



THE
WILD SIDE
OF HELL

Book five of Hellfire MC

ELIZABETH N. HARRIS

The Wild Side of Hell.

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ElizabethnHarris74@outlook.com

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Cover by Joe Prachatree @ <https://www.indiepremade.com>

Editor: Ellie Race.

PA: Christy Rose.

Proofreader: Jordan Howes.

Beta readers: Tammy Carney, Jayne Rushton, Natasha Kemmer, Jacqui Edge, Christy Pritchard, Kathy Jackson, Victoria Rae Stewart Hine and Julie McLain-Berger, Rachel Bay, Linda Cameron Brashears.

The Wild Side of Hell.

Blunt, driven, cocksure, and muscled. That was a Hellfire brother. Mix in determination, nosiness and enormous ego, and you had an officer of Hellfire. And like his brothers, he was fully capable of recognising what was his when he saw it. She may have hidden right under his nose at first, but he'd seen her now, and she was right in the middle of his bullseye.

Safe for years, different, shy and under the protection of a man who wrote the book about overly protective men, she'd hidden in plain sight. Except now, the bossy biker wanted to know more and know her. And she was sure she'd heard mention of claiming. And knowing how her boss loved a happy story, she was on edge! Until the day she was discovered, not by those who cared for her. All her years of running and remaining hidden amounted to nothing because they had found her once again, and this time it was harder for her to run. Especially when those eyes begged her to stay and trust him.

Nobody was going to take her. She belonged to him. He knew she was hiding from someone, but he had no idea who or why. He's stunned when the truth comes out, but it doesn't stop him from doing what is needed. Even if he sleeps on her doorstep to protect her. She should know but has clearly forgotten that when someone threatens the woman of a Hellfire brother, they unleash Hell. And Hell comes in many forms!

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DEDICATION.

To Jai-jai, who is the next biggest surprise in the Rage MC world!

Love

Elizabeth x

Elizabethnharris74@outlook.com

Elizabethnharris.net

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This book was written, produced and edited in England, the United Kingdom, where some spelling, grammar and word usage will vary from US English.

A Quick Note!

After a couple of reviews and emails commenting on grammar and spelling errors, I thought I'd explain. My work is edited thoroughly, and some grammar and spelling will differ from US English. For example, color to colour or focusing instead of focussing. But I type as I imagine the characters speaking. I've been around several MCs and know many bikers; believe me, they don't watch their grammar! So you may find errors when one of the characters speaks; that's intentional! Even educated characters may drop their p's and q's from time to time, and we'll let them off because we love them so much!

Drake may use *don't* instead of *doesn't*, *it don't make sense* instead of *it doesn't make sense*. Or I *be* angry instead of *I am* angry! Or Phoe may say *me and you* instead of the grammatically correct *you and I*. They also drop words, possibly one of my own personal pet peeves! *You won't do it* becomes *won't do it*, or *it ain't right* turns into *ain't right*. However, typos are not deliberate; if you find any, I sincerely apologise!

I hope you enjoy the book because I write from the heart and genuinely love my Rage MC characters and the world I'm creating around them.

They were mere nuisances in the meaning of life and were petty and small. They'd never look at this sky and be filled with wonder because they were incapable of understanding its magnificence.

Happy Reading!



Elizabeth N. Harris

PROLOGUE

Quietly, I ran through the bushes, with stones and twigs digging and cutting into my feet and branches clawing my exposed limbs. The soft slippers I wore were no protection against the forest. My hair was a tangled mess, and scratches marked my hands and face. But somehow, I knew where I was headed. And I had little time before they released the hounds to track me. The bloody path I made meant the church would locate me straight away. As I crested the hill, I saw the road in the distance with endless cars. Quietness no longer my concern, I slipped and slid down the mountain, splashing through two streams in haste.

The long skirts I wore tangled around my legs, and I'd torn the veil from my head. The wedding would be soon. They'd be coming to collect me in the next few minutes, so this was time I needed to take advantage of. There could be no stopping or pausing. Nothing existed but running.

All the years of working in the fields meant I was fit. My frame may be slender, but I was healthy. The baying of the hounds screamed in the distance, and I realised my time was up. They'd come and realise I was gone.

I kept moving because there was no way I was going back to hell. Freedom was within reach, and I'd die before giving it up. The canines howled again, sounding slightly closer. They headed straight for me, the bloody trail I'd left acted as a beacon for them to hunt.

Suddenly, I reached the road and landed on all fours. Cars blasted horns and swerved. Frantically, I tried waving somebody down, but they kept moving. The hounds barked, and I knew I had mere minutes remaining. I stepped into the road, determined to make someone stop or hit me. Either was an acceptable end. A loud roaring made me jump, and a guy approached on a motorbike. I recognised it because we had dirt bikes in hell. The rider screeched to a halt and studied me.

The hounds howled again, and he looked to the dense forest.

"Get on before they see you," the man rasped.

I didn't hesitate. Even if this stranger killed me, it was better than what awaited me. Quickly, I gathered my skirts and climbed on, and we roared off. We were nothing but a spec on the horizon when they finally tracked me to the road.

I, Alexis, had pulled off the impossible and escaped hell.

CHAPTER ONE.

Alexis

My strange rescuer pulled up outside a long rectangular building and tapped my leg to get off the bike. I clumsily clambered down and finally got a look at the man who'd saved my life. Holy hell. He was tall, far above Second Minister's six foot three. Studying him, I added another couple of inches. The guy was also broