag grabs the remote and turns the movie off.

"Hey, man, what the hell?" Knox is doing a shit job of hiding his grin.

"You both suck. It was actually a good story."

"Yeah, but the acting sucked." I toss another piece of popcorn into my mouth. "What's the point of a suspense movie if you already know what's going to happen?"

His gaze cuts to me. "That's practically the entire point, dumbass."

"Fuck you."

"Stop fighting," Kiki murmurs against my chest, fingers gripping my shirt as she yawns. "Is the movie over?"

"No. These guys ruined it."

"Spoilers?" Kiki guesses.

"Yeah." Jag sighs and sits back, resting his arm on the top of the couch. "Should we pick something else?"

“Maybe.” Kiki pats my chest, thanking me for providing a warm place to sleep, and sits. “Or we could—”

Something thuds against the front door, making it rattle. Kiki jumps up and races to the front door. We’re all out of our seats in the next instant, chasing after her.

“You’re not going to say anything about her racing into danger?” Jag bites the question out.

“Chill, dude. It was a shitty movie.” Knox lightly shoves him.

“I was enjoying it.”

“Both of you shut the fuck up.” I break away from them and join Kiki at the door. She’s staring down at a flaming bag of shit. “What the hell?”

A few snickers come from across the street. Her eyes snap up, and she gives a tiny, terrifying growl before running down the porch. The teenagers see her coming and set off running. Like hell.

The guys and I chase after them, passing Kiki and grabbing the kids around the collars. Their eyes are as round as saucers and one of them starts begging to be let go. The other one pisses himself.

“We’re not going to hurt you.” I glance at Kiki. “It’s her you need to worry about.”

My omega drops her hands to her hips and glares at the kids. “Who the hell are you?”

“No one,” one of the kids says.

“Bullshit.” She takes all three of them in. “You’re the kids from down the block. Matt and Ryan and Brad, right?”

The one I’m holding thrashes a little. “We’re sorry, okay? It was a stupid prank.”

“Not to mention disgusting. Which one of you held the bag up for the other one to shit into?” Knox asks, bringing the kid he’s holding a little closer.

“It was dog poop, man!”

Were we ever this scared when we were young?

Kiki's forehead is lined with frustration, and she steps toward us. "This one time I'm letting you off without telling your mom. Got it?"

The three kids nod.

"And don't throw flaming bags of shit at people's doors. I guarantee half the people in this neighborhood have guns and one of them is stupid enough to threaten a bunch of kids with it." She shakes her head. "Go home. Do your homework. Don't go looking for trouble. Understood?"

"Yeah," they mumble.

"Do you understand?" Knox barks.

Kiki startles but relaxes in the next second once she realizes the command isn't meant for her. I caught that reaction though, and I grind my teeth to keep from taking my anger out on the wrong person.

"We get it," they say this time.

I release the one I'm holding and clench my fists at my side, wrestling with my rage. Axel is going to regret making her flinch at an alpha's command. He's going to regret ever scaring her. As soon as the cops finish with the clubhouse, we're going to get the damn guns and show that fucker what it's really like to be scared.

The kids slowly back away before turning and bolting down the sidewalk. I shove my murderous thoughts aside when Kiki drops her head back and groans.

"We were *way* worse than those kids."

Jag chuckles. "We were horrible."

"Is this what getting old is like?" Kiki asks, straightening and looking at us. "When did I get un-fun?"

"You're not old, and you're plenty of fun, Angel." Knox reaches for her, but she dodges his grabby hands.

"You know what I mean." Kiki shakes her head. "Let's do something."

“You’re asking us to help you break the law?”

“Yes.” She doesn’t say please, but her eyes do all the pleading.

“I guess there are a few things we could take care of,” Knox finally says.

Kiki rubs her hands together. “Perfect. I’m feeling like fire.” She turns and marches to the house, a little more pep in her step than before.

My balls tighten. This damn omega.

“Arson is what does it for her,” Jag says in awe. His eyes are as big as a kid’s in a candy store. He loves fire, and he certainly loves Kiki. Put the two together and his dreams have come true. “Have I mentioned she’s perfect?”

Knox’s eyes track her every movement. “You don’t have to tell me twice.”

Jag sets off after her. “Don’t keep the lady waiting.”

And suddenly I’m seventeen all over again, eagerly waiting for the spark of an omega to light up my world.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

KIKI

The guys and I take my dad's older SUV to the outskirts of town. Knox is driving and the windows are down to keep the smell of gasoline down. We filled up two gas cans in the city and even with the caps on, it reeks. The guys haven't told me where we're going or who we're punishing, but at the moment, I don't care. The little thrill of being back with them and getting ready to do something illegal is enough for me.

Crow is busy on his laptop and Jag is reminding Knox how much he hates spoilers. I roll my eyes and gaze out the open window. There isn't much light this far from town. A thousand stars stretch across the sky. I try to make out a constellation but quickly give up. All I can see are scattered stars. Knox is humming along to the rock song playing. Strands of hair whip at my face. Not even that bothers me.

Knox turns down the music. "What are you thinking about?"

"How it feels like we're teenagers again." I stick my hand out of the window and make waves, moving my fingers through the current the car generates.

"It's crazy how much time has passed and how much hasn't really changed between us, huh?"

I scoff. "A lot has changed."

"I thought we were past that," he says. "I'm sorry—"

“I’m not talking about that. We *are* past that, I only meant that this is totally different. Back then you guys didn’t want me the way you do now.” I shrug. “We were only kids.”

“We were teenagers,” Crow corrects. “And we always wanted you. Only now we can have you every which way we want.”

My core throbs. I shouldn’t be so affected by those words, but I am. I should be satiated after my heat, but I’m not.

Jag tugs on my hair from the back seat. “Let’s do the job first, Kiks.”

“We could turn around,” Knox offers.

“No.” I can’t let my sex drive get in the way of what we’re doing. There’s plenty of time for both. “We need to finish what we started.”

“Whatever you want, Angel.” Knox slows and takes a right, turning down a bumpy road. We drive for a few minutes, over a hill and around a bend, before we pass a familiar sycamore tree.

“I know this place.” I scan the night, searching for the worn storage building. The headlights flash over the steel structure. A flood light turns on and Knox screeches to a stop. “There are cameras.”

“Not for long.” Crow’s fingers fly over the keyboard. His phone is sitting on the seat beside him, the screen lit up and showing the hotspot connection.

“Is this smart?” I look between Jag and Knox. “Axel will know you did it.”

“He hit us first.” Knox grips the steering wheel a little tighter. “The drugs in there almost killed Nova.”

“Sneaky was cutting it with fentanyl though.”

He shrugs. “Heroin is dangerous regardless of what it’s cut with. Axel and...” He stops short of saying my dad’s name. “Wrecker is responsible for more than half the supply of drugs in Dolin. He hit us to hurt us.”

“He tried to claim you when he had no right.” Crow types a little faster. “He made you scared of an alpha command.”

“And he’s all around a piece of shit.” Jag leans forward and runs his finger up my arm. “I’ll never forget that day I smelled him on you and how scared you were.”

That was the same night I thought the guys betrayed me.

“This will hurt more than him.” I don’t know why I’m trying to talk them out of this. I hated that Dad was mixed up in this side of the business, but this is what gave us money. This is what helps the other club members eat.

“What are you trying to say, Kiki? Should we turn around and go home?” Jag asks.

I don’t want that either. I do want to make Axel pay, but not if it means fucking over everyone else. I am mad at them for not doing anything to stop him, but he is their alpha and he is unhinged. I won’t say they were necessarily afraid, only that they probably realized trying to stop Axel from claiming me would be bad. Some of them have kids, and Axel isn’t above playing dirty.

There is something though, a place only Dad and Axel knew about, well and me, but Axel doesn’t know dad took me to the safe house. He doesn’t know that I know where he stashes most of his cash.

“Should we go?” Jag asks again.

“Yeah, but I have a better idea.” I snatch Knox’s phone from the console and input the address.

“We can’t let them keep running drugs,” Knox says. “Tonight we’ll do the new plan, but eventually we need to deal with this.”

I nod. “I know, but let’s make a plan that won’t ruin lives. The only one I want to destroy is Axel, okay?” I blink, waiting for his acquiescence. I’m asking for a lot. There’s no reason for them to go with my plan. We’re already here. The cameras are down. They have the gas. It would take less than a minute for them to hit Wrecker and fuck up the MC’s business.

“All right, Angel.” He reaches over and grips my chin, pulling me in for a quick kiss. His thumb brushes over my lip, and he stares into my eyes. “If it weren’t for the investigation, he’d already be dead.”

My chest tightens. Those sort of promises shouldn’t make me swoon, right?

“And it wouldn’t have been a slow death.” This from Crow.

Butterflies flutter around in my stomach. It’s definitely unhinged to love that they’d torture him for me. Totally not normal, but I’m not a roses and chocolate kind of gal. Give me the head of my enemy though? They’ll have my heart.

“I’d cut his dick off first.” Jag tugs on my hair again. “He should have never tried to claim you.”

Who the fuck am I kidding? They already do.

The safe house is only twenty minutes away. Knox pulls into the driveway and Crow sets to work disabling the cameras and alarm. Axel will know something is up as soon as they’re down. We’ll need to get in and out of there quickly. I tie my hair back and check the visor mirror, smoothing the bumps and adjusting the tightness.

“We’re good.” Crow snaps his laptop shut.

“Five minutes,” Knox reminds us, setting the timer on his phone before looking at me. “Lead the way.”

I push the visor up and hop out of the car, rushing to the front door. It has one of those fancy passcode locks, and I type in the numbers dad made me memorize. The buttons flash green and the lock disengages. Shoving inside the room, I head straight for the bedroom. The guys help me push the bed aside, and I drop to my knees, prying up the loose wooden plank. The hole in the floor is just wide enough for a duffle bag to fit through, but the little crawl space underneath has a

few bags full of cash. I grab the first one and hand it off. There are four in total.

“Two minutes.” Knox lugs two of the bags out of the bedroom.

Crow grabs the other two. “You guys light it up.”

Jag and I exchange smirks. There’s no time to think or hesitate. The two of us sprint to the car and grab the cans and take them inside. He takes the back bedrooms, and I take the kitchen and living room. The sweet scent of gasoline makes it hard to breathe, but I push through, splashing a trail of the liquid all over. A picture on the fridge catches my eyes.

I set the can down and grab it. It’s a picture of me, Dad, and Axel at a barbecue Wrecker held a few years ago. I’m in the middle of them. Dad’s elbow is resting on my head, but Axel’s arm is wrapped around my waist. His fingers grip my hip, knuckles white from how hard he was holding me. There’s a forced smile on my face.

Dad is standing at the grill talking to some prospects while he flips burgers. I head over to see if he needs help, but Axel snatches me around the waist.

“Where are you going?” His mouth brushes over the shell of my ear.

“Let me go.”

He chuckles. “Come on, sweetheart. Don’t be mean.”

“Please,” I say, glancing back at him. “My dad—”

“Kiren!” Axel hollers as he shifts me to his side. “Come get in a picture with me and the kid.” Axel snaps his fingers at one of the prospects. “Get your phone out.”

Dad’s gaze flicks to the alpha and then straight to me. He grins and heads over. “I was wondering where you were,” he tells me.

“At least pretend like you’re happy to be here.” He ruffles my hair and steps in close, dropping his arm on my head.

*Axel's grip tightens on my hip, painful and warning.
"Smile for the camera, Kiki."*

"We have to go, Kiks." Jag's voice calls me back to the present.

Dad yanked me out of Axel's hold and dragged me over to help finish cooking. Axel had no good reason to protest, and he let me go as if he hadn't been squeezing me hard enough to bruise. I rip the picture into tiny pieces, throwing them on the floor and grabbing the can. Tipping the container all the way up, I pour the last of the fuel on the remnants of another memory ruined by Axel.

"What was that?" Jag asks.

I lift my gaze to meet his. "Something I wish I didn't remember."

His eyes darken. "Axel?"

"Yeah," I rasp, vulnerability lining my face.

Knox honks.

"Time's up." Jag grasps my hand and pulls me toward the door. Once we're on the porch, he releases me and takes the box of matches from his pocket and hands them to me.

I slide the little tray out and grab a match, backing down the steps until I'm far enough away to avoid the flames.

Jag joins me and nods. "This is only the beginning."

Without an ounce of hesitation, I strike the red tip against the side of the box and throw the match. The orange spark of fire flickers as the wooden stick turns end over end, arching through the air and passing the door. I take another step back. Jag doesn't though, his eyes are riveted on the house. The match drops toward the floor and the gasoline we spread immediately catches fire in a giant whoosh of heat and light. I shield my face and reach for Jag.

"Come on."

He resists my hold. "One more second." He closes his eyes, soaking up the warmth and sighing like he's discovered

the best way to relax. I turn toward the flames and do the same. Heat brushes against my skin, and I find comfort in knowing we've just taken two things Axel cherishes. His money and his safe haven.

What comes next will be worse.

CHAPTER THIRTY

KIKI

We get back to the house, and I wrinkle my nose as we climb out of the car. I didn't mind the smell on the ride because I knew exactly what we were in for, but now that the job is over, it's overwhelming. The guys carry the cash into the house, tucking it away in the back of my closet. Dad has the bigger shower, but I can't bring myself to suggest we all use it. That's too weird.

"I'll use my bathroom," I tell them as I perch on the edge of my king size bed. "There's another in Dad's room and one in the hallway bathroom."

Knox rips his shirt off, revealing washboard abs and tanned skin that makes my mouth water. "Have fun with your hands," he says to Jag and Crow before pushing his way between my legs. I tip my head back and his hand comes to cup my chin. His pupils are dilated, and he brushes his thumb over my lip. "She's mine tonight."

My throat and mouth go dry, and I dash my tongue out to wet my lips, inadvertently licking the tip of him. He purrs and presses his thumb between my lips. I suck on it, caressing his skin with my finger while I stare at him through my eyelashes.

"Sharing is—"

"Get out," he interrupts Jag. "You can both have your turn another night." They grumble but leave us. One of them shuts the door behind them. Knox's other hand finds my hair, stroking and smoothing. "Take your clothes off, Angel."

Slowly, he pulls his finger from my mouth and steps back, reaching to undo his jeans.

I quickly tug my shirt and bra off, tossing them into the laundry basket near the closet. I stand and start to take my comfy pants off, but Knox appears and bats my hands away, lips brushing over mine.

“On second thought, let me help you.” He sinks to his knees and tugs my pants and thong off, fingers coasting over my skin and leaving a trail of heat. He kisses my hip, wrapping his hands around me and grabbing two handfuls of ass.

My chest heaves, and my thighs press together. His arousal perfumes the air with leather and musk, and I inhale it with a breathy sigh. Knox is always so unaffected by things, it’s nice to know how much of an impact I have on him.

“We should shower first,” I tell him, but he growls at the suggestion. “I smell like gas.”

He runs his nose over my cunt, kneading my ass. “You smell fucking delicious.” He licks up my slit, humming in approval when my hands fall to his shoulders as I struggle to stay standing. He teases me a bit more before pulling back. “Sit on the mattress.”

I step back and drop onto the bed, spreading my legs for him. His eyes flare with desire as he takes me in, crawling toward me until his face is mere inches from my center. There’s a brief pause where he simply gazes at me with wonder, attention moving over every inch of exposed skin until his eyes meet mine.

“Do you have any idea how much I missed you?”

“I’m starting to understand,” I whisper as his hands run over my thighs, stroking around to the backs so he can carefully lift them and hook my knees over his shoulders. His hands find my hips and he yanks me down the mattress, burying himself between my legs without another word.

But he doesn’t need to speak. Knox reminds me how much he misses me with teasing licks and tentative nibbles, tasting

me like I'm something to be savored. He runs the flat of his tongue over my cunt, and I arch to meet him, clamping my thighs around his scruffy face. I rock my hips, gently guiding him. He slips two fingers inside of me, and I gasp, grabbing his hair at the sudden pressure. He hums again, the vibration tickling. He moves back enough to say, "That's it, Angel. Use me. Fuck my face."

Then his mouth is all over me. I leverage the hold on his hair and lift my hips to meet his eager tongue, grinding into his mouth. His fingers curl inside of me, gliding over that sensitive spot before pressing down. My clit pulses and I pant, chest heaving as I do exactly as he said. I use him until my toes curl and my back lifts off the bed. My grip on his hair loosens, and I sink onto the mattress, but he doesn't stop. Knox follows me down, licking and teasing and sucking until I shout his name and my mind goes blank. Slick coats my thighs and his face, but Knox doesn't give a damn.

He cleans me with his tongue, and I prop myself up on my elbows, watching as he savors every drop of my orgasm before sitting back on his heels and sucking his fingers clean. I flush as he holds my gaze, and his lips pull into a self-satisfied smile. He grabs my throat and pulls me in for a rough kiss, nipping my lip and whispering, "I'm not done yet."

Standing, he grabs my hand and pulls me into the bathroom, kissing and teasing me the whole way. I reach around him to start the shower and he smacks my ass before taking two handfuls and spreading my cheeks.

I arch into his touch and test the water. It's warm enough now, but I'm not sure I'm ready to get in. As if sensing my hesitation, Knox spins me around. He moves so fast my hands drop to the counter on instinct to keep myself from falling over. I meet his gaze in the mirror as he runs his cock through my pussy.

"We have plenty of time." Then he thrusts into my slick heat, sheathing himself fully inside of me with a soft growl.

"Fuck," I rasp, gripping the edge of the granite.

“That’s it.” He pulls all the way out and slams into me again. My breasts swing from the force of it, but his eyes hold mine.

My walls clamp around him as he eases out of me, trying to keep him where he is, but I’m not in control here. Knox is, and when he jerks into me again, his thick cock hits deep inside of me, stealing my breath. He’s so big and long. Slick coats his length, and my pussy stretches to accommodate him in the most delicious way. Every time he slams against that spot, my legs threaten to give out.

“I can’t,” I finally moan, dropping to my elbows and letting my head fall. “I can’t.”

He grabs a handful of my hair and wrenches my head up, forcing me to look in the mirror. “You can take it, Angel.” He thrusts into me, pulling my hair a little harder. “Good.”

“Oh god,” I gasp as he begins to drive into me, his hips slapping against my ass. He takes me hard and fast, and all I can do is hang onto the counter and watch as he destroys me. “Fuck, *Knox*.”

“Say it again,” he demands.

“Knox,” I rasp.

He growls and goes even harder, holding my hair and making me watch as he fucks me like a man untamed.

“Yes, yes, yes.”

“Fuck, you feel perfect,” he says on a pant. His cock jerks inside of me. He slips one hand around my body and presses on my clit. “Let me hear you come.”

“I ca—” I break off in a scream, and he purrs, swirling his finger over the throbbing bundle of nerves before sheathing himself fully inside of me with a growl. His knot swells and his grip on my hair loosens as he comes down on top of me, wrapping me in his arms while he continues to pump into me from behind, filling me with every last drop of cum he has to offer.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

KIKI

Knox is fast asleep when I wake up the next morning. Crow and Jag never came back but that's probably because Knox kept me busy for most of the night. Knowing I won't be able to go back to sleep, I ease off the bed and tug on Knox's shirt before tip-toeing out of the room. Coffee scented air greets me. I head to the kitchen and find the guys at the table, talking about some business with the McGraths.

They both get up when they see me.

"Morning." I give them a lazy grin. "Sleep well?"

"Probably better than you," Jag teases. "Is Knox still asleep?"

"Yeah. He's snoring." I grab a glass from the cabinet and fill it with water. The guys join me near the sink, both of them pressing in on either side of me. Their scents wrap around me, and I sigh. They smell so good.

Crow fiddles with the edge of my shirt. "It isn't fair he got to spend the whole night with you."

"Are you pouting?" I ask with a laugh. "You didn't have to leave, you know. I don't think he would have forced you out of the room."

His hand slips beneath the fabric, and his rough palm coasts up my stomach, stopping and teasing right below my breasts. "Maybe not, but he needed that time."

Jag runs a finger up my thigh. “And we don’t mind waiting or sharing.”

I take another sip of water and hum when he cups me, kneading his palm against my aching core. “What about you, Kiks? Do you mind if we share you?”

I bite my lip. My body is still recovering from Knox, but that doesn’t stop me from wanting the both of them. They’re different than Knox, less serious.

Crow tweaks one of my nipples, tugging on it. “I think she likes it when we share her.” He bumps his nose against my chin, and I drop my head back, giving him access to my throat. His lips skim over my skin before he gently bites me.

Slick wets Jag’s hand in answer, and he dips a finger into me, capturing my lips while Crow kisses my neck and plays with my nipples.

“What about me?” I hear Knox ask as he enters the room.

I gaze at him, considering how selfish he was last night. Crow and Jag played nice and let him keep me all to himself, but now it’s their turn. Jag’s thumb brushes over my clit, and I buck into his touch.

“You can. Watch,” I say between breaths.

Jag and Crow both purr in approval.

“Take her to the bedroom,” Crow tells Jag. “I need to grab something.”

Knox mumbles about how unfair we’re being, but I can’t seem to focus on him. Jag is too busy teasing me with his fingers. Eventually, he stops and leads me to the room where Crow is waiting, naked and holding my rose-gold clit teaser. My cheeks flame.

“Where did you get that?”

He gestures to the nightstand. “I can smell your cum all over it, baby.”

“A woman has—”

“I’m not judging you. I want you to use it while we fuck you.”

“Oh.” I was worried they’d tell me to throw it out or something and that wouldn’t have gone over well. They’re great, but I love my toy too. He climbs on the bed and reclines against the pillows. His cock juts toward the ceiling, and I watch it sway, my core aching to be filled.

Jag grabs my tits from behind and grinds his erection into my ass, kissing my neck in the same spot Crow had only moments ago before whispering, “Sit that pretty pussy on his cock.” He guides me to the bed and I crawl up Crow’s thick legs, straddling his wide hips. I love how different their bodies are. Knox is corded with muscle. Jag is lean and cut. Crow is big and strong. I don’t like one more than the other. If anything, I’m damn lucky to have them. They’re all perfect just the way they are.

Crow lifts Knox’s shirt up, and I raise my arms, letting him take it off. His hands squeeze my breasts as I grab his length, positioning his head at my entrance. He hisses, nostrils flaring as he watches me sink onto his cock. I rock my hips a little, adjusting to his size. Knox stomps into the room and drops into my reading chair.

I turn to look at him, rising up Crow’s length before dropping back down once again with a soft hum.

“Fuck.” Knox adjusts himself in his pants, and behind me, Jag strips out of his clothes.

Circling my hips and getting a feel for how Crow fits inside of me, I say, “You can touch yourself,” to Knox.

His body goes entirely still. Is he mad I told him what to do? Before I can worry about that too much, Crow grabs my hips and thrusts up into me, making my tits bounce. I gasp and drop my hands to his chest, grinding against his cock. God, it feels so good.

“Whatever you want, Angel.” Knox stands and drops his pants.

The bed dips as Jag joins us. His hands find my hips and help me ride Crow's dick while he bites and kisses my shoulder. "You look so pretty when you fuck him."

"Mmm," is all I can say.

"Let me see how good you look taking both of us." Jag presses me down onto Crow's chest and my ass rises. Cold lube hits my skin, and I writhe, the movement forcing Crow deeper into me. My cunt clamps around his length in anticipation. Now that I know what to expect and how good it feels once I get past the initial discomfort, I'm impatient for Jag to join us.

"I need to watch her," Knox says.

Gathering my hair and holding it away from my face, Crow helps Knox get what he needs. He's fisting his dick, slowly pumping his hand up and down his length.

Jag preps my ass while Crow takes over, fucking me while I focus on breathing through one finger, two, and finally the head of Jag's cock. I bite my cheek to keep from crying out as he eases into me, but a soft sound escapes from my lips.

"Breathe," Jag reminds me. "Relax." I do as he says, and he praises me before finding his way fully inside me. "Yesss," he moans.

They move together, slow and gentle as they help me adjust to being so full. My nipples scrape over Crow's chest and he captures my lips, devouring every little sound I make while they fuck me. When my legs finally relax and I start to move my hips in time with theirs, Crow slips the clit teaser into my hand.

"Play with yourself while we fuck you."

I can't respond to him, but I lift my hips a little, creating the space I need to place the teaser over my clit. The toy vibrates and Crow sucks in a sharp breath. I immediately turn it off and glance at him, but he shakes his head and turns it back on. Understanding washes over me, and I smile a little.

He can feel it too.

Without an ounce of shame, I turn the toy on high. He clenches his legs and thrusts into me. Jag grabs my breasts, working in and out of my ass while we find a rhythm that's perfect for the three of us. Knox's heavy pants match ours, fist pumping up and down his length as he's forced to sit and watch his friends have their way with me.

Together, we chase the same high. We tease and touch and kiss and fuck, becoming one and riding out each wave of pleasure until the final crash pulls us all under and we sink into it.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

KIKI

Eventually we all fall apart and get serious about coffee and breakfast. Crow cooks fried eggs, bacon, and crispy potatoes. He portions everything onto four plates while Jag snatches the freshly toasted bread from the toaster.

“If you guys ever want a cooking lesson...” He trails off and grabs the butter. “I’d be happy to oblige. It took years to perfect my toasting game, but with the right amount of practice, you guys might do all right.”

Crow gives him a bored look. “Should I just leave dinner to you then?”

“I wouldn’t want to show you up.” Jag slathers the first piece with butter.

“No, please, I’d love to see what you can do. Show us what all those years of practice can do.” Crow places equal amounts of bacon on every plate. “Besides, Knox and I have that meeting with the McGraths. I may not get back in time to cook.”

Jag aggressively slides the knife over the butter. “I’ll make dinner, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

“Maybe we should order in,” Knox says with a frown.

“Are you doubting my skills?” Jag lifts his gaze to meet his friends, scowling. “I can cook.”

“I know you can cook. Whether or not it’s edible is another thing.”

“You’re a dick, *Prez.*”

Knox slides his attention to me. “I’m trusting you to supervise.”

“I’ll do my best.” I grab the orange juice from the fridge and fill up four cups. “What’s the meeting with the McGraths about?”

Should I have asked that question?

“Jimmy hacked into all of our shit. We need to smooth over any worries they might have and let them know we’re handling the threat,” Knox answers without hesitation.

Good. It would’ve been awkward if they weren’t willing to talk to me about MC stuff. I’m still getting used to their blatant honesty, but that’s how things have to be for this to work. Just like I can’t hide things from them.

“They may be going to work, but I’m spending the day with you.” Jag finishes up with the toast. “Maybe we can find a crime to commit?” His smile is all wicked intent and daring.

“No trouble,” Knox says. “We don’t need you two getting arrested. You hear me?”

Jag pouts but nods. “Fine.”

We eat around the kitchen table. Dad’s seat is pointedly vacant and the guys do their best to distract me with conversation when they catch my gaze lingering on the worn wood. I don’t know that I’ll ever get used to that spot being empty.

But I don’t feel so alone now that I have a pack. The guys are my family. I don’t know that Dad would appreciate who I’ve claimed as a pack, but he would be happy knowing I found one that would treat me right.

“Scrabble, Cards Against Humanity, Pictionary, or Stratego.” Jag grabs a pack of cards. “Or I can kick your ass in poker.”

“You can try.” I stand from the couch and turn off the TV. The show we’d been watching got boring and since we’re under strict orders to behave, we’ve resorted to playing games. Not that I mind; game night used to be my favorite. It’s when Dad was just... a father and not the VP.

The doorbell rings and I head to the door, calling over my shoulder, “Will you grab some beers?”

“Kiki Malone, it’s only three in the afternoon.” Jag is already on the way to the fridge.

“And?” I open the door, catching the delivery van pulling away from the house. On the stoop is a small box addressed to Jag. I grab it and head back to the kitchen. “You’re getting mail here?”

“Technically, that’s for you.” Jag pops open two beers. “It’s your phone.”

“Oh.” I fight for the right response. I’m not exactly upset that they’d buy me stuff, but it still feels weird. Dad and I always took care of ourselves.

“You’re welcome,” he says with a smile.

“Right, thank you.”

“Come on.” He sets the beers on the table and we sit.

Opening the package, I pull out the instructions and unwrap the new device. It’s fancier than my old one, but somehow they managed to find a case that somewhat matched the one I had. My fingers pause on the rubbery material.

“How—” Oh right. They broke into my house. But breaking and entering is a little different than spying on me. I must pull a face because Jag sighs.

“Before you get mad, let me start by saying we never claimed to be good people.” The cards make that funny noise as he does a bridge.

“Stalkers.” I glance up at him. “How often?”

“In a week?”

“In general?” I ask, a little overwhelmed at what he’s implying.

“A lot.” He starts dealing. “Sometimes more, sometimes less. But at least a few times a week. The time you spilled water on your pants and freaked out because it looked like you pissed yourself? That might’ve been my favorite.” He gives me a simmering look. “We were always *here*.”

“Would’ve been nice to know that.” I shake my head and turn on the device. “Scent blockers?”

“Yup. And carefully timed break-ins.”

The phone prompts me to connect to my cloud account. I’d forgotten about the online backup. That means everything, pictures, texts, voice messages from my dad, they’ll all come back. I enter in the information and take a sip of the beer, waiting for everything to finish loading. Finally, the phone completes the download, and I quickly unlock the device and click into the photos.

“They’re all here.” I blink up at Jag with watery eyes. “All my pictures.”

He leans over and looks through the photos with me. I pull up a selfie of me and Dad on his motorcycle.

“Your face looks weird in that helmet. Your Dad looks hot as hell though.”

“Screw you,” I say with a laugh, swiping at the tears. They’re not sad, more relieved. I hadn’t realized how many memories I’d been missing without my phone. I’m so happy to have them back. I scroll through more and Jag waits patiently. An alert flashes across the top of the screen. A text from Knox.

I open the message. It was sent the day my world turned to utter shit.

I’m sorry.

I hadn’t seen it; Axel had already taken my things. My heart clenches, and I shut off the device before the afternoon ends with me sobbing into a pillow.

I clear my throat. “Thanks for the phone.”

“Anything for you, Kiks.” Jag taps his cards. “If I win, you strip.”

He’s trying to distract me. I let him.

“And if I win?”

“Then I do whatever you want.”

I have a few good ideas, one in particular I think Crow and Knox would like. Picking up my cards, I nod at him and organize them. He stretches out his leg and rests it against mine. The touch is comforting and somehow everything I need in this moment.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

KIKI

The bacon snaps and sizzles, bursts of hot grease popping into the air. Jag hisses in pain and glares at me. I'm perched on the counter, getting a very big eyeful of his birthday suit. The bacon pops again, this time the fatty liquid hits dangerously low. He growls and gives me an even angrier look. I stifle a giggle and shrug.

"You're the one who underestimated my poker skills."

"Maybe, but cooking bacon nude? That's fucked up, Kiks, even for me."

"Well, first of all, I just said you had to stay naked for the rest of the night. You're the one who decided to make BLTs." I shake my head. "You only have yourself to blame."

"BLTs are classic, so forgive me for wanting to make something everyone would enjoy." Another pop of grease. He jumps back and drops the tongs. "Fuck."

"Are you sure this isn't the easiest thing to make, something that's almost virtually impossible to mess up." I frown at the pan. "Unless you burn the bacon because you're being a chicken shit about a little hot grease."

He scoffs. "A little?"

The front door slams closed, and I arch my eyebrows at Jag, daring him to try and hide. I won the game, and he agreed to be completely naked until we all went to sleep. If he hides,

he breaks the terms and that means I get to pick an even worse punishment.

Crow and Knox walk into the kitchen, eyes finding me first. Knox heads toward me, completely ignoring Jag, but Crow sniffs the air and turns toward the stove. A few emotions pass over his face: surprise, disgust, and finally incredulity.

“What the hell?” Crow shakes his head and looks at me. “Was this your idea?”

“Maybe.”

Knox sweeps me into his arms, still ignoring Jag, and kisses up my neck. “God, I missed you.”

A grin tugs at my lips, and I melt into his arms. “You weren’t gone that long. How’d the meeting go?”

The McGraths—or the Irish—are who the guys get their guns from. Losing that connection would be a fatal blow to Hell Hounds business.

“Good.” Knox kisses me then leans back, cupping my face in his hands. “We’re all good. They were a little upset, but we assured them we’re handling it. Since we’ve been loyal clients for years, they trust us to do what’s right.” His thumbs caress my cheeks. “And what sounds right to me is taking you back to the bedroom—”

“Dinner is almost ready and Jag worked so hard on it.” I gesture to where the naked alpha stands, pulling bacon out of the pan with a fresh pair of tongs.

Knox finally glances over his shoulder, and a laugh bursts out of him, full and hearty. I love it when he laughs.

“I don’t want to hear shit from you two,” Jag mutters, grabbing the tomatoes and slicing them into perfect pieces for the sandwiches. “This is between me and Kiks.”

“Considering we can all see... everything, I’d say it’s between all of us.” Crow meanders over and nudges Knox out of the way. “What did he do?”

“I didn’t do shit,” Jag quickly defends.

“He lost a bet is all.” I wrap my hands around Crow’s neck and pull him in for a kiss. “The bacon was his idea.”

“I told you, this meal is a classic.”

Crow chuckles against my lips. “You’re devious,” he whispers, running his finger over the tattoo on my arm.

“Please, this is nothing.” I roll my eyes and slide off the counter. “Let’s help him carry the food to the table. Can’t risk getting pubes everywhere.”

“I think the time to worry about pubes has come and gone, Angel.” Knox’s forehead lines. “Is this safe to eat?”

Crow covers a laugh with his hand and grabs the bread and lettuce. I find some plates for us while Jag finishes the tomatoes.

“Laugh it up, assholes. One of these days I’ll come home to you naked and I’ll remember how you all made fun of me.”

“So sensitive,” I murmur, pinching his ass on the way to the table. He purrs and the other two groan as his cock hardens.

“No knots at the dinner table,” Knox orders with all the seriousness of an alpha giving a command.

Crow and I break into obnoxious laughter. Jag gives us a venomous once over, but his lips twitch slightly.

“It’s not that funny.”

“Oh, it’s knot?” I ask.

“Dear god, do not tell me you like puns.”

“What’s knot to love?” Crow asks.

“Maybe I should go to bed,” Jag mutters. “Can we stop with the dick jokes and eat already?”

“No need to get all huffy about it.” I take my seat, the picture of innocence with a sweet smile and batting eyelashes.

“Your good girl routine doesn’t fool me, Kiks.” Jag slides into his seat. “Next time I’ll win and you’ll be the naked one.”

“Somehow that doesn’t exactly sound like a punishment.” I grab some bread and start building my BLT. “You’d enjoy that too much.”

“She’s right.” Knox sits on my left. His phone rings, ruining the fun and games once he announces who it is. “Axel,” he greets the asshole on the other line.

I can’t make out what is said, only that Axel is pissed and yelling. Knox listens to him for a few minutes before interrupting him.

“I don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about, Axel. If you lost some money, I don’t see how that has anything to do with us.”

More shouting. Knox lifts his gaze and glances at all of us before focusing back on the call. “Sounds like you’ve got an electrical problem, Axel. Electrical fires are really common.” He pauses. “Say her name again and find out what’ll happen.”

I look at Crow and Jag, but they’re focused on Knox.

“Any day you want to work this out like a real alpha without hiding behind a gun, just let me know. I’m not afraid of a fight.” Knox pulls the phone away from his ear and glances at the screen. “Fucker hung up.”

“What did he say?”

“He thinks we’re responsible for the fire at his safe house. Said he thinks he saw us on his security footage”

“We are responsible.”

Knox nods at me. “But I’m not about to confirm that on the phone.”

“If he thinks it was us, he’ll find a way to get back at us.” I worry my bottom lip.

“Let’s not let him ruin our night. He’s already ruined so much, don’t you think?”

Touché.

In the middle of dinner, a loud knock sounds at the front door. The guys all turn to look at me.

“Are you expecting someone?” Jag asks.

“No.” I rise from my seat.

Knox tips his chin at Crow and my big guy stands, gesturing for me to lead the way. The frosty glass oval in the front door reveals two people standing on the stoop. For a moment, I worry it’s Axel, but if he decided to come here tonight, I doubt he’d knock. Maybe it’s the kids from last night? I share a look with Crow before easing the door open.

“Riley?” I ask, eyes narrowing on the officer standing next to the captain. “What are you doing here?”

“Kiki.” Riley scans Crow from head to foot. “I was wondering, what does Kiren have to say about this...” He sniffs, no doubt scenting all the cum and sweat and sex filling the air. “Development?”

“I don’t make a habit of talking to my dad about who I fuck, Captain. What would your mate say about you asking an omega these types of questions?” He might be playing his question off as simple curiosity, but Riley is fishing.

His face flames, and he clenches his jaw. “I didn’t mean ___”

“I think you meant exactly what you said, Riley.” Crow drops an arm around my shoulder. “What do you want?”

“We’re looking for Kiren.” The tall guy with brown hair reeks of beta and something else... an omega perfume I’ve smelled before, but I can’t quite place who the scent belongs to.

“Who are you?”

“Hayden. You’re Kiki?” His eyebrows pinch together.

It's interesting he didn't introduce himself as an officer. Let me guess, he's the good cop.

"I think you know the answer to that question." I'm tired of the games and guessing. "Listen, I'm not sure why you all are so determined to find my father, but unless you have a warrant..." I shrug.

"He's not in trouble." Riley sighs. "May we come in?"

"No." Crow's body goes rigid. "Come back when you have a warrant."

"You guys aren't in trouble either." Hayden shakes his head. "Come on, Kiki. Kiren could need our help." He almost sounds worried.

I blink.

Why the fuck would my dad need help from these fuckers?

"Has Axel been around?" Hayden presses. "Is he threatening you?"

"Give me your word that you aren't here to arrest us or fuck us over."

"Kiki," Crow growls. "You can't trust them."

Generally I'd agree, but this guy smells familiar, and he's here asking after my dad. I need to hear what else they might have to say. According to them, he's not in trouble, but I'm not so sure I believe that.

What laws did the old man break before Axel killed him? A twinge of discomfort swirls in my gut, but I push it aside. A thought I'm not ready to acknowledge tries to present itself to me, but the beta clears his throat and my attention shifts before it can fully form.

"You have my word, and I keep my promises." His gaze is earnest, and I almost chuckle at how seriously he says that. This guy must've been a boy scout.

"All right. You have five minutes."

"Kiki," Crow says again, but I shoot him a look.

“Five minutes. Then they’re gone.”

His body is tense, but he gives a sharp nod, relenting and stepping a little to the side, forcing Riley and Hayden to shrink and twist to keep from brushing their bodies against his. Since they’re playing nice—for now—the cops don’t give him shit about it.

They know they have no right to be here, and as much as I hate them being inside my house, I know Riley follows the rules. He stopped that other prick from harassing me all those years ago.

“Who was it?” Knox asks as he steps out of the kitchen and into the foyer. His eyebrows drop and his lips thin. “Why are they here?”

“Lovely reception,” the beta mutters under his breath.

“They’re here to talk,” I tell Knox. Jag joins him, contempt flashing over his features once he sees what all the fuss is about. He takes a step but Knox slaps his hand to Jag’s bare chest, keeping him in place until he fully processes what any rash decisions might do.

I have no doubt Jag would’ve tried to muscle them out of here, but that’s why Knox and Crow are so good for him. They keep him in line when he can’t see past the desire to protect what he loves.

“Did you lose your clothes, son?”

“I’m not your son,” Jag growls.

Do I regret the bet now that we have guests? Absolutely not. Crossing my arms over my chest, I spin on Riley and Hayden and cock an eyebrow. “Speak.”

Knox chuckles under his breath, but the sound is void of humor. He’s not Knox the alpha who snuggles and gives orgasms right now, he’s an alpha and the Prez of the Hell Hounds.

Hayden and Riley share a tense look, as if suddenly realizing they’re here, alone, with three Hell Hounds. At least their fight or flight instinct is working.

“Right.” Hayden’s gaze returns to mine, pointedly avoiding Jag. “We have reason to believe Axel wants your father dead.”

I don’t respond right away, instead taking time to process that statement. How could they know that?

Hayden continues when I stay silent. “What do you know about your mother?”

“What does she have to do with this?” I whisper the question. Truth be told, all I know is what my father told me. She was pretty, feisty, and she stole my father’s heart. He was never the same after her crash.

“Everything.” Hayden swallows, struggling to say the next part. “Her death wasn’t an accident.”

The way Riley’s been acting, them asking to come in to talk, all of it had me thinking something was amiss, but what they’re saying doesn’t make any sense. Dad would have known if something else had happened.

“That’s not possible.”

“It is,” Riley said. “Axel and Kiren never liked each other, did you know that?”

Dad was the VP. He and Axel didn’t always see eye to eye. Axel forced him to do things he didn’t want to, but at the end of the day, Kiren was the VP of Wrecker. He and Axel were brothers in that regard.

“They’re friends,” I say, even knowing that Axel was responsible for his death, to me and everyone else, it had seemed they were as thick as thieves.

“Axel was the Prez of Wrecker. Your dad protected you as well as he could, more than he did with your mother.” Riley’s words sucker punch me.

The night I came home from jail, Dad asked me about Axel’s scent in my room. I lied to him, but Axel didn’t bother me again until Dad died. Had he said something to Axel?

I try to form words, but they get stuck in my throat. Clearing it, I try again. “What are you saying?”

Knox's fingers lace with mine. "Stop beating around the bush and say whatever it is you have to say. You're not making this any easier on her." I squeeze his hand in thanks.

"Axel wanted your mother. He always wanted what he couldn't have, and your mother was no exception. It didn't matter that she was mated to your father. She was in a crash, but it was no accident. Her brakes were cut."

I swallow, trying to wet my dry mouth. "And Axel did it?"

"The night before, he tried to force himself on your mother. She got away, but not before he... well. She came to the station for a test." Riley grimaces. "Your father didn't know that part."

Axel assaulted my mother? He... he forced himself on her?

"He told me my dad killed the people who caused her accident."

"I'm not sure what he was talking about seeing as Kiren knew it was Axel's fault.

So Axel had lied to me about that. And now he's trying to get to me. My stomach turns, disgusted by how despicable Axel truly is. I knew he was an asshole. I'm not surprised by what he did, but I'm sick that my mother had to go through that. I don't remember her, but no one should have to endure that.

She deserved better.

"How do you know this? You weren't even on the squad?" Crow asks. At least one of us has enough brain power to question what they're saying.

Riley ignores the question. "After Kiren was informed about the circumstances of her death, we went to him with a deal."

My stomach drops. No.

He wouldn't.

Couldn't. Dad wasn't a snitch.

Then why did Axel kill him?

“He’s been trying to get us enough intel on Wrecker for us to take them down. Axel only recently started to trust him.” Hayden gives me a pointed look. “Kiren said he’d been more willing to tell him things about supplier contacts and the inner workings of the dealings. Axel was working toward earning some of your Dad’s favor. I think we all know what he wanted.”

Me.

“Fuck you,” I breathe.

“Kiks,” Crow warns, hand finding my arm. “We got you.”

“Axel is smart. He gave your dad enough to keep us happy, but never enough for a case that would win. Then, your dad missed our meet up. And another.” Hayden looks at Riley. “We think he’s dead.”

I suck in air, still not used to those words being said aloud. “My dad isn’t a snitch.”

“Your dad was a trusted informant. He helped us take down a few scum bags along the way, but Axel and his supplier were always the end goal.” Riley glances around our group. “Where’s Kiren, kids?”

“Don’t be condescending,” I snap. “You’re telling me my dad never knew about what Axel did to my mom?”

“No.” Riley shakes his head. “Your dad and Axel had been fighting about what Axel had done to the other alphas, so he thought he’d been the reason for your mother’s death.”

“He’s not that dumb,” I counter.

“Sometimes our hearts protect us from what’s right in front of us,” Hayden says softly. “It doesn’t mean he’s a bad husband or dad. He loves you. His priority is making sure you’re safe with a pack. Once you were gone, he was going to find what we needed, without discretion.”

“Of course he’s not a bad father.” I step forward but arms wrap around my middle and tug me against a hard body. A

summertime scent and warm skin. Jag. I clench my teeth. “Why would you say that?”

How could anyone even think that about him? He laughed at every stupid joke I made. He took me hiking. He showed me how to change oil. He taught me to cook. He bought me chocolate when I was grumpy. He was a good fucking dad. He was the best.

“I didn’t want you to be mad at him. I never meant to imply he was bad, I was only trying to help you see that everything he did was for you and your mom. He would die for you, Kiki.”

He already did, I want to say, but I keep that to myself.

“Have you heard from him?” Riley redirects the conversation. “We have reason to believe Axel knows he’s a CI.”

“What reason?”

Riley snaps his mouth closed.

I scoff. “Don’t be shy now, *Captain*. You already told me more than you should have, didn’t you?”

Hayden narrows his eyes. “You’re reaching the limit of the disrespect I’m willing to tolerate. We’re not your enemy.”

“Then tell me what you know,” I say with more composure than I feel. My body is vibrating with rage, though I’m not sure who exactly my anger is directed at. Axel is always a given, but I’m a little frustrated with my father. I don’t like that one bit.

“Okay,” Hayden says with a small nod. “There’s this guy, Jimmy. He’s been seen with Axel, and the one thing Jimmy is good at is finding information. He hacked into the station’s network. Your dad’s file was accessed.”

A hiss passes between my lips. “You mean to tell me you guys were stupid enough to keep notes on his real file? You didn’t make up a dummy profile or something?”

Even I wouldn’t be so dumb.

“The network is layered with firewalls and we have state of the art encryption software.” Riley lifts a shoulder. “There was no reason to worry about his information being taken.”

I scoff. “Obviously there was.”

“Like I said, Jimmy is good.” Hayden pinches the bridge of his nose. “What we did or didn’t do isn’t important right now. What is important is that you tell us where we can find Kiren so we can get him to safety. You four should consider coming too.”

“We’re not scared of Axel.” Jag’s arms flex around my stomach, his deep voice vibrating against my back. “We don’t know where Kiren is.”

Not entirely a lie. The Hell Hounds don’t know where Wrecker buries the dead.

Hayden and Riley look at me. I shake my head.

“I can’t help you.”

Riley’s jaw ticks. “If you’re withholding—”

“I haven’t talked to him for over a week,” I say in a rush. “I don’t know where he is. If he’s really in danger like you say, I’d tell you.” But there’s nothing to tell. Telling these two would mean Axel gets off easy. Prison isn’t enough for that douche bag. He deserves to suffer, *really* suffer. And the only people I trust to do that are standing with me.

“Fine.” Hayden shoots his gaze around the foyer. “You know where to find me if you hear anything, and I mean anything at all. Axel isn’t someone you want to mess with.”

I lift my chin. “Axel won’t bother me.”

Riley and Hayden move their attention to the Hell Hounds.

“Keep her safe.” And with that last statement, Riley and Hayden leave.

Crow snaps the door closed once they’re gone, and I release a hard breath, squeezing Knox’s hand harder than before.

“He’s going to regret *everything*,” he vows.

“He won’t get away with it.” Jag rubs his cheek against the side of my head.

“We should get started.” Crow heads to the kitchen. “He already thinks we hit the safe house. He’ll expect us to come for him next.”

“Maybe he won’t.”

Crow stops with one foot on the kitchen tile, shooting me a curious glance. “What?”

“Use me.”

“No,” the three of them say at the same time.

I bristle. “Think about it. He’ll be distracted. You know it’s the only way to catch him off his game.” They know I’m right. As much as I hate to admit it, he’d make the time to hear me out if only to find a way to make me bend to his will.

I don’t want to be at his mercy, but I trust the guys to keep me safe.

“She’s not wrong,” Crow eventually says. “I don’t like the idea though.”

“Me either. It is a plan... I won’t say a good one, but it might work. Give us some time to try and find another way to draw him out without getting anyone else hurt.” Knox jerks his thumb toward the kitchen. “Before we do anything, we should eat. You’ve expended a lot of energy.”

As if to punctuate his statement, my stomach growls.

I don’t have it in me to be ashamed.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

KNOX

Filling a thermos full of the cinnamon flavored coffee, I run through a checklist of things to bring on the short day trip. Jag and Crow are at the dealership, helping distribute the new motorcycles, but there's one that's special. I grab the cookies Crow made and put them and the thermos into a backpack.

“Should I be offended that you all didn't like my coffee?” Kiki steps into the kitchen, freshly changed into a pair of jeans and a white t-shirt, and eyes the backpack. The flower tattoo peeks out from beneath the sleeve of her top. “Where are we going?”

“I thought maybe we'd go for a drive, maybe stop and have some coffee.” I lean against the counter and stare at my omega. “As for the coffee, yours was fine. We just like ours better.”

“Because of the cinnamon?”

I nod. The scent of her frustration. None of us like vanilla flavored coffee, so we settled on cinnamon. The spice is delicious and surprising, sort of like her.

“I'm starting to think you all are a little high maintenance.” The edges of her lips quirk, but it's not a full smile.

“Did I mention we're stopping for mani-pedis on the way home?”

The grin takes full hold and she lifts her eyebrows, chuckling under her breath. “Don't tempt me. I could use a

new set.”

“Are you ready?” I push away from the counter and prowl toward her. She tips her head back, holding my gaze and staring me down. I stop a hair’s breadth away from her and lower my face toward hers. “Because if we don’t leave, I’m going to fuck you and that’ll ruin the surprise.”

She sucks in a breath and her cheeks turn pink. “There’s a surprise?” she manages to ask.

“Mmmhmm.” I grip her throat and pull her toward me, claiming her mouth with a rumbling purr.

The way her body softens, yielding the careful control she holds herself with, has my dick hardening in my pants. Rich and sweet perfume plumes around us. I bet if I slipped my hand between her legs, she’d be wet and ready for me. Any other day, I’d say fuck it and blow off what I have planned.

“Angels aren’t supposed to be so tempting,” I whisper against her lips.

“Oh, you’re blaming me?” She leans back and narrows her eyes. “You’re the one giving out hand necklaces like it’s Mardi Gras.”

I flex my fingers on her neck and her pupils dilate. “You look so gorgeous with my hand wrapped around your throat.”

She gives me a lazy smirk. “You think I’m gorgeous?”

“Always have.” I kiss her again then force myself to drop my hold on her and take a step back. It might be the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do. “Let’s go for a drive, Angel.”

We drive out to the park. It’s not the same as before. The city tore it down and rebuilt it. They took our picnic table, but there’s a new one that’s splinter free. I park next to a gleaming black motorcycle.

“Nice bike,” Kiki murmurs as she gets out of the car and glances at the new playground. “This place has changed.”

“A bit, but the essence of it is the same.” I grab her hand and lead her to the picnic table. We sit next to each other, and I fill two foam cups with coffee and set the container of treats on the table. Kiki snatches two cookies before I get the lid all the way off.

“It’s been years since I’ve had Crow’s baking.”

Some kids run by, screaming as they race for the swings. A frazzled mom chases after them. She didn’t even notice us in her hurry to get to her gremlins. They’re cute, don’t get me wrong, but I don’t know that I trust myself to be a good parent. I didn’t exactly have the best example. I don’t do drugs, but that doesn’t mean I’d know how to give love to a kid. For me, it’s safer not to have any rather than have one and fuck the child up.

“She looks tired,” Kiki comments, noticing where my gaze has strayed.

“Yeah, but she’s a good mom.”

Kiki squints. “How can you tell?”

“She’s worried about them. She’s not screaming at them for being excited. She’s exhausted, but she has a handle on her emotions.” I glance away from the kids. “And some might say she’s hovering, but underprotected moms become overprotective moms.”

I don’t know if the same can be said for dads, but I’d like to think so. I still don’t want to find out what kind of parent I’d be. Maybe I’m a chicken shit. Too scared to face the full truth of how awful my parents were.

“You deserved better parents.” Kiki wraps her arm around mine and offers up a cookie. “Want a bite?”

Her words make it hard to respond, but she’s given me a way to change the subject, so I take it. Our histories are no secret. We’ve all shared the skeletons in our closet, and it’s never changed how we felt about each other.

I take the bite and hum in approval. “Crow’s a damn good baker.”

“He is.” Kiki takes a sip of coffee. “You don’t ever get tired of cinnamon?”

“Nope.” I watch her take another drink. “Cinnamon reminds us of you.”

Her gaze jerks to mine before dropping to the cup in her hand. “My anger?” Wrinkles line her forehead.

“Yeah. It was cinnamon or vanilla. We preferred the spice.” I pick up my cup and take a big drink. “And maybe we thought we deserved a bit of your anger.”

“You did,” Kiki whispers. “But not anymore.” She sets the cup aside and turns to face me. “I’m not mad anymore, Knox. I”—she pauses and uncertainty crosses her face—“I love you guys. I love you.”

“Kiki Malone, I’ve been waiting for you to confess.” I lean over and brush my lips over hers. “I’ve always loved you.”

She smiles against my mouth, a true smile, and kisses me again. “Good.”

I wrap my arm around her and we sit together, watching the birds flying around the playground, listening to the chaos surrounding us, and enjoying a few moments of peace.

“Are you ready for the surprise?” I ask once we finish the coffee.

“I guess.” She glances at the backpack.

Standing, I hold my hand out to her and help her get up. I shove everything back into the bag and lead her back to the car, stopping in between it and the shiny new motorcycle. Kiki slows to a stop next to me.

I jerk my chin toward the bike. “Surprise.”

“I can’t tell if you’re serious or joking.” She shakes her head and shoots me a questioning look.

“I’m dead serious, Angel. This is your bike.”

“Knox,” she whispers a reprimand but moves toward the motorcycle, running her hand over the smooth black body. I hold my breath as she walks around it, waiting for the moment

when she notices the special engraving on the right side. “Oh.” She traces a finger over the halo and angel wings etched in glittering gold.

“Do you like it?”

She lifts her gaze to meet mine. “I love it, but this is too much.”

“It’s perfect,” I say with a hard shake of my head. “Don’t think about the price. You needed a motorcycle, we got you one.”

“As simple as that?” she asks.

“Yeah.” I move to the trunk of the car and open it, pulling out her helmet. “Fifty bucks says I beat you home.”

Kiki’s features smooth, and a cool confidence fills her gaze. “It’ll be like taking candy from a baby.”

I shrug. “Maybe.” I hold out the helmet and the keys. “Do we have a deal or what?”

Snatching the helmet, she drops it onto her head. She swings her leg over the bike and backs it out of the parking spot before starting it up. The new engine purrs, and she grips the handle bars. “Try to keep up,” she shouts at me over the roaring noise.

“If I get lost, I’ll find you.”

I always do.

JAG

It’s been a week since the cops told us about Kiren being a CI. A week since Kiki asked us to use her to lure Axel out. The guys and I are no closer to finding a better alternative than sending Kiki into a dangerous situation. The investigation wrapped up four days ago, and we were clear to come back. The clubhouse was a mess. Turns out the cops don’t clean up during their investigations.

Fuckers.

Kiki pitched in alongside Monica, Royce, Lor and a dozen other members. At first, a few of them side-eyed her, but when Lor sliced themselves on a piece of glass and Kiki dropped everything to bandage the wound, everyone cut the shit.

“Is that the best you got, Mountain?” Kiki taunts the giant beta. “You play like a bitch.”

Mountain shoots me a mock glare. “She’s rude as hell, you know that?”

I lift a shoulder. “I kind of like her insults.”

“Aw, thanks, babe.” Kiki winks at me and focuses on the game, bending over and lining up her shot.

I know she’s using good form, but all I can think about is catching her in the same position once everyone leaves and seeing how much shit she can talk with my cock fully inside her.

“Come on, Jag. You’re stinking up the clubhouse.” Mountain pretends to choke. “How the fuck are we supposed to play when we all know exactly what you’re thinking about?”

“You’re not thinking about what I’m thinking about, are you?” Despite my teasing tone, my jaw clenches. I really don’t like the thought of him fantasizing about Kiki.

He’d be easy to kill.

“I’m not an idiot, Jag.” Mountain is serious now, face drawn tight as he waits for my possessiveness to pass.

Grinding my teeth, I breathe and stare him down. He’s all sincerity and worry. He doesn’t want her, he wouldn’t dare. Fuck, she drives me crazy, but in all the right ways. I’ll kill for her.

“Jag, either control yourself or get out. I’m not done kicking Mountain’s ass.”

Lor bursts into laughter, and Kiki grins at them. Monica props her arm on Lor’s shoulder and shakes her head, braids

falling over her shoulder.

“I knew you were trouble the moment I saw you.”

Kiki arches an eyebrow. “Please, you’re worse than I am.”

“And don’t you forget it, babe.”

Kiki glares at the older woman, but it’s with affection. Between how accepting Lor, Mountain, and Monica have been, the other Hell Hounds have started to come around. I, for one, love to see Kiki getting comfortable.

I let her finish the game before grabbing her and dragging her into the conference room. She barely manages to hand the pool cue off to Monica before I shut us in the room and set her on the table. Pressing between her legs, I capture her lips as she laughs. Her hands clasp around my neck and tug me even closer.

Curling around me, she palms my cock. “I have an idea,” she whispers against my mouth.

“What’s that?” I press into her touch.

“Let me show you.” She pushes me back and sweeps her gaze around the room. Her eyes double back to the other end of the table where Knox usually sits, mouth pulling into a devious little grin. Snatching my hand, she leads me over to the chair and pushes me into it, sinking to her knees.

“Kiks,” I breathe her name, excitement coursing through me when she begins to undo my pants. “You don’t have to.”

“I want to.” She holds my gaze and slides the zipper down. My cock practically jumps out of my jeans, and she releases a startled gasp. “Commando?”

Shrugging, I run a hand through my hair. “I like to live dangerously.”

“Of course you do,” she says with a soft chuckle. Carefully, she wraps her delicate fingers around my shaft, sliding her hand up and down my length and licking her lips. Her eyes flick to mine. “Tell me if I’m doing it wrong.”

“You can’t do it wrong,” I tell her with a gentle smile.

Her eyes fill with determination before she moves her lips to my tip, brushing a gentle kiss and teasing her tongue over it. She seals her lips around me and sucks, lapping at me before taking me fully into her mouth. Slick and hot, her cheeks clamp around my cock, and I swear that's almost enough to make me come. I grip the edge of the chair to keep from grabbing her.

My dick pulses in her mouth, and she hums in surprise, wrapping her finger and thumb at the base and moving it in time with her mouth. Her aquamarine eyes lift once more to meet mine, seeking approval.

“Just like that,” I say between clenched teeth.

The door swings open, and Kiki squeals, scuttling underneath the table. I instantly follow her, sliding the chair all the way forward to cover my dick. By the time Royce fully steps inside, it looks as though I'm in here by myself.

“I've been looking for you,” he says with a sigh.

“What's going on?” My cock is hard as a rock and Kiki's soft breaths brushing over my skin aren't helping the situation. Thank fuck for the table.

“I know it's a lot to ask, but I was wondering if we could talk about Pete.”

Kiki's fingers inch up my thighs, and I grip the arms of the chair even tighter. She wouldn't, would she? Fuck, I hope she does. My heart is hammering in my chest. The mere thought of being caught has my dick leaking. I want her to swallow my cum while Royce is in the room, oblivious to what she's doing.

“What about him?” I scoot forward ever so slightly and spread my legs, giving her the go ahead. Her shoulders brush against my legs as she slots herself between them.

“I'm thinking he should be patched in.”

Lush lips wrap around me, and she takes me all the way to the back of her throat. Fuck, that's divine. She swallows, gagging slightly around my length. I bite my cheeks to keep from reacting.

“Why?” I manage to ask as she tries to swallow again. Her throat clenching around my dick might be my new favorite thing. She pulls back and bobs her head, slow and steady, and uses her hand to stroke the bottom half of my dick. I’ve been staring in Royce’s direction, but by the time I manage to focus again, he’s in the middle of a sentence.

“—over and over. He’s always willing to do what we ask and he doesn’t fuck it up like that other prospect.”

Kiki hollows out her cheeks.

“Fuck, she’s doing good. Him, I mean he’s doing good.” I blink at Royce, not really sure what I’m supposed to say next as Kiki begins to get serious about making me come.

“Yeah,” Royce says, gaze slipping around the room as though he’s searching for someone. “He’s what we want in a fully patched Hound. So anyway.”

Kiki moves her other hand to squeeze and tug on my balls. Fuck me. I lean forward, resting my elbows on the table and tipping my head down, glaring at Royce as I try to focus. Can he smell her? Because I sure as fuck can, and her arousal smells like my next meal.

“I’d like to be the first to vouch for him.”

Kiki slides her mouth down my shaft and swallows, pulsing her cheeks against my cock like she’s trying to suck my soul from my body.

“Yes,” I say. “Fuck yeah.”

Royce nods. “Right? If it’s okay with you”—Kiki tugs on my nuts—“I’d like to”—she swallows around my pulsing length again—“be the one to tell him”—she caresses her tongue on the underside of my dick, matching the pace of her suctioning cheeks. “Is that okay with you?”

She swallows again, and my balls tighten. Oh fuck.

“Yeah.” I grunt, slapping my palm to the table as my cock jerks in her mouth. Cum spills out of my tip but Kiki doesn’t let up, she sucks and swallows and devours every last drop.

“Okay.” Royce gives me a funny look. “Are you...” He sniffs suddenly, eyebrows hitting his hairline. “Fucking hell, Jag! Get your dick sucked somewhere else.”

Kiki laughs around my length, and the reverberation against my sensitive skin makes my hips jerk, and I groan, covering my face, and Royce starts to cuss me out.

“Get the fuck out,” I finally tell him.

He slams the door behind him, and I push the chair away from the table, grabbing Kiki and pulling her into my lap. Her lips are a little puffy and red and moisture pools at the edges of her eyes. I hold her face between my hands.

“You’re naughty.”

She smirks and licks her lips. “Am I?”

With a soft, pleased growl, I claim her mouth, wondering what the hell I did to deserve an omega like her.

“I fucking love you.”

We head back to the apartment and Kiki leans into my side the entire way. I half-consider tossing her against the wall as soon as we get inside and having my way with her, but Crow and Knox cock block me.

“What happened?” Kiki slips away from me and rushes to where the guys sit at the kitchen table.

Neither of them look happy, and the semi in my pants immediately goes limp. There goes my plans for the night.

Knox opens his mouth to say something, but his eyes crinkle with pain. Crow stares at the table top. What the hell could have happened? They went out an hour ago to meet up with the McGraths to discuss new terms.

“The deal fell through?” I ask.

“The deal is fine,” Knox says, avoiding Kiki’s scrutinizing gaze. He doesn’t like hurting her.

I tense at what he might have to say, ready to kick his ass if I need to. He may be my brother, but no one gets to hurt Kiki, not even him.

“Knox.” Kiki places her hands on the table and leans toward him. “What happened?”

“Your house. There was a fire, Angel.” Knox finally lifts his gaze to meet hers. “It’s gone.”

“Gone, gone, or just damaged?” I ask for clarification when Kiki stays silent. Her shoulders bunch together. I run my hand over her back, reminding her she’s not alone. Thank fuck she packed some of her more valuable belongings and brought them back with her. The money we took from Axel’s safe house is here too.

There was still plenty in her childhood home though. A total loss would be a devastating blow.

“Gone, gone. The firefighters were on the way but someone shot out their tires. According to the police scanners they never caught who did it.” Knox’s face darkens.

“We know who did it.” I squeeze Kiki’s shoulder. “We should deal with this now before it escalates even more.”

Kiki releases a low growl. “He’s such an asshole.”

“The retaliation makes sense after what we did to his safe house. That’s why we took what we could. Was there anything left that isn’t replaceable?” Crow drums his fingers on the table, fidgeting for something to draw with. He does his best thinking while his hands are creating masterpieces.

“I have all the sentimental stuff. I liked my bed and our furniture, but you’re right. We got everything that was important out of the house.” Kiki straightens, and I pull her into my side. She wraps her arm around my middle and tips her head back to meet my gaze. “I think it’s time to use me as bait.”

No is on the tip of my tongue, but we’ve already wasted enough time. The only way to get to Axel without hurting anyone else from Wrecker is to use her to draw him out. I

don't like it, but Kiki is capable, and she won't be alone with him long enough for shit to go sideways.

“Okay.” I brush my lips over her forehead. “But you have to promise to stick to the plan. We'll use you to get to him, but then you need to stand back until he's restrained. As much as you hate it, he can command you to do things you don't want to do.”

“And if he tries to force you to do something to any of us, we'll have to tranquilize you.” Knox's fingers curl into a fist on top of the table. “I don't know if I can make that shot.”

“I can.” Crow raises his eyebrows when I scowl at him. “I don't want to hurt her, but keeping her awake puts her in more danger. I can make the shot if it comes to that.”

“And it might not,” Kiki adds, trying to pull Knox fully on board. “The tranquilizer is just precautionary and it's a non-lethal dose. Better than me stabbing one of you on Axel's command, right?” She chuckles but there's a tremor of nerves working through her body.

I hold her a little tighter. “It'll be okay, yeah?”

She blinks up at me, tugging her bottom lip in between her teeth. A task like this means relinquishing her control and fate wholly to us. We'd never betray her. Finally, she nods.

“The moment he commands me—”

“I'll light your ass up with tranquilizers.”

She narrows her eyes at Crow. “Should I be worried about your willingness to shoot me?”

“I promise to make it up to you.” His wink is salacious and Kiki's scent floods with desire.

Deciding we need to act now rather than allow her perfume and body to distract us, I grab my phone and hand it to her. In case things go sideways, I don't want Axel to have her number. She can use mine since I already have his number saved. “He's under Nutsack.”

“Oh god,” she says with a groan. “So mature.” She goes onto her toes and kisses my jaw. “I'll be right back.” Escaping

from my arms, she rushes into the nest to set the bait. Axel isn't an idiot, but he is cocky enough to believe Kiki would come crawling back to him.

I can't wait to see the look on his face when he realizes he's a dead man.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

KIKI

My hands shake as I navigate to Jag's contacts. Sure enough, Nutsack is a real contact. With a heavy sigh, I press the call button and sit on the floor. I don't feel right sitting on the bed and talking to the bastard who forced my first heat. The line trills three times, each ring seeming to take longer than the last.

"What?" His voice is sharp as a knife.

"Axel?" I ask, keeping my voice low and letting some of my nerves bleed into it. The trembling tone isn't entirely faked.

"Kiki." He pauses. "Why are you calling me?"

I sniff. "Axel, I need help." Sucking in a breath, I play up being on the verge of sobbing. "They won't let me go."

"How did you get a phone?"

Good question.

"They're sleeping now. I had to wait for my heat before I could steal it and call you." I lower my voice more. "I shouldn't have left you."

Technically, I didn't leave him. Camila sent me to the auctions, but I know what'll play to his ego. I have to be careful though. Too much and he'll be suspicious.

"You said some pretty nasty things, sweetheart. I didn't think you wanted me."

“I don’t know what to say, Axel. My dad died. I was so sad and I... I wasn’t thinking straight.” I blow out a breath. “They said the only reason they bought me was to make Wrecker pay. They don’t care about me, not like...” I trail off.

“No one will ever care for you like I do.” He clears his throat. “Kiki. Are you tricking me?” Through the phone, I can sense the alpha command but it doesn’t even touch me. Commands don’t work through the phone, and I have my own alphas now.

“No,” I immediately answer. “You’re all I have left, Axel.”

Fuck me, I hate saying these things, but I know it’s for a good reason.

“Sweetie,” he purrs. “I’ve been waiting for you to come home.”

“Please, help me.” This time I have to fight to stay vulnerable. The pet name he’s using makes me want to gag.

“Can you get away from them? I imagine they’re keeping a close watch.”

“I think I can now,” I say quickly. “My heat just ended and they’re passed out. There’s a back door... It’s locked though. Oh god. I think I’m trapped.” I can’t sound like I have a plan.

“Calm down.”

Like that would help if I were really panicking, asshole.

“Okay,” I breathe. “Okay.”

“Fucking chicks.” He huffs then sighs. “Sorry, sweetie. Not you. I’m only stressed. If there’s a door, Kiki, someone has the key. Those assholes will have it.”

I think there’s a supplemental dumbass that he left off of that last statement, but he’s trying—and mostly failing—to be nice to get me back.

“Oh. Knox has keys.” I hesitate. “Do you think those are the right ones?” I can practically envision the way he grinds his teeth to say, “Yes, Kiki.”

“Okay.” I make some rustling noises and breathe into the phone, pretending to panic. “I don’t think... Oh wait. Here they are.” I lower my voice again. “What do I do next?”

An alpha like Axel needs to feel in control. He needs to make the decisions.

“Can you steal a bike?”

I scoff. “You know I can.”

He chuckles as though we’re both romanticizing the night I stole his bike and crashed it. “That’s my girl. Meet me off of Route 214. I’ll be waiting for you.”

“That’s closer to Mayerburg?”

“Yeah. I’ll be waiting for you.”

“Okay.” I suck in a shaky breath. “Axel?”

“What?” he snaps.

God, he’s *so* sweet.

“Thank you for saving me. I’m sorry for everything I said.”

“Don’t worry about that right now. We’ll deal with that when I get you back.” A door slams in the background. “Move your ass, Kiki. You can’t let them catch you.”

“I won’t.”

He hangs up. No see you later or goodbye. I drop my head back and stare at the navy painted ceiling. Please don’t let this be the worst decision I’ve ever made. It sounded like a solid plan at the time, but I’m a little worried now. He could hurt me in the time it takes for the guys to get to us.

He won’t until he gets what he’s been waiting for.

And as much of an asshole as he is, Axel doesn’t strike me as someone who would enjoy knotting a corpse. No. He’ll want me alive for that. My safety relies on holding him off for as long as I can. The guys will get there before anything bad happens.

I continue to reassure myself, but there's a sliver of doubt in the back of my mind.

What if they don't make it in time?

There wasn't much time to waste after I hung up the phone. I quickly filled the guys in and gave them the location where Axel wants to meet. Route 214 is way out in the middle of nowhere. The perfect place for sketchy drug deals. Jag lets me borrow his bike and I take off. They promise to be ten minutes behind, giving me enough time to convince Axel I'm being genuine and hopefully enough time for them to get there before anything bad happens.

The vibration of the Harley's motor works into every centimeter of my body. Grounding myself in the constant and familiar sensation, I accelerate to ten miles over the speed limit. The longer I take the more Axel will suspect something is wrong. As far as he knows, I wanted to escape and I'm desperate to get back to him.

Signage for Route 214 appears sooner than I'd like. Gripping the handle bars, I calm my fluttering nerves and remember why we're doing this. Axel killed both of my parents. He burned my childhood home, and he tried to force me into a heat so we could mate. The past few days, I've tried over and over to find something redeeming about him. Something that might suggest letting him rot in a prison cell would be punishment enough, but there was nothing. I've known the guy for twenty-one years and I can't think of a single good thing about him. He's ruthless and cruel. He's a murderer. He deserves what's coming.

Slowing, I take the turn and immediately spot Axel parked under the shade of an ancient tree. The trunk is wide and the branches are full of leaves. There's plenty of cover. It's probably why Axel picked this spot. I pull up beside his bike and kick the stand down, hopping off with the engine still running. I toss the helmet aside and jump into his arms,

burying my head against his shoulder and forcing myself to relax.

“Whoa, whoa,” he shouts over the roar of the motorcycle. His arms come around me, and his chest rises as he takes a deep inhale, breathing in my scent.

The little excursion with Jag is fresh and what was left of my heat in the nest lingers on my skin. I fist his vest and let my body embrace the tremor of fear I feel at his presence. I’m brave enough to be bait, but that doesn’t mean I’m not scared shitless. This is the same alpha who tried to force my heat. Shivers rattle through me. His touch makes me want to scrub my skin with bleach. His scent makes me want to vomit. I swallow back bile and breathe, forcing myself to remain soft in his hold.

“Kiki,” he says sternly, pushing me out of his arms. “Shut your bike off.”

The command should snap through me, but it doesn’t. I go ram-rod straight anyway, pretending like I’m under his control. I move a little slower than normal, dragging out every action to delay the inevitable. As soon as the engine cuts out, Axel pounces. He grabs my shoulders and spins me around. His mouth presses to mine and I let him. I swear if he puts his tongue in my mouth, I’ll bite it off.

I break away before he can take the kiss further. “Axel, wait, I have so much to tell you.”

His eyes bounce between mine. “You’ve already told me everything I need to know. I knew you’d come back to me.”

Fuck you.

He comes in for another kiss, but I shake my head and press my fingers to his lips, batting my eyelashes at him.

“Please, it’s important. It’s about the safe house.” I lower my hand and run my palm over his chest, smoothing his shirt.

Stiffening, he narrows his gaze. “You took my money.”

“No,” I say quickly. “They forced me to tell them all kinds of things about Wrecker. Axel, the club is in danger.”

“You snitched,” he snaps.

I wince, not a feigned reaction. “I didn’t have a choice, Axel. They made me.” Pinching my eyebrows together, I drop my gaze. “You know how much Wrecker means to me. The MC is the only family I have left.”

“You didn’t want me to take you as a mate,” he reminds me. “You made that fucking clear to that bitch Camila.”

“I was grieving,” I say with a heavy sigh. “I took it out on you, and I’m really, really sorry for that. Can you forgive me?” I lift my eyes to meet his. “I belong with Wrecker, Axel. I belong with you.”

He brushes some hair from my shoulder, and I would think he was trying to be sweet if not for the way he pinches my shoulder. “You understand you’re in trouble, right?”

He’s a sick fuck.

Only a few more minutes until the guys get here.

“Yes,” I breathe. “But there’s something else.” I pause. What else could there be? Something big enough to stave him off.

“Spit it out, Kiki.”

Why this alpha thinks any omega would come running back into his arms is beyond me.

“They were making plans to hit the clubhouse, to pay you back for hitting the Hell Hounds’.”

His head rears back. “What the hell are you talking about? I didn’t do that.”

“You didn’t? I thought you were coming to save me.” If he didn’t do it, who did?

Is he purposefully trying to throw me off?

“I wish I would have thought of that.” He lifts a shoulder and clenches his jaw. “I’m actually a little pissed I didn’t.”

“You have to tell them, Axel.” I grab his vest and pull him closer. “I heard them talking about it when they thought I was

asleep, and they're going to hit the clubhouse today."

He peels my hands off him. "Relax, Kiki. Wrecker MC isn't so easily hurt. The Hell Hounds have a lot to learn if they're hurt by a little bombing."

Yeah, Kiki. It's only a bombing, Kiki. What are you so worried about?

I tuck away my anger. "Please, will you at least warn them? If you're not there to protect them, I'm not sure they'll survive the attack. There might be bombs. They need their Prez to get through this. You're the only one who knows what to do. Please, Axel." I grip his vest a little tighter and tug him toward me.

"Relax, sweetheart." He glances around the empty field. "All right. I'll call them, but once that's done, you're mine."

Going on my toes, I press a hard kiss to his lips and quickly drop back down before I succumb to the urge to vomit. "Hurry."

He smirks and cups my left breast. "You'll take my knot like a good little bitch."

Ugh. I don't mind a little degradation but coming from him it's so wrong.

"Anything you want." My voice comes out husky. "Anything," I say again.

His features darken, and he steps back, dropping his hold on my tit and lighting a cigarette before he makes the call. He walks away, and I keep a hopeful look on my face, keeping my eyes a little wider than normal. The roar of vehicles from the main road fills the space between us. Axel turns his back to the road.

"It's me. We have a problem."

A motorcycle engine roars by and Axel whips around. I dash to the tree and hide, peeking around the trunk. As planned, the guys don't come down 214 on their bikes.

"Relax."

I don't know if he's talking to me or himself.

"Yeah, I'm here," he says into the phone. "A little bird told me the dogs are planning to hit our clubhouse. Apparently those dumb fucks think we're responsible for their spot getting hit." He snickers. "Yeah, yeah, I know." He scans the road once more before turning away from me. I focus on his whispered words and block out everything else. "Listen, I have Kiren's girl with me. No, she's not with them. I know what you think, but you're wrong. She came back to me for help." He grabs his crotch, adjusting himself.

There's a long pause on his end. Whoever he is talking to has a lot to say.

"No. Shut the fuck up. You're not the fucking Prez, and if I say she's mine, she is, you dumb piece of shit."

My upper lip curls. Axel is such a prick.

"Forget about the broad, man. Do you hear what I'm telling you? The little puppies are going to strike today. Sweep the lot. Check for bombs." He glances back at me. "I have an omega to claim."

True fear roots me to the spot. Like hell he will. Dread courses through me. The guys will be here. They have to be here. He says a few more curt words to whoever he's talking to before hanging up and tossing his phone in the direction of his bike. His chest puffs up as he marches toward me with stark determination. I keep my gaze on him, not wanting to give away the plan. My face remains open and sweet, but inside my stomach revolts, and I have to fight to stay calm. I reach for him, and he roughly grabs my palms, jerking me against his body. I release a little yelp of surprise, and he smirks.

"I've been waiting for this for a long time."

"How long?" I ask, licking my lips as his face lowers toward mine. His eyes drop to the movement.

"Since you grew tits."

What a scumbag. His dick will rot before it gets anywhere near me.

“Axel?”

“What, sweetie?”

“That’s fucking disgusting.” I bring my knee up and hit him right between the legs. His hold on me loosens, and I quickly put space between us.

“You fucking cunt.” He clutches his junk and seethes, face turning bright red.

Three figures appear behind him, wielding knives looking more like hell’s angels than Hell Hounds.

“Careful, Axel, that’s my lady you’re talking about.” Crow advances, moving without trouble. I can’t tell if today is one of his good days or if he’s able to push through the pain to deal with the dickhead in front of him. His switchblade presses nice and snug against Axel’s throat. “Didn’t your mama teach you how to treat a woman?”

“She left me.” Axel wheezes again, still not fully recovered from the hit to his nuts.

“Can’t say I blame her.” Jag steps in front of him, fully cutting me out of his line of sight.

Knox comes to me. “Are you okay?” His cheeks are red from running.

“Yeah.” I take a shaky breath. “I was a little worried.”

“Maybe we need to hit the cardio a little harder,” he says with an easy laugh before growing serious and looking me over head to toe. “He didn’t hurt you?” His questions distract me from whatever Axel is saying to the guys.

“He didn’t have the chance.” I grimace. “I had to kiss him.”

Knox reaches into his pocket and pulls out a travel size mouthwash. “Here.”

I close my eyes. Oh my sweet summer child. “Thanks but he didn’t get that far. Only a shower will help get rid of the feeling his lips left on mine.”

“Swish.” He uncaps the bottle.

“This is ridiculous.”

“Don’t say her name.” The crack of a palm against skin ricochets through the air. I glance around Knox. Jag is seething and Crow is glaring at him.

“You’re going to make me accidentally kill him.” Crow straightens Axel and wrenches the alpha’s head back, positioning the knife once more.

“So?” Jag rolls his shoulders.

“So, Kiki didn’t give us permission.”

“You take your orders from a bitch?”

I growl but Knox stops me from going over.

“Wash your mouth out.”

“Is that a demand or?” I raise my eyebrows.

“No. Sorry. Please, try it. I think it’ll help more than you know. The alcohol will get on your lips when you spit and clean them.”

Solid point.

I quickly rinse and spit, surprised by how much that actually helped. I don’t feel like clawing my lips off anymore.

“And one more thing.” Knox grabs me and sweeps me into his arms, kissing me like he loves me. I open to him and his tongue caresses mine, stealing just a breath before he pulls back and grins. “Now how does that feel?”

“Better.” I nod and move for his mouth again, but he dodges me.

“First things first, Angel.” Knox keeps his arm around me but moves to my side so we can observe.

The first thing snarls, ruining any sort of excitement I feel. I scowl at Axel.

“Fine. Kill him.”

“What?” Crow asks, jaw dropping.

“Kiks?” Jag looks at me over his shoulder.

“That’s not good enough.” Knox shakes his head.

“Don’t tell me you want to torture him.”

They all give me stupefied looks. Cool, cool, cool. That was a dumb question. I spare the alpha a second of my attention. He’s a dick, that’s for sure. He’s done the unthinkable, but I don’t think I can stomach literal torture, no matter how much the guys might want to make him pay.

Why don’t I feel guilty about asking them to kill him?

Because he’s taken both of your parents and if you don’t deal with him now, he’ll find another omega—or worse, another teenager to torment. He absolutely deserves death.

“I don’t want to watch you torture him,” I finally say. “I want him gone. That’s it.”

The guys trade glances but eventually relent. Axel tries to thrash out of Crow’s hold. Crow moves the knife before it can do serious damage.

“You should go home, Kiks,” Jag moves to guide me back to the motorcycle. “We’ll take care of it.”

“No.” I plant my feet.

“This isn’t something you need to see.” Crow shakes his head. “You don’t have to stay.”

I lift my chin. “I may not be able to kill him myself, but I can’t leave you to do my dirty work. I need to stay.”

“Don’t hate me once it’s done.” Crow presses the knife back to Axel’s throat.

“I could never hate you, Crow. I love you.”

“I love you too.” He drags the blade.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

KIKI

Watching someone die changes you. It's been two weeks and I still remember the way Axel's eyes looked as the life faded from his body. Don't get me wrong, I'm not sad about his death, but I'm not sure I have a future as a serial killer or a murderer for hire. His face haunts my dreams some nights, and even as the guys snuggle close, enveloping me with their scents, he manages to get to me. I know with time the nightmares will fade. But talking to anyone about it is the last thing I want to do. The guys pressed for me to at least open up to Monica and Lor after I woke up crying a few nights ago.

Apparently the two of them have some sort of support group... *I Saw a Murder and Now I'm a Wreck Anonymous*. ISAMANIWA. That doesn't roll off the tongue quite as well as some others. It's probably not as funny as my mind is making it out to be... but honestly it's either falling into dark humor or falling apart. The right choice is pretty obvious to me.

Lor drums their fingers on the tumbler of coffee they're holding. "So."

We're sitting around the kitchen table within the greater space of the clubhouse. A carafe of coffee and a dozen donuts for us to split sits on the worn wood. With Axel gone, the guys managed to get what remains of Wrecker to agree to a tentative truce until the meeting that's scheduled at the end of the week. Today the guys are sussing out who might've been responsible for the bombing. Axel was surprised when I told

him about the attack, and I don't think that was faked. He didn't hit the Hell Hounds, which means someone else did.

I'm not sure how useful I'm being by sitting here talking about my feelings, but they were worried about me. Talking to them hasn't helped stop the dreams. Coming to this meeting can't hurt. If anything, at least I'll feel less alone.

"I guess I can start," Monica says in that raspy voice of hers, one that speaks of too many late nights and cigarettes. "I saw my first person die when I was nineteen. My abusive step-mother had been doing unspeakable things to my little brother. I found out and went to confront her, but things turned violent. She slapped me and..." She pauses and sucks in a sharp breath. "My brother couldn't defend himself, but he could defend me."

I reach over and squeeze her arm.

She pats my hand and continues. "Royce and I were already dating by then, and I called him to help figure out what to do with her body. The cops eventually came looking for her, but my man does a damn good job of covering his tracks, and without any proof of any maleficence at home, they chalked it up to her walking out on my alcoholic father. It wasn't the first time someone left their partner for that sort of thing." She lifts a shoulder.

"And where's your brother?" Her lips press into a thin line, and I start to back track. "I'm sorry. You don't have to tell me. That was rude of me to ask."

"No, you're okay. It's part of sharing the grief." Her watery smile tells me all I need to know. "He didn't do too well after the incident. He fell into a spiral of addiction and you can guess how the story ends. I only wish I had known what was going on sooner. Maybe if I had stopped it—"

"You know that's a dangerous path to go down," Lor chastises.

Monica nods. "Yup. Anyway, that's my story. Sometimes I dream about both of them. Sometimes it's only her except this time I'm the killer."

“I’m so sorry.” I battle with my sympathetic tears. “I guess you know mine.” I don’t reiterate the story—I don’t think I can say it and they were briefed on the incident.

“At some point, it might help to say it out loud.” Lor takes a sip of coffee. “Part of being in the group is working through the stories together. It’s about building a safe place to do whatever we need to: mourn, cry, rage.”

“Not today.” I cross my arms over my chest.

“She’s not ready, Lor.” Monica gives me a knowing once over. “She can have some time to get used to the meeting.”

“She can have all the time she needs.” Lor nods. “I can share my story if you want. Monica knows it as well as her own by now.”

“I’ll listen to it however many times you need to say it, honeybee.” Monica grabs a donut from the table.

I take one too, needing something to do to keep from fidgeting. The chocolate frosting is soft and creamy, just as it should be and the glazed donut practically melts in my mouth.

“Right.” Lor sets the coffee tumbler aside. “I was twelve.”

Holy shit, that’s young.

“It wasn’t family, but I was somewhere I shouldn’t have been. My parents were absent—not cruel or anything, more uninterested. I got in with a bad crowd through a friend. His brother was into some bad shit. One night we were all hanging out and one thing led to another, and a fight broke out. This kid took another one down and was going in on him... and he didn’t stop until three guys hauled him off. It was too late by then.” Lor glances at the table. “I still remember the sound his fist made.”

I shudder. That’s horrifying to me and I’m an adult. Lor was only a kid. “I’m sorry.”

“Last year you couldn’t tell that story without panicking.” Monica gives me a pointed look. “Lor worked through it.”

I scoff. “Like a twelve-step program?”

“Don’t get down on AA. They know what they’re doing. But no, we don’t have any steps. What we do won’t replace therapy, but we’re here for each other, as fucked up as we may be.” Monica nudges Lor.

Lor chuckles but it’s humorless. “Speak for yourself.”

“Fuck you.” Monica shakes her head. “I know you’ll never admit it to any of your MC buddies out there, but you love me. Even Royce knows it.”

Lor’s cheeks flame. “Monica.”

“Don’t get all huffy on me. I’m only speaking facts.” Monica gives me a saucy grin. “I may not have three mates, but I have Royce and my bestie Lor.” She tips her head to the side. “And I guess maybe you too?”

“We’re totally friends. I really like you both.” I grab another donut. “Sorry for being a dick about the process. I know what you’re saying. I can’t keep it bottled up.”

“And you can’t talk to your guys or else they’ll feel guilty for doing what needed to be done,” Monica adds, seeing right through me.

“I’m not mad at them for doing it.”

“Of course you’re not.” She pours herself a fresh cup of coffee. “But no matter how much you reassure them, they’ll feel responsible for whatever goes on inside that pretty head of yours.”

She’s right. I have talked a bit with the guys, but I feel like a burden. A lot has happened in such a short amount of time, and I’m worried there’s only so much they can handle.

The door to the worn kitchen opens, revealing the guys in all their glory. Knox’s short hair is styled to perfection, that leather vest lying over his black t-shirt in the best way and those fitted jeans don’t do a damn thing to hide how powerful his legs are. Jag’s blond hair is slicked back and the scruff covering his jaw is a few days old, almost as long as Knox’s. Jag is hot without the beard, but with it he’s a walking hazard. A swath of dark hair falls across Crow’s forehead, giving him a moody, edgy vibe. His eyes cut across the room in an instant

and collide with mine, stealing my breath for an entire minute. I know he's an artist, but sometimes I wonder if it isn't Crow who's a work of art.

"And that's our cue to go." Lor snatches the tumbler from the table and stands. "Come on, Monica. Let's go shoot some pool."

"Maybe you'll keep your money this time with the omega staying behind." Monica smirks. "How about you and me take Mountain for all he's worth?"

"He's already hurting from playing against Kiki." Knox stops in front of them and crosses his arms. "Give him hell."

My heart squeezes at the familiar words my dad used to say. Unlike the sadness I've grown accustomed to, a new sensation blooms within me. Nostalgia? Fondness of a memory? Whatever it is, it's a hell of a lot better than the depression that's been riding any mention or thought of my father.

"You got it, boss," Monica says on her way out, pulling Lor after her.

The door shuts and the air thickens with unspoken questions.

"That went better than I thought," I hedge, offering them an opening as I stand and grab the box of donuts.

"Yeah?" Crow drums his fingers on his pants as we head toward the apartment.

Knox grabs a sugary treat from the box while we walk. "Do you think you'll go again?"

"Probably." I lift a shoulder. "Monica and Lor are great, and I can admit hearing their stories gave me something... I wouldn't say relief. More like... mutual misery?"

Jag laughs under his breath and unlocks the door, letting us all inside before he shuts it. "Misery does love company, Kiks."

I set the box of donuts on the counter and take a seat at the table. Knox drops down beside me and offers me a bite.

Leaning forward, I stare at him while I take a giant mouthful. His eyes dilate, mind obviously going in the gutter, and he doesn't seem to realize I ate half his donut until I pull back.

“Hey.”

Shrugging, I smile around my full mouth.

Jag grabs the laptop I've been borrowing from Knox off the couch and brings it to the table. “I have something to show you.”

“I'll see you guys later.” Crow heads to his bedroom and I frown after him. Where's he going?

The computer emits sharp moans and grunts. I swing my head around and gasp. I left my game open. Fuck. After a stupid amount of miscommunication, I'd finally gotten the characters to the inevitable sex, but I'd been interrupted by the support group. My intention was to finish once I got back.

“What is... Is that an orc?” Jag's voice rises two octaves.

Oh god.

I refuse to cower. “Yes.”

“Are you watching cosplay porn?” Knox asks with a snort.

“It's not cosplay.” I take the computer from Jag and roll my eyes. “It's an animated game.”

“Like the Sims?”

“No, not like...” I trail off. “Fuck. Okay, kind of like the Sims but better because it's a story. I can still control their fate, but only within the parameters the story offers.” I pause the sex session. I'll restart it.

“I want to watch,” Jag whines. “Do they talk like the Sims too? In weird combinations of sounds?”

Knox badly imitates the characters from the other game.

“You suck.” I narrow my eyes and stand up, taking the laptop with me.

“Where are you going?” Knox tries and fails to stop chuckling.

It's honestly endearing to see him so beside himself, but my orc love game and I are offended by their laughter. I head to see what Crow is up to.

"We're joking, Kiks, come back," Jag calls after me but when Knox breaks out into a fit of giggles, both of them lose it. "Kiks," Jag tries again between laughs. "Come back."

"Maybe later when you can appreciate orc sex!"

"I do appreciate it. I wanted to watch it."

I scowl and ignore their laughter. I'm not mad at them though. I love this game, and I don't give a flying fuck what they think. I'm more annoyed that I missed the big moment where the characters kissed for the first time. Jag stole that from me.

Crow's door is slightly ajar, and I knock softly. "Hey."

He glances up from the sketch book splayed before him on the desk. "What's going on with orc sex?"

I sigh. "Jag opened this game I've been playing and the characters were finally getting it on. Apparently it's hilarious."

Crow's lips twitch.

"Not you too."

"I'm not laughing at you," he says quickly. "But how does that even work? Orcs are big."

An idea sparks. Something that'll let me relive the glory moment and make Knox and Jag regret laughing at my game. "Want to watch with me?" I step inside his room and close the door with an evil grin.

His eyes light with mischief and he snaps the sketch book shut. "Fuck yes."

"What are you drawing?"

Hesitating, his fingers run over the edge of the notebook.

"You don't have to show me, I'm only curious."

"Promise not to laugh?"

“Of course I won’t laugh.” I shake my head. “Unlike those guys out there, I’m not an asshole.”

He snorts. “They are assholes, aren’t they?” The question is teasing and affectionate.

“The biggest.” I nod and shuffle toward the desk. “So...”

Chewing on his lip, he gingerly opens the sketchpad and turns it toward me. I set the computer down and lean over the table. His lines are precise and clean; like he’s practiced for years to draw without needing to erase and start over. The first picture is of a girl sitting at a half-drawn picnic table. She’s holding a cookie, and her long hair is fluttering in the wind. He’s left off the rest of the setting but it’s intentional. All of the focus is on her.

“That was the night we had to leave you,” he whispers. He turns the page, and the same girl—me—is sitting on a motorcycle, beaming as she wraps her arms around the rider. “This is when you got shit faced and Knox drove you home and snuck you inside.” He brushes his fingers over my smile. “I’d never seen you so goofy.”

He turns the page again. A drawing of me staring up at the sky. A few portraits of me in different poses. The images shift for a while, drawings of me in made up scenarios, then there’s one of me standing before the guys outside of the auction house, face pinched in anger. I swallow at the memory and look at the next one. Me sitting on the dock. Me snuggling against Knox that night we watched the dragon show. Page after page, Crow shows me his heart.

My breath catches when he rifles through the book and shows me one where I’m sitting on the edge of a waterfall of stars.

“You were always in my dreams.”

“Crow,” I choke out.

He tips his head to look up at me. “Do you like them?”

“Like them?” I pinch my eyebrows together and shake my head. “Crow, I love them. I don’t know what to say.”

His eyes shine with pride and he sits back in his seat, tugging me into his lap and burying his head against my neck. “You don’t have to say anything,” he murmurs, kissing my throat as I sniff and battle tears of happiness. “Do you want to watch porn with me?”

A startle laugh bursts out of me. “You’re only trying to distract me from how fucking wonderful this sketchbook is.”

“Maybe.” He kisses my chin. “Do the orcs have green cocks?” His question is curious, not judgmental.

I relax into his hold and swipe at my damp cheeks. “I think so. This is my first time doing an orc storyline.”

“Huh.” His arms wrap around me. “I showed you mine. Show me yours.”

“My game can’t even compare—”

“Kiki,” he whispers. “Show me the damn game, baby.”

“Okay.” I bite my lip and lean forward to grab the computer. “There’s only one rule, okay?”

He runs his hands over my thighs, fingers grazing close to my core. “Okay.”

“No asking questions while they get it on.”

His fingers dig into my legs. “Deal.”

My stomach flutters. I rewind and press play, holding my breath as the orc makes his move.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

CROW

The orc sex is underwhelming. At first it was intriguing, what with the big green dude and the human love interest, but once the shock of that wore off, it's quite simple mechanics wise. He's on top of her and they're moaning and panting. I guess you can't expect spectacular porn from an app like this. The main hook is the build up to the sex.

Kiki's mouth twists to the side, and she glances over, catching me staring at her. "What? Is it horrible? You hate it, don't you?"

"I don't hate it... It's just not wonderful? I mean, I like the concept of the game, but I guess I was expecting something a little more graphic?"

She wrinkles her nose. "The sex scenes do always leave a bit to be desired." Sighing, she exits the game, sets the laptop on the floor, and flops back onto the mattress. Her blonde hair splays around her, and her aquamarine eyes flick to mine. "How would you have done it?"

"The hook up?"

"Yeah." She turns on her side and searches my face. "If you were the orc and this was your first time with the woman you love, what would you have done?"

"First, I'd probably run my hand up her thigh, stopping right below her hip before dragging it back down." I rest my palm against her leg and show her what I mean. "And then I'd

scoot closer.” The bed wiggles slightly under my shifting weight. “Grab the back of her neck and bring her to me.”

Kiki’s breath comes in a soft exhale as I drag her closer. I rub my nose against hers and barely brush my lips to hers.

“And then, I’d wait for her to demand a kiss.”

Following my lead, Kiki fully presses her mouth to mine and teases the seam of my lips with her tongue. My chest rumbles, and I open to her, taking over and tasting her. I run my palm up the inside of her leg and barely brush the edge of my fingers over her core before moving away once more. She writhes as I do it again. Pulling her bottom lip into my mouth and sucking softly, I finally put my hand where she wants it. Kiki grinds into it and I break away from the kiss and trail my mouth down her neck, biting down over the mark we left behind when we claimed her as ours.

“And then what?” She breathes the question and presses into my kneading hand. She’s already slick and ready, her pants all but ruined with her greedy desire.

I bite a little harder, not puncturing the skin but enough to make her stiffen under me for a second, her body going completely lax until I slip my hand into her pants and run my fingers through her dripping wet center. She rocks into my touch, and I release her neck.

“Then,” I whisper into the shell of her ear, “I’d edge her until she cries for my knot.”

I press down on her clit and roll so I’m on top of her. Sitting back, I hook my hands into her bottoms, yank them off and toss them on the floor. She pulls her knees up and plants her feet on the bed, lifting to tear off her shirt and bra. I quickly undress and get back on the bed.

With wide, trusting eyes, she waits for whatever I have planned. No sharp remarks. No snark. Only complete and utter need. Her sweet scent fills the room, and I press my hands on either side of her head, looming over her much smaller frame.

She’s so soft compared to me.

There's something about being an alpha that makes me crave submission. I'm not going to be a dick about it because my omega deserves better than that, but right now, an inherent urge to see her wilt beneath me, completely undone on my knot, fills me with almost feral hunger. Remembering that I need to do a better job than that game is the only reason why I'm not already balls deep inside of her.

Kiki reaches for me, but I sit back.

“Spread your legs for me, baby.”

Her knees fall open, revealing a glistening cunt that's begging to be licked. I rove my gaze over her before lowering my face and running the tip of my tongue up the length of her slit. Kiki's hands dive into my hair, fingers grasping for some sort of control.

I roll my tongue over her clit then lift my gaze to meet hers. “Put your hands above your head.”

She listens without protest, and I get back to work, licking and fucking her cunt with my tongue, taking her close to where she wants to be, but backing off whenever her muscles begin to tense. She lifts her hips, and I growl, slamming my hands onto her thighs and forcing her back onto the mattress.

“Crow,” she whines, glancing at me. Her arms tremble as she tries to listen to what I told her to do.

The flat of my tongue runs through her slit as I hold her attention. Her essence is better than any whiskey I've ever tasted. Sweeter than any cookie I've ever made. Her legs twitch under my hands, and I tease her clit a little more before lazily kissing up her stomach, stopping to bite and suck on each of her breasts.

“I'll take missionary.”

I chuckle and blow on her nipple. “You're going to take everything I give you, then I'll let you fuck me.”

My cock is heavy. Engorged and pulsing with need. Lowering my hips, I let her feel how hard I am. I let her writhe against me and try to position herself to take me. Right as my tip finds her center, I lift up and nudge her chin with my

mouth. She turns her head and exposes her neck. Submitting. Relenting.

I kiss her mark again before flipping her over and slipping my hands between her and the mattress. Her needy cunt is slick against my skin, and I have to prop myself up on my knees and elbows to keep from crushing her. She presses into me, whimpering with need.

“Show me how you’d get yourself off.” The arm with her tattoo is begging to be kissed, so I drop my mouth and brush it over the flower. “But use my hands,” I whisper against her skin.

There’s only a moment of hesitation before she shifts slightly, positioning her legs and arms so she can grind her pussy over my hand. She does it again, turning her head to the side on the bed and panting.

“Make fists.”

I do as I’m told, letting her have this small thing because I’m not planning on letting her come yet. She rolls her hips over me over and over, breaths coming faster and faster, movements growing more urgent.

“Stop.”

With a groan, she does as I ask.

My fingers are drenched, and I pull my hands from beneath her, slipping two fingers into her mouth. Kiki’s lips close around my digits, and she sucks, licking and cleaning them. I tease my cock over her ass, the precum beading over the tip trailing over her skin.

“We’re going to try something.” I sit back on my heels and turn her over. She takes the hand I proffer and I tug her up to sitting. “Get off the bed.”

She does so with a little line between her eyebrows. I sit on the edge of it and quirk my finger at her. Her hips sway as she walks toward me, and I grab her love handles, pulling her between my legs.

“Do you trust me?”

Nodding, she runs her hands over my hair. “Always.”

“Good. Turn around and touch the ground.”

Kiki presents herself to me, her ass and cunt so close to my mouth I could spend all night eating them both. I lightly smack her, cracking my palm across her glute. She sucks in a breath.

“Is that okay?”

“Yes.” She arches her back slightly.

So I spank her again, this time a little harder. Kiki moans and tries to scoot closer, practically begging for more. I chuckle under my breath and push two fingers into her cunt without warning. She emits a glorious sound that’s punctuated by a breathy sigh of relief.

My palm cracks across her ass again. Kiki bucks, but I grab her hips to keep her from getting away.

“I want to fuck you like this.” Her ass is bright red and I brush my mouth over her skin before provoking her with a soft bite. “Can you hold yourself up?”

“I can try,” she says quickly, planting her hands on the ground and inadvertently pressing her ass further into my face.

I lick her seam, curling the fingers still inside of her and brushing them over her g-spot. I tease her ass with my tongue.

“Crow, that’s”—I hum against her, claiming a part of her for my own—“oh, god, that’s nice,” she finishes with a rasp. My cock pulses painfully so I pull away, kissing her ass cheek and grabbing one of her legs and propping her foot on the bed. I position the other one and fist my cock, teasing her center before easing inside of her.

She tenses, resisting my girth for a moment before exhaling and forcing herself to relax. Before she can fully relent, I grip her hips and push her up my length, roughly jerking her back down. Her ass bounces from the impact. I do it again, earning a tiny squeal of approval. With a wicked grin, I slow all the way down, languidly gliding her over my dick. She tries to take control and force herself on me, but she

doesn't have enough strength, not with her arms trembling to hold her up.

"This is where you learn to beg for it, baby." I flick her clit then pinch it, thrusting slightly harder but not quite hard enough.

"Crow," she growls.

I tsk. "I didn't hear you say please." I slam into her and yank her back at the same time.

Kiki screams, arms scrambling for purchase to keep her from collapsing.

"Do you want my knot?"

She nods.

Crack. My palm leaves a faint pink outline on her juicy ass and her cunt gushes with slick. I smirk to myself and fight to keep my knot from forming. It's hard to do with her body so ready for it, but I want to hear her say it.

"Tell me."

"I want—" I thrust into her hard and her breath catches. "I want you—" This time I slam into her twice and she moans in approval. I relax onto the bed and sheath myself fully inside of her, refusing to move until she says the rest.

"Give me your knot," she growls, grinding against me.

My dick pulses, about ready to listen to her demand.

"Say please," I growl back, barely able to contain myself.

"Please," she whines and rolls her hips again. "Please, please, please."

"What do you need?"

"Your knot. Please give me your knot."

"Good girl. Now hold yourself up a bit longer." My voice drops an octave and I let go of my restraint, fucking her hard and fast, watching that perfectly round ass bounce as my cock slams so deep inside of her I swear she's about to break.

“Crow, fuck. Yes, yes, yes.” Her entire body is trembling, my hand around her waist the only reason she’s able to take what I’m giving her without falling on her face. “Oh god, oh god.”

Grunting at the praise, I fuck her even harder, deeper. I fuck her until my knot starts to swell. I pull out of her and help her turn around and climb into my lap. My cock is inside her before either of us can breathe and she sinks down my length, stretching over my knot with a throaty “Fuuuuck.”

“That’s how you beg for it,” I tell her, dropping my forehead to her shoulder to keep from kissing her with my dirty mouth. “You feel so good,” I whisper, letting her take over and ride me while my knot pulses inside of her, filling her with my cum.

Her nails bite into my shoulders and she grinds on me. Kiki takes my knot. Kiki rides my knot. Kiki owns my knot, and I let her have every last drop of cum, until her cunt is swollen and full.

What started as me showing her how I’d fuck the woman I love turns into Kiki claiming me. Her tits press into my bare skin, and I wrap my arms around her waist, thrusting up every so often when she starts to moan, forcing her over the break of her orgasm until she screams and cries out with pleasure. Sounds that’ll replay in my mind for days to come slip past her pretty lips.

“I love you,” I tell her, kissing her mark as my knot finally begins to deflate.

She wraps her arms around me and rests her cheek on my shoulder. “I love you too.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

KIKI

Crow and I finally join the guys for dinner. They ended up having to prepare the meal since we were a little busy. Both of them seem slightly put out that I left them to have fun with Crow, but that's what they get for making fun of my game. Besides, getting to see Crow's sketchbook is worth them pouting.

Knox smartly hands me a bowl full of food when I take a seat at the table.

"Please accept this very simple but very delicious fancy macaroni and cheese as our apology."

"And we have the best beer money can buy." Jag sets down the generic domestic beer that my dad used to love in front of me.

"This beer is hardly the best."

"Says you, but it's consistent, affordable, and does the job. And those fancy IPAs don't taste very good with this dish." Jag settles in beside me as I take a drink. "How was the sex?"

I choke on my beer.

"How do you think it was?" Crow leans back in his chair. "I'm sure you heard her screaming."

"Fucking hell, do we have to talk about this?" My voice is shrill, and my face is flushed, despite knowing these three have had their tongues all over my body.

Logistically, I shouldn't be embarrassed, but I wasn't expecting the question and I'm not really sure I want to give a report on how well Crow did—which was damn good by the way.

“Don't be shy, Kiks.” Jag winks. “But that wasn't the sex I was talking about. How was the sex in your game?”

“Oh.” I take a sip. “It was sufficient.”

“Sufficient?” Knox's brow furrows. “All the fuss for *sufficient?*”

I release a heavy sigh. “Well, I expected a little more for how long the buildup was. It was pretty plain. Don't get me wrong, I definitely still liked it, but it would have been cool to see some crazy orc-kink stuff.”

“Like maybe he could have used one of his sharp extra-long teeth to tickle the glory hole?”

“What?” I give Jag a concerned once over. “Would you like a sharp tooth shoved up your ass?”

He snorts. “Hell no.”

“I guess if it wasn't sharp...” I trail off. Is that position even possible? I guess it would depend on the length of the tooth and the angle of the orc's head between her legs. How would he clean it before going to kiss her once he was done? “No. I don't think that's what I want either. I don't know. He's a monster—shouldn't he be a little rougher or something? Like maybe taking her from behind while he pulls her hair hard enough to wrench her head all the way back until she can't move, basically holding her hostage while he ruts into her or maybe a primal scene.”

Silence follows my verbal vomit. I take another sip of beer and shove a forkful of cheesy pasta into my mouth. Right. Maybe that was too far, but honestly, that sounds hot as hell to me.

I don't buy the gentle monster sex; at least not gentle missionary monster sex. Maybe a gentle reverse monstergirl or doggy style or something, but missionary?

Too human.

“That’s not a bad concept,” Crow says, stabbing noodles. “Have you thought about writing your own story for the app?”

I definitely have a thousand ideas... but writing a story?

“I don’t know.”

“Have you tried? Surely, whatever you write will be better than that miscommunication stuff you were talking about.” Knox chews his food and stares me down.

“I feel weirdly pressured about this.”

“Maybe we all just want to see how kinky the smut you write will get.” Jag nudges me. “You could even try writing the scene I suggested.”

I laugh. “Nice try. No teeth in the ass. But I think I might fiddle around with an idea. The website says they’re always looking for submissions. I don’t know if it’ll even be good enough.”

“There’s only one way to find out.” Crow takes another bite of his food.

Knox’s phone rings, and he grumbles, dropping his fork and grabbing the device. “What’s up, Royce?” I not so subtly eavesdrop. The voice on the other end is muffled, but there’s no mistaking the rage that flashes across Knox’s face. “You’re sure? Where’s Nova now?” He pauses, and I straighten.

“Did something happen?”

He nods. “Okay. We’ll go look for her now.” After hanging up, he tosses the phone onto the table. “Well, we found the fuckers who hit the clubhouse.”

“How?”

“Royce and Mountain were checking in on Nova for us, just making sure she had everything she needed, and three alphas tried to roll up on them. It turned into a brawl. Apparently one of the guys talked some shit about the bombs they left for us.”

“Did they kill them?” Jag asks, shoving aside his food.

“No. But it was bloody. Rita’s mate came out and helped the guys win the fight. Rita and Nova escaped out of the back. The cops are there now, questioning everyone.”

“Were there witnesses?” I stand. “We need to find Nova before the cops do. I’ll change.”

Knox stands to follow me to his closet where I’ve stashed all my things. “A neighbor saw the alphas attack first so our guys will probably get off on self-defense.”

I throw on a hoodie and shoes, turning to nod at Knox. “Let’s go find Nova.”

Crow and Jag are waiting for us by the front door. Together we rush through the clubhouse and set off toward where Nova was staying. I ride on my own bike and we take corners at speeds fast enough to send adrenaline surging through my veins. Before long, we pass the street where Rita lives. There are a few cop cars and people standing around. Nosey neighbors most likely.

We cruise up and down each street. My head is on a swivel as I search for her. Nova was technically supposed to go back to the Omega Council after what happened with Curtis, but she didn’t. There’s no way in hell I’m letting her get dragged back to Camila. A flash of brown hair and wide eyes catches my attention as we pass by an alley. I automatically flip a bitch and roll into the narrow lane. Nova is tucked behind a few trash cans, trembling with fear. A woman—who can only be Rita—glares at me until the guys appear. Her features smooth, and she shoots me a quick apologetic look.

“Get on.” I take my helmet off and hold it out for Nova. “We have to go now while they’re distracted.”

Without hesitation, she snatches the helmet and shoves it on her head, dropping the sun visor and swinging her leg over the bike, settling in behind me like a seasoned pro. “Where are we going?”

“To the apartment.” I glance at the guys for confirmation.

“Are you okay with that?” Knox asks.

“Yeah. We’ll meet you back there. Go make sure Mountain and Royce aren’t in trouble.” I spare a second for Rita. “Thank you for taking care of her.”

Rita nods. “She deserves better than the Omega Council and that shitty pack.”

I glance toward the end of the alley which opens to another road. “Don’t we all?” And with that, I take off. Nova’s hands rest lightly on my hips, but she’s stiff as a board behind me. I go fast, knowing the cops will be distracted for at least a little while. We’re lucky her asshole pack hasn’t already told them about Nova. If they had, there was no way she would have been able to stay hidden for so long. Lor is there and closes the gate behind us as I park my motorcycle.

Nova scrambles off and removes the helmet, handing it to me. “Thank you.” She glances at the ground.

“Let’s get you inside.” I walk with determination and those few loitering around the clubhouse property give me a wide berth. It might have something to do with the bitter tang of anger chasing my steps. If Mountain and Royce hadn’t shown up, those assholes would have got her. Who knows what they would have done to her.

There’s no question that the safest place in the clubhouse is our apartment so that’s exactly where I take Nova. No one comes into the apartment; that’s the general rule, but the guys agreed, and keeping her safe is a priority. Her footsteps slow behind me once she realizes where I’m heading. I stop and turn. She takes a step back and shoots her gaze around. That look... that fear... it makes my stomach clench.

She’s afraid of me?

I wasn’t very nice the first time I met her, but that was mostly because the guys didn’t think through their plan. They were being valiant and saving her from a bad situation, and I was too hopped up on hormones to see that they didn’t want her the way they want me.

Sighing, I run my hand through my hair, detangling some of the knots from the ride. “You’re probably wondering why I

brought you here.”

Her gaze snaps to mine. “I don’t want any trouble.” There’s a tremor in her voice.

What the fuck did Curtis do to this omega? A fresh wave of frustration rolls through the air, heady in my scent. Nova winces as though I slapped her. I don’t know what to do here. I have to do something though, we can’t stay in the hallway all day, and I don’t want her to run away because she thinks I’m going to omega rage on her.

“I know you don’t want trouble,” I say softly. “The first time I met you was not my best moment. I was mostly mad at the guys because I thought they were fucking you.”

She blanches.

“I realize now that they’re not,” I’m quick to add. “Things between us are really good, and I don’t know what happened to you or why, but I do know that I want to do my part to keep you safe, just like Knox or Jag or Crow would do.” I raise my hands to show I’m not a threat and step toward her. She doesn’t bolt. Okay this is good. “If you’re all right with it, I’d like to go into the apartment. It’s the safest place we can be and the guys will be texting or calling soon.”

Nova chews on her cheek before nodding ever so slightly. “Okay.”

“Okay.” I unlock the door and slip inside so she doesn’t have to come too close to me. I don’t think she’d like that. Sure enough, as soon as she’s inside, she puts as much distance between us as possible. I fight off a frown and shut the door, locking it for extra measure, but as the loud snick cuts through the air, I mentally curse myself.

What if she thinks I’m trying to cage her in so I can go after her?

I can’t unlock it now, the damage is already done.

Shaking my head, I shoot her a careful grin and go to where I left my phone charging on the kitchen counter. My dad’s smirking face shines up at me from the lock screen as I type in the passcode.

There's a missed call, but it's not from the guys.

I tap into the voicemails and hit play, turning away from Nova to listen while she acclimates to being in the same space with me. I don't think she's moved since we came inside and she absconded to her corner.

"Kiki Malone, this is Captain Riley. I'm going to need you to come down to the station for a few questions. Call the station and set up a time. The desk has an order to fit you in as soon as possible."

The message ends, and my fingers tighten around the phone. Did they find Axel? That can't be it. They'd come kicking the door in if they had proof we were responsible for his death. Maybe he wants to ask me about my dad again. The couch creaks, and I glance over my shoulder. Nova is perched on the very edge of the cushion, stiff and uncomfortable as hell. Whatever the captain needs can wait for another day.

"Have you ever been on *Playing for Love*?"

Nova peers at me from the corner of her eyes. "No."

"It's amazing. Hang on, let me go get my laptop." What better way to bond with her than to show her animated sex? As I march into Crow's room to grab the computer, I realize it's probably not the best decision, but sitting in the living room with her as wound up as she is isn't going to do either of us any good.

She avoids me while I settle in on the other side of the couch. I keep one cushion between us and place the extra pillow there too, building a barrier of sorts for her sake.

"Okay." I navigate to the homepage to start a new story. "We have basilisk or minotaur. Personally, I like the minotaurs because they're..." I probably shouldn't say cock in front of her right now, right? "Well endowed." I swallow. *You're really helping her feel comfortable, Kiki. Great job.* "Uh, so," I continue. "Yeah. The basilisk has nice attributes too. It's really your choice. You can even pick your female character." I set the laptop on the pillow and show her the screen.

Nova, to my surprise, leans toward it. “The one with the cinnamon brown hair.”

“Done. Okay. Now pick your man, er, monster.”

She flicks her eyes between the two options. “The minotaur.”

“Good choice. I follow the prompts to take us to the journeys set for the minotaur. There are four basic options. “We can do meet-cute at the farm, intergalactic abduction, massage therapist, or boss-employee.”

“Massage therapist?”

I lift a shoulder. “Your choice.” I nudge the laptop toward her, and she considers it and lifts her gaze to meet mine. “It’s okay.”

She sucks in a breath but tugs the computer into her lap and starts the game. I lean back and simply observe her while she plays, noticing the same frustration in her when the minotaur stupidly withholds information. I get why the creators are doing it, it’s a good way to add the will they/won’t they aspect to the game, but there are a lot of other options for tension.

They could have the main character come from a super wealthy family who runs a slaughter business, and somehow she saves the minotaur she loves from that fate. Or they could be enemy massage therapists—do massage therapists have enemies? Whatever. The point is there’s more that can be done with the game. The ideas run rampant in my head while Nova plays.

The guys were right. I should write a script and submit it for submission. There’s really nothing to lose except maybe a bit of my pride. Once we figure out what to do with Nova, and after I go see the captain, I’ll sit down and hammer out the ideas.

The guys get home a few hours later, opening the door to Nova and me huddled around the laptop. Despite the miscommunications, we can't seem to stop working through the game. The couple is out at a club and some chick comes to try and dance on him—or at least that's what I think the animation is showing. It's hard to tell.

Some things in the game aren't the greatest animation wise.

Either way, this floozy is trying to steal Yelena's man. Halfway through, Nova wanted to name her and I couldn't hold back the cheesy smile. I knew she'd like it.

Well, not really, but I'm glad she did, and I'm glad it helped her relax.

“No orc this time?” Jag drawls.

Glaring at him, I jab my finger in his direction. “Shut your filthy mouth.”

He chuckles. “Easy, tiger. Hey, Nova.”

Nova tenses and turns to me, gauging my reaction.

“I promise I'm not going to flip out.” I'm not threatened by Nova, I'm worried about her. It hasn't been that long since the guys saved her from a really bad situation.

“Okay.” She's reverted back to being tense, and I get a little frustrated, more with the situation than her.

It was so nice when it was the two of us, but it's not totally irrational to worry how an omega will react with another omega in her space.

“Rita and Leroy are back home. The cops thought our guys should press charges.” Knox stops near the couch. “What do you want them to do?”

Nova struggles to come up with an answer.

“If they're charged, they'll be facing time, right?” I ask.

“Yeah. Probably not life, but enough.” Knox gives me an appreciative nod.

“What do your guys want to do?” Nova asks.

“Not press charges,” Crow confesses. “We wouldn’t be asking if it weren’t for the fact that they’ll be out of the picture if the guys do it.”

“Don’t make them do something they don’t want to,” she says adamantly. Nova pauses and fidgets in her seat. “I actually have a plan... but I’ll need some help.”

“This sounds like we need a drink.” Jag grabs a handful of beers from the fridge and brings them over. I take one while the guys all find a place to sit. Nestling himself between my legs, Jag props my thighs on his shoulder and drops his head onto my lap.

“Hey, Kiks.”

I tug his hair. “Hey.”

“What’s this plan of yours?” Knox asks Nova.

She wrings her hands in her lap. “I want to go to New Pond Rehab. I know it’s far away, but it’s the best solution I’ve come up with. I can’t stay in Dolin. Not with Camila and my old pack. And...” She glances away. “I’m struggling. Curtis made me take drugs, but I still crave them. My body wants them even though I know it shouldn’t.”

I reach over and place my hand on her arm. “Curtis was an asshole and what you’re feeling is normal. You’ve been through some shit.” I squeeze her arm. “I’m proud of you for recognizing that you need help.”

Swallowing, she nods. “Thanks. But I need more than New Pond.”

“We’ll help you however we can. What else do you need?” Crow taps his fingers on the beer bottle.

“A fake identity and a shit load of scent and heat suppressors.” Nova grimaces. “I know the risk of taking the medicine too long, but I’ll figure out how to handle the heat once I’m settled. They make toys and before you mention it, I know there are drugs too, but it’s different. I can’t be Nova or an omega once I get out of rehab. I want to start over. I need

to.” She blows out a hard breath. “And like I said, there are special toys for omegas.”

The guys all look uncomfortable at the mention of the knotting dildos some omegas use when they don't have alphas around during their heat. I've never seen one, but I've definitely heard of them. I doubt it can compare to the real thing.

“Where are you going to live after rehab?” I ask.

“Maybe in Middleburg. Maybe Lincoln. I haven't fully decided.”

“Do you know anyone up there?”

She shakes her head. “No. But that's the point. I want to start fresh. Recover. Get a job at a coffee shop or something. Live my life.” Her eyes mist a little. “A lot of time was stolen from me.”

My heart aches for her. “I'm sure the guys can help you figure something out. They can probably help secure an apartment too, right? We could use that money from the auction?” All the objections they're not saying out loud weigh heavy in the air, but eventually Knox relents and agrees to help.

She's so much stronger than I am. I hope she finds her happiness.

Rita calls a while later and offers to come pick up Nova. That shitty pack of hers will be locked up for a few days at least. Long enough to set the arrangements in motion. I walk her out to meet Rita, relieved to see she's no longer fidgeting or flinching. Rita nods at us from the front seat of her SUV.

“Well,” I say with an awkward wave. “Let me know if you ever want to talk.”

She studies me. “You know, I was around when they were forced to stop seeing you.”

I suck in a breath. Did everyone but me know what happened?

“They were assholes for the first few months. Losing you hurt them.” Her gaze wanders to the trees across the road. “I don’t know if I’ll ever experience a love like what they have for you.” Her throat bobs. “You guys are good together. Take care of them?”

“They’re my pack. I’ll always take care of them. And no one is going to force us apart again.”

Turning a watery smile on me, she says, “Good,” and sets off for the SUV.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

KIKI

The morning of the big meeting with Wrecker, I come up with a solution for how to settle the problems between the two clubs. The guys are all around the kitchen table when I burst into the room.

“We should patch them in.”

Knox casts a careful look in my direction. “Oh?”

“Yeah.” I nod and grab a coffee mug from the cabinet. “Think about it. We’re bigger than they are. Their stuff is a mess and without Axel, the supplier connection is gone. These guys need stability. They won’t find that in a broken club.”

“And you want them all over here?” Jag sits back in his seat.

A few of them I could live without, but really the only reason I don’t care for them is because of Axel, and he’s dead. “I think it’s the smart move.”

Crow shakes his head. “We don’t have room for all of them. Not to mention, some of them won’t be accepted.”

I chew on my cheek and fill my cup, thinking for a moment. “Fine, maybe not all of them, but we offer to patch some of them. Maybe only those who haven’t killed any Hounds. You guys have hurt Wrecker too. Not everyone will want to patch over, but some might.”

Jag and Crow look to Knox, and he flicks his gaze between the two of them, taking measure of their reactions before

turning to me. “We can put it to a vote. I can’t make any promises, but it is a good idea. With Axel dead and that supplier connection lost, Wrecker won’t have to worry about us, so long as they don’t get back into the drug business.”

I love how adamant they are about protecting Dolin as much as they can. Wrecker isn’t the only dealer in town, but they’re one of the bigger ones.

“Okay.” I beam at them and take a long sip of cinnamon coffee. It’s much better piping hot. “Thank you.”

“Of course, Angel.” Knox stands and comes to drop a kiss on my cheek. “But we need to gather everyone to discuss it. Will you be okay on your own?”

“I’ll be fine. I probably need to go talk to Riley.” I grimace. I’ve been putting him off and he’s called me two more times. The guys don’t like the idea of me going on my own, but I refuse to be the omega who won’t go places without her pack. “If they wanted to arrest me, they wouldn’t be leaving voicemails,” I say with a soft laugh. “Go do your meeting. I’ll text you when I’m home.”

They all say goodbye in their own way. Knox with another chaste kiss. Jag with a devastating one that leaves me breathless, and Crow with one that makes me ache for them to stay. They leave, and I finish my coffee. It’s time to stop delaying the inevitable. Captain Riley will find a way to meet with me and it’s better that I control when and where.

I ride over to the station and park my motorcycle between two cop cars and make my way inside. The guy at the front desk looks me up and down.

“Are you here to see your man?”

“Do I look like I’m here to see my man?” I scowl. “That’s judgmental as fuck, dude.”

His chest puffs up. “I’ve been around my fair share of old ladies. Who are you here to see.”

I smirk and press my hands to the counter, leaning toward him. “Captain Riley. Maybe I should tell him how big of an asshole you are.”

He blanches a little. "I'll go get him."

"You do that." I hold back from making a snotty face at him. There are only so many fuck bucks in the day, and he's not getting any more of mine.

Captain Riley emerges from an office in the back, and as if every cop in the place has *the boss man is coming* radar, they all focus really hard on whatever they're working on. The captain's gaze narrows slightly. He's not buying it, but his attention moves to me and his charges are forgotten. He marches over and nods.

"Thanks for coming in, Kiki."

"I know you miss me, but what would your mate say if she knew you were calling me?"

"Don't be a smart ass."

But it's so much fun.

"What can I do for you?" I tip my head to the side, completely unapologetic for being myself.

"Let's go to my office." He escorts me to his area and shuts the door firmly behind us before taking a seat behind his desk. His eyes drill into me. "Axel is dead."

I don't know what to say to that. "He is?"

"You don't sound sad."

"I'm not." I won't bother with acting surprised and worried. If he had reason to suspect me, we'd be in an interrogation room instead of his office.

"Have you heard from your dad?"

I lift a shoulder. "And if I have? Is he in trouble?"

"You know he's not in trouble." Riley bristles and blows out a hard breath. "Despite what you might think, I'm only worried about Kiren."

"Okay."

"Do you make a habit out of being difficult?"

"Only for you." I smile sweetly. "Is that all you needed?"

He opens a desk drawer. “There is one more thing.” He drops a folder onto the desk. “Take it.”

“What is it?” I don’t make a move for it.

“It’s for you.” He huffs and opens the folder for me. There are pictures inside. Pictures of my mother pregnant. Pictures of my dad with her. Pictures of them holding a baby, holding me. They don’t seem to realize they were being photographed. “They’re copies of the originals, but these are from way back when I was trailing Wrecker, trying to find something to use against them.”

“And you thought my parents were the way in?”

He shrugs and points to the picture of the three of us. “I thought maybe they’d want to protect their daughter. Your dad didn’t listen to me until after your mother’s death.” His eyes lift to meet mine. “I liked your dad.”

I swallow. “I liked him too.”

“Liked. Funny you would use past tense.”

Stiffening, I glare at him. “Don’t read into it. You used past tense too.” I shake my head and grab the photos. “Thanks for the pictures. They’re only a little creepy.”

He doesn’t smile, only continues to stare at me as if he knows exactly what happened to my dad and exactly what happened to Axel. After a few tense moments, he glances at the clock on the wall. “I have another appointment, but don’t be a stranger, Kiki.”

No making me promise to get in touch if I hear from my dad. No threats about finding out what really happened to Axel. Captain Riley holds my gaze in that knowing way of his. I roll my eyes, pretending like he isn’t getting under my skin.

“I plan to never speak to you again, Captain. Good luck with the cereal business.”

He does laugh at that stupid joke. Taking that as my sign to leave, I open the door and split. I place the pictures in the compartment under the seat to keep them safe. I wasn’t kidding when I told Riley I had no plans to see him again. If I

had it my way, that's what would happen. I'm a Hound now. Jag, Crow, and Knox are mine and we were made for trouble.

The purr of my Harley fills the air, and I cruise out of the parking lot, a strange sensation washing over me as I head home. The sun shines down on me, warming my skin and comforting me. It's just me, the road, and my bike, but I don't feel alone. I remember a familiar smile, one that'll be in my heart forever regardless of if Dad is here or not.

Give 'em hell, Kiki.

Gripping the handle bars, I accelerate and speed down the onramp, watching for cars and breaking more than one road rule while my long hair whips behind me. I laugh as my stomach drops while I expertly weave between cars.

You got it, Old Man. Love you.

EPILOGUE

TWO YEARS LATER

KIKI

“I don’t know, I really think we should consider a pegging scene.” I stare into the camera, unblinking. My co-workers are used to my ideas by now, and most of them trust me. I’ve worked for *Playing for Love* for a little over a year and a half and I’ve managed to bring a lot of new readers to the app. I’m pretty sure it’s because we threw in some kinkier sex sequences. Well, that and we added more story lines than their standard miscommunication stuff.

I’m glad the guys are gone for this part of the meeting. They wouldn’t be able to keep their laughter to themselves. The second annual meeting with all the new chapters is well underway by now. I glance at the clock on my laptop. Actually, it’s probably over. Most of Wrecker patched over, and with that many people, the Hounds redistributed its members and expanded. Those who didn’t join moved on to other packs. Wrecker is officially an MC of the past. The only reason I feel a twinge of sadness is because Dad would have hated to see it crumble, but I think he’d appreciate the things my pack is doing. He’d love knowing they take good care of me.

Before I can get too down in my thoughts, I refocus on the computer screen. The silence has stretched on uncomfortably long. “Is my connection okay?” I ask, knowing full well everyone heard me. Sometimes they need a little prompting when I suggest something they’d consider radical.

“Pegging?” Stewart, the head of animation, tips his head to the side. His video feed is a little fuzzy but there’s no missing the confusion lining his face.

Online meetings are generally chaotic, but I’ve managed to make half the team speechless with my suggestion.

“It’s when one partner takes the other from behind... in the other hole.” Linda bites her lips and fiddles with the end of her braid.

“To clarify, the other hole is the asshole,” I say with a dramatic sigh. It still amazes me how embarrassed some of my co-workers get. We work for an erotic novel company. You think they’d be able to talk about pegging using proper terms.

“You don’t say,” Stewart deadpans. “And you think the readers will enjoy it?”

“Without a doubt.” There have been a flood of requests since we expanded into different kinks, and pegging has by far come out on top. It makes sense. Who wouldn’t love to see the dominant partner submit to the other, if only for one scene. “Does everyone have the boxes I sent?” They all nod. “Okay. Open them up.” I grab the box sitting next to me on the couch and pull out the strap on and dildo. It’s not as thick, but that’s probably for the best. Luxuria, a premium sex toy company, provided the toys and a couple varieties of lube.

“Oh wow,” Stewart whispers as he opens his package. “My ass already hurts.”

I snort. “Relax, Stew. No one is pegging you unless you ask.”

Linda and a few other creators titter, but they’re all fascinated by the strap on. One person even tries it on.

“I’ve heard enough. Let’s make it happen.” Tisha, Head of Creative, grins at the camera. “Good thinking as always, Kiki. Are you able to experiment and let us know how it goes?”

As if summoned by her question, Knox comes in the front door. I bite back a smile and nod. “I think I can make that happen.”

“Lucky wench,” Linda mutters.

I chuckle. “Still looking for the right one?” I waggle my eyebrows. “Have you tried the dating app?”

The Omega Council miraculously changed its ways. Well, it wasn't a total miracle. Camila was fired and a new person was put in charge by the new head of the royal council. I was hesitant to be hopeful, but when the auction house burned to the ground two years ago, I couldn't help screaming in triumph. The compatibility test is still used, but instead of omegas being assigned to a pack, they get a list of potential packs that might be right for them. The omega gets to decide her destiny. Linda's been on more than a few dates, but she hasn't connected with any of them.

“No.”

“Soon,” I tell her. “Until then, I'll talk to Knox and we'll report back with our findings.” I say my goodbyes and disconnect the call, smirking as an eager Knox kicks off his shoes and rips his shirt off.

“God, I love the monthly brainstorm meetings.” His eyes darken, and his scent blooms, rich and earthy and horny as hell. All of the guys have willingly helped me play out more than a few scenarios the team has pitched, but this one is pushing boundaries.

It doesn't stop me from setting aside the computer and hooking my finger under the harness, holding it up for his inspection. “Do you trust me?”

His eyes widen slightly when he realizes what it is. “Angel, I don't need a strap. I have a perfectly good cock.”

“Mmm. I think you're misunderstanding.” I stand and press my chest to his. “The strap isn't for you. It's for me.” I bat my eyelashes and press a kiss to his jawline. “Can you give up control?”

“You want to peg me?” he asks, stupefied.

I run my nose over the column of his neck and nip at his skin. “Only if you're okay with it. I can always ask Jag.” Something tells me he'd be interested. Knox's hands find my

hip and he presses his thigh between my legs. I rock against him, humming in approval. “What do you say, Knox?”

“An ass for an ass?” He jerks my pants covered core over his thigh, and I hiss at the sudden pressure on my clit.

“Fair is fair.”

Ducking down, he captures my mouth. “The things I do for love,” he whispers against my lips. “You can peg me, Kiki Malone, but then I’m going to put my cock in every hole you have.”

“You already had my ass,” I whisper back, reminding me just how many times he’s taken me in every way.

He kisses me again. “Fine, but I want that pretty cunt wrapped around my cock.”

Goddamn.

I rock over him again, groaning at the friction. “Get in the nest.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

My nostrils flare, and I purr. “Be a good boy and I’ll swallow your cock.” I may be a little power drunk now that I’ve learned that little trick, but I love the way they fall apart and sometimes beg for release. In a world that was made for alphas, I’ll take all the power I can get.

He struts toward the nest, glancing at me over his shoulder. “Hate to break it to you, babe. You were always going to swallow my cock. Now hurry up and show me what you can do with that strap.”

With an excited squeal, I snatch the dildo and lube from the box and hurry to sanitize the dildo. Knox is already undressed by the time I close the door, his hand stroking up and down his thick length. Heat pools in my cunt, and I set aside the freshly washed toy and peel off my clothes. Knox watches me with curious interest as I slip into the harness, securing the dildo.

“I’ll have to get you ready first,” I tell him as I grab the lube. “Lift up your legs and hold onto your feet.”

He does as I ask; his thick and full sac rests against his skin, begging to be squeezed. I cup his balls in my hand and tug and squeeze softly, earning a purr of approval. I give them a little more attention before using my teeth to rip open the first packet of lube. I drizzle some between his ass cheeks and over my fingers, staring at him while I do it.

Knox's chest is heaving, and I have no doubt he's using every ounce of control to keep from taking over and fucking me senseless.

"Relax, big guy." I cup his balls with one hand and gingerly slip one finger into his ass. He grunts and I wait, letting him adjust to the intrusion. Tugging on his overfull testicles, I distract him as I begin to slide my finger in and out of him. He pinches his eyes shut and breathes, forcing himself to relax.

"That's a good boy," I tell him, wrapping my free hand around his cock and pumping.

His hips jerk a little when I tease a second finger near his asshole. "Fuck."

Slick rushes out of me, coating my skin as my cunt begs for his knot. *Soon, but not quite yet.*

I adjust the finger inside of him and stroke him. "Do you like how that feels?"

"Yes," he pants.

"Do you want more?"

"Angel," he murmurs, eyes opening to look at me. "Do your worst."

With a grin, I add the second finger and his eyes nearly pop out of his head, jaw clenching.

"Breathe."

He listens to me and a heady rush of power fills me. I was right. Dominating the alpha is hot as hell. He's at my mercy. He's giving me something he's never given anyone else. I tighten the fingers around his cock and pump a little faster, scissoring my fingers and helping him prepare for the dildo.

It's not much bigger than my two fingers, and that was intentional. You can't take a virgin ass with the thickest dildo on the market. At least, not unless you want to scar your partner for life.

When his dick pulses in my hand, I slip my fingers out and open another packet of lube, drenching the dildo with plenty of artificial slick. My own coats my thighs and I rub my legs together and stare down at Knox. He's still holding his legs up, head dropped back slightly with his chest rising and falling.

Stepping closer, I line the dildo up with his ass and meet his gaze. "Ready?"

He nods and fists the blankets in his hands. I drop my hands to his ass and spread his cheeks a little, pushing the tip of the dildo in. Knox wiggles.

"Shh, you can take it, baby." I push in another centimeter. "Just like that, Knox. Relax." He stares up at me with hooded eyes, nothing but trust and desire shining in his irises. Not a hint of fear. With renewed determination, I surge into him, seating the dildo fully inside of him in one deliberate thrust.

Gasping, Knox clenches his muscles. I use my clean hand to squeeze his cock, whispering little words of encouragement while he gets used to the dildo. When the tension bleeds from his body, I pull my hips back a bit and rock into him.

"Fuuuuuck."

"Mmm. Let me know if it's too fast." I do it again, sliding my hand up and down his length at the same time.

"I can feel it all over," he rasps. "Oh, fuck."

Smirking, I move a little faster. Nothing too hard or intense, but enough to pick up the pace to match that of my hand. Knox's grunts and moans turn into sweet little whimpers, something I thought I'd never hear. His breath is stuttered as he fights his release.

"Don't fight me," I warn him, squeezing his girth. "Be a good boy and let it happen." This time I do thrust a little harder, still nothing like what the guys do with me, but definitely more than Knox has ever felt.

“Oh fuck, I’m going to come.”

“Yeah, you are,” I whisper, thrusting at the same force and pace, keeping my grip on his cock. His eyes roll back, and he arches, taking one last thrust before his cum explodes and shoots into the air. I pump my hips a few more times, getting every last drop of cum out of him before finally slowing my pace.

I let him recover before slowly sliding out of him. His legs drop to the bed as his heavy breaths fill the space.

“Fuck, Angel. What are you doing to me?”

Chuckling, I drop onto the edge of the mattress. “So you liked it?”

“I’m surprised, but yeah. We can definitely do that again.”

I squeeze his leg. “I have to go clean up really quick. Will you be okay for a few minutes?”

“Yeah. When you come back, I’m making good on my promise.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything else.” I lean back and kiss him, then head to clean the dildo and wash my hands.

Knox is hard and ready when I make my way back into the nest, sitting casually on the side of the mattress. I walk around where I’d taken him and sink to my knees, running my palms up his strong legs. He’s already hard again, but I’m not complaining. His tip is glistening with cum, and he uses his thumb to spread it around.

“I cleaned it up a little for you,” he says in a husky voice.

Licking my lips, I look at him through my lashes and lean forward, flicking my tongue over his slit. His hand finds my hair, and I hum in approval, willingly opening my mouth and taking him in. He groans and gathers all of my hair into one hand, moving it out of his way so he can watch me suck him off.

“Not much of an angel now with my dick in your mouth.” He thrusts his hips up a little, the tip of his cock edging deeper into my mouth. “Can you take me all the way, Kiki?”

I hum in affirmation, relaxing my throat and holding onto his hips, letting him control the blow job for a bit. With a growl, he stands, keeping my hair in his hand and gaining better control for face fucking. I hold on to his hips and swirl my tongue up his length, opening my throat for him.

“Look at me while you choke on me,” he growls.

Lifting my watery eyes, I breathe through my nose and let him have free rein. He’s not too rough, which I appreciate, but some thrusts do push me past where I’d be comfortable going if I were in control, but I find if I continue to focus on relaxing and breathing, I can take it. My pussy aches to be filled, and after a few deep thrusts, Knox steps back, slipping his cock out of my mouth and tugging me to my feet. He hooks his hands under my thighs and lifts me up, easing me onto his length and walking until my back hits the wall.

“Reach up, Angel.”

I glance at the wall and grin. A bar is secured to it, the perfect height for me to wrap my fingers around it. “When did you put that here?”

“Last week, now hang on.” With me holding myself up, Knox can slam into me over and over without faltering. His length stretches and fills me. His hand drops to my clit and he traces a circle over the sensitive bundle of nerves.

I kiss him then, stealing a few moments of his attention before he breaks away and burrows his head into the crook of my neck, sucking and biting at the tender flesh. My walls clamp around him and he growls, teeth digging into my skin. I gasp and rock my hips, pressing his finger more firmly against my clit.

“Don’t stop,” I gasp, rocking and meeting him thrust for thrust. His knot swells as the first orgasm crashes through me, hot streams of cum gorging my cunt. “Fuck, fuck fuck,” I whimper as he fully bites down, re-marking me where he already has. Claiming me again, as though he wants to remind me that this is where I belong.

I never forgot.

These guys were always mine.

And I wouldn't have it any other way.

Did you know there's a bonus scene of when the guys first met Kiki? Sign up for my newsletter at www.rorymiles.com to get it delivered straight to your inbox.

Don't forget to pre-order Nova's book, [Heat & Deceit](#).

Looking for more to read from Rory Miles now? Check out the sample of Nest of Thieves on the next page!

NEST OF THIEVES

JO

Robbing a bank should be easier than this, but you know what they say: empires aren't built in a day. Or something like that.

The lobby is slow for a Tuesday. I glance at the clock as the cash drawer pops out. A quarter to two. Nelson, the bank manager, will waltz over soon enough and pick his special woman of the day. I've been waiting over two weeks to be chosen again.

Today is the day I stop dreaming about finding an escape and take action. I'm almost done with my bachelor's at Omega University. Omegas that attend OU at the expense of the government are supposed to have a pack picked out by the time graduation rolls around, otherwise, they have to pay the money back. Since I haven't found a pack, at least not one that I like, I'm going to be stuck with the bill.

I've tried to find a pack that would fulfill my needs, but what I want and what the packs I've met have to offer don't align. If it were up to my parents, they'd stick me with the first pack that expressed interest. Since I refuse to settle, I have to suck it up and deal with the consequences of delaying my pack choice. Eighty-thousand dollars. That's a lot of money I don't have, but that's what the vault is for.

I lay the cash on the counter. "Twenty, forty, and sixty. Is that all for you today?" I paste on a smile as the elderly

woman carefully arranges her cash before depositing it into her wallet.

“That’ll be all, dear. Thank you.” Gripping her cane, she makes her way toward the exit.

She may be elderly, but at least she’s free to do as she pleases without judgment. At twenty, all eyes are on me to pack up. I would be happy to be with a pack if they weren’t all so . . . good. I’m getting ready to rob a bank. See the problem?

Eloise, a beta who recently adopted a toddler, sighs and rests her head on the counter. The dark circles under her eyes are prominent and her hair is in a messy bun, the kind that’s done out of desperation rather than style.

“Tired?” I ask, making small talk like any good beta would. My omega mark is covered with makeup, and the Sharpie-drawn B on the inside of my wrist helps ensure I pass as a beta. Omegas can have jobs, but it’d be a hell of a lot harder to fly under the radar if I reeked like one. The goal here is to blend in so no one suspects me. To Eloise, and everyone else, I smell like a beta. *Thank you, illegal scent suppressants.*

Don’t try to count the number of laws that have been and are about to be broken—you’ll lose track.

“I am so tired. Kinzey is going through a growth spurt and hasn’t been sleeping well. But it’s fine. The afternoon rush is always the worst.” She wrinkles her nose and flicks her gaze to where Nelson is exiting his office.

Gabby is out sick.

Eloise is a beautiful mess, but a mess nonetheless.

That leaves me, Monica, and Libby.

Nelson only hires attractive women. It’s part of why I picked this bank. He’s an easy target if you have the right assets. No matter how much I regret the parents I was born to, I have to appreciate the ample C-cups and full ass my mama gave me. The tight dark green button-up blouse I’m wearing is stretched tight across my boobs, and I purposefully left one too many buttons undone. If the HR rep happens to come by

today, I'd surely get a reprimand for all the cleavage I'm flashing around.

Work it if you got it, am I right?

Twirling a lock of my fake hair around my finger, I beam at Nelson as he crosses the lobby floor. His cheap dress shoes shine a little too brightly and his gray slacks are an inch too short for his legs. I'm not sure if he realizes the off-white shirt he's wearing has a red stain from the ketchup-drenched burger he ate earlier. Regardless of how repulsing I find him, I tip my head to the side and wait for him to scan over his options.

Monica is hot. She's wearing a pretty dress, but it's modest, hitting at her knees and fully covering her tits. Libby is my biggest competition today. As if without realizing, the beta wears identical colors to Nelson almost every day. I think that's why he gravitates to her more than the others. He probably thinks she has a secret crush.

Truth be told, we all know Nelson's game, and we play along because he never gets too handsy and it could be worse. We could have an asshole who times our transactions. Nelson cares about customer satisfaction, not speed. Fortunately for me, he also loves boobs. His gaze lingers on Libby, but she pops her gum and his face instantly flashes with irritation.

Nelson also hates gum.

Right. So, perhaps he's not as good of a boss as most would like, but he's not really my boss. At least, he won't be after today.

I glance at my computer screen as his lecherous eyes slide in my direction. I pretend to frown at something, pouting my bottom lip.

The air around me grows stifling as Nelson approaches, his scent like three-week-old frying oil. His lust is wholly unappealing to me, but I quickly think of the last romance hero I mooned over to help my eyes project attraction.

"Hey, Jackie, how are you?" Nelson stands in front of the teller counter.

“Oh, hey, Nelson! I’m doing really great, you?” I tip my head to the side and run my fingers over my chest, pushing hair over my shoulder.

As predicted, his gaze drops.

Sucker.

Nelson quickly flicks his eyes to my face.

I pretend not to notice him checking me out.

“I’m good, Jackie. Are you up for a trip to the vault?”

“Of course. Let me grab my key and badge.”

About time you asked me.

Excitement trembles through me, but I keep a calm mask on. I take the badge from the computer and snatch my keys from the cash drawer.

“Good luck,” Eloise sing-songs under her breath as I walk toward the door that leads from the teller desk to the back office where the underwriter usually sits.

The vault is around the corner and down the hall.

I take another step and the air seems to shift, as if it senses the electric elation filling me. I take another. And another, gaze honing in on the doorknob as I inch closer to a pivotal moment in my career. One breath closer to who I’m truly meant to be. It’s time to stop falling on my knees to do the bidding of others and take control.

It’s time to strike out and claim my empire and find the pack that’s meant for me. Even if that means leaving my sister and baby niece behind. I love them, but I also love me. I need more than what Philadelphia has to offer. Step one of my grand plan is to have enough money to pay off the government stipend and build a new life in a different location. With graduation only two months away, I can’t afford to waste more time.

I adjust my shirt as I meet Nelson in the lobby, giving him what I hope comes across as a shy smile. “I hope I remember what to do.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll help you.” Nelson winks and gestures for me to go first.

Swaying my hips more than necessary, I pray the kitten heels don’t get stuck in the worn carpet. They’re not four-inch fuck me heels, but I can’t exactly rob a bank in those. Pretending to button my top, I grab the cap-covered needle filled with horse tranquilizer from my bra and tuck it into my hand with the key and badge.

The vault has a giant, steel reinforced door with one combination lock and one key. The good old dual control requires two people to get inside the vault, hence the obnoxious outfit to get Nelson’s attention.

Bank robbing is much harder than it seems.

“So, I scan my badge first,” Nelson says, his breath tickling the back of my neck.

I fight off a cringe.

Creepy bastard.

Reaching around me, he swipes his badge over the reader mounted to the wall to log the event. There are electronic records for each time the vault is accessed.

His front brushes over my back, and he slowly retracts his arm, brushing it over the curve of my hip.

“Now me?” I ask with a breathy voice.

“Good,” he praises me. “You’re doing so good, Jackie.”

Coming from Nelson, it’s not hot. It’s fucking disgusting, but I’m trying to win an Oscar here.

I release a husky chuckle and touch my badge to the reader, looking over my shoulder and batting my eyelashes at Nelson.

His ears grow pink, and his eyes drop to my mouth.

“The key?” I ask, dashing my tongue across my lower lip.

He nods, almost too dumbstruck to speak.

For a creepy manager who preys on his staff, he sure doesn't know how to talk to a woman.

Slipping the key in, I turn the lock. No alarms sound. No police come rushing to arrest me. It's paranoia to think any of that would happen. My fake identity is solid. Nelson has no idea what's about to happen. He has no idea who Joey Walsh is or that my natural hair color isn't blonde like the stifling wig I'm wearing. He doesn't know why I'm known as Kitty to the criminal world.

Quiet as a cat, isn't that the saying?

The best way to do a job is undercover, without suspicion, and as silently as possible.

"Now the combo." He steps around me, brushing his hand over my ass.

I curl my fingers around the badge, key, and needle to keep from junk punching him. That wouldn't be quiet at all, and I need him to do his part. I'll stab him with the tranq once we're inside. He'll be out for about an hour, more than enough time for me to get away.

There are cameras that I don't know how to disable, but that's what the blonde wig, green contacts, and fake nose are for. By the time I'm gone and the police watch the security footage, Jackie Morgan won't exist. The whole of her fake identity will be promptly tossed into a dumpster.

He turns the dial, and I hold my breath.

Click.

Click.

Click.

Nelson reaches for the handle with one hand and adjusts his junk with the other.

Come on, baby, so close. Adrenaline floods my system and I take a slow breath to steady myself.

Focus, Jo. You're almost there.

“Everyone down!” A booming voice, full of alpha authority, fills the air. I grind my teeth and glare down the hallway. There’s no suppressant for an alpha bark, but since I’m not in the same room, the command doesn’t force me to the ground like it would with everyone else in the lobby.

I hear one of the tellers whimper.

“You, open the drawer,” another alpha barks.

You’ve got to be kidding me.

Nelson makes a small noise.

I face him and raise my eyebrows. “I think we’re being robbed.”

He gives me a funny look, likely noticing how annoyed I sound. “What do we do?”

Time to stop playing pretend. This job is shot. “Oh, I don’t know, Nelson, maybe you should hit the fucking panic button inside the vault,” I whisper shout at him.

Recoiling from the venom in my voice, he blubbers and wrenches the door open. The metal hinges groan loudly and Nelson gasps, scrambling to the wall where the panic button lies. I stuff the needle into my bra, knowing, at any second, someone will venture down here. I can’t be seen as anything other than an employee to the robbers.

As a general rule, thieves don’t like competition.

“Stop,” a third alpha barks from the end of the short hall.

Called it.

Nelson’s pitiful beta hand hovers in front of the red button.

I pinch my eyes shut and curse under my breath. Time to pretend some more. Maybe if my career as a thief goes bust I can become an actress. I drop the key and badge. I won’t be needing those after today. Raising my hands into the air, I make a show of trembling and even whimper a little.

“Please, don’t hurt us.”

The alpha stops next to me. “Shh,” he says softly, running the tip of a blade up my arm. “I’d never hurt a pretty lady.” Stepping closer, he breathes in and sighs. “Especially not a pretty beta whose fear smells like cake.” His hard chest presses into my arm and a shiver races down my spine.

The alpha’s scent is so strong I almost choke on it. He smells like fire and gasoline. Like bad decisions and filthy sex. I’m really glad I took two scent suppressors this morning. My omega scent would be rank with need right about now. Probably not the most appropriate reaction given the situation, but we all have our vices.

I happen to love bad men and knives.

Keeping my eyes on the ground, I pretend to whimper again. “Take whatever you want.” I gesture to where Nelson is still frozen in the vault.

“So generous of you, love,” the alpha whispers, tracing the knife down my arm again.

Gooseflesh chases after the contact. I flick my eyes to meet his, but the alpha isn’t watching me. His masked face is turned toward Nelson. Tossing the big duffel bag at his side into the vault, the alpha points at the bank manager.

“Fill it,” he barks, eliciting another shiver.

This time, he notices. Icy blue eyes dancing with mirth stare at me through the holes of the mask. He steps a little closer and tugs on a lock of my hair. The pins holding the wig strain to stay in place.

Nelson’s breaths are heavy as he scoops bundles of cash into the bag.

That’s my money.

I seethe a little but try to keep my rage from showing. I’m supposed to be terrified. Not pissed. There are countless other banks in Philadelphia. Hell, they could have robbed a Wawa instead. God knows those convenience stores are loaded up with cash. But no, they had to rob *my* bank.

“What’s your name, sweetheart?”

“Jackie,” I lie, flicking my gaze around to seem distressed. “I won’t tell anyone anything.”

Drop, drop, drop, goes more of my cash into the bag.

“Oh, Jackie, Jackie, Jackie. Did you think I was lying about hurting you? I don’t hurt women.”

“I have kids,” I lie.

“They all do,” he says, studying my face.

I force tears into my eyes.

Nelson has grown suspiciously quiet. Before I can look over, the alpha lifts his hand and throws his knife. I track the blade, flipping end over end until it embeds in Nelson’s thigh.

Nelson screams.

God, that was hot. The bastard deserved it, and the knife throw? Ten out of ten.

The alpha rolls his eyes. “I thought it was obvious not to try and hit the panic button, didn’t you?”

I nod and suck in a sharp breath, hiding my fascination from the alpha. “I won’t tell anyone,” I repeat.

Maybe if I make it out unscathed, I could rob a Wawa. At least they have food.

“Hmm, I know you won’t because you’re coming with me. Grab the bag.”

My heart skips. “What?”

“The bag. Grab it.” He stares at me but doesn’t use his alpha bark. Strange, but I don’t need his command to do what he said. Helping him get the cash helps me get the cash, so long as I can find a way to abscond with it.

“Good girl,” he purrs. Unlike when Nelson said it, a visceral response zings through my body. As if sensing the effect of his words, the alpha chuckles. The deep, throaty sound carries through the mask. “Time to retrieve my knife.”

Nelson is whimpering on the ground, clutching his bleeding leg. He scrambles back as the alpha and I step into

the vault. My fingers inch toward my chest. I could use the tranq on the alpha, but he has friends in the lobby and I'd never make it past them with only his knife. I didn't bring a gun to work. I didn't think I'd need it. The alpha glances at me and I scurry to do as he asked.

I check the weight of the bag. It's nearly full. Between this bag and whatever they stole from the registers, there's plenty of cash. Once I get the money back from these assholes, I can pay off my stipend, leave Philly, and buy a new identity wherever I land.

All I need to figure out is how to rob the robbers.

Easy as pie, right?

Keep reading Nest of Thieves [here](#).

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Thank you for reading Kiki's story. For those of you who followed along the editing journey, you know I was having a rough time making sure this book got everything it deserved. I struggled with my own author self-worth through editing this, wondering why the heck I even decided to write this story and if anyone would even like it.

I'm only telling you this because writing isn't always easy, but in the end, it's always worth it. Kiki has found a home within the omega love world and I'm proud of her for teaching her team at Playing for Love that pegging can be fun (with proper consent of course).

Seriously though, Kiki and her guys were so fun to write. I can't wait for you to read the bonus scene that's being sent via my newsletter. Sign up at www.rorymiles.com to check it out!

Now on to the people who make my author life worth living. First and foremost, Colette and Harper. You guys. You keep me sane. Thank you for being willing to chat up plot stuff and listen to my panic attacks that things weren't good enough. I appreciate your friendship so much!

To my beta team, thank you for all your help and feedback! I love hearing your thoughts and getting to share my words with you first.

Jennifer, thanks for catching all the misplaced commas in the middle of the graphic content. You're the real MVP.

My family gets my never ending thanks for all the treats, patience, wine, hugs, and love.

To all my readers who love the characters perhaps more than I do, thank you for all the recommendations, shout outs, and love. You're more than enough just the way you are and if no one told you lately, you have a cute butt (not that I was

looking, but it was kind of hard to miss with how perky and butt-y it was).

Does anyone read this far?

And finally, to you, ya fucking cunts. Kidding! I'm kidding (this relates back to the introduction in case you missed the joke).

Love ya <3 Rory

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rory Miles is a paranormal romance author. She loves cats, memes, gifs, books, writing, her children and her husband (especially when he makes fried chicken). She loves writing about romantic shenanigans and does her fair share of reading. Her all time favorite books are: #whychoose.

For new on more adventure filled romance, make sure to follow her on Facebook and Instagram.

Please don't forget to leave a review! Reviews are a huge help to authors and Rory loves to hear from readers.

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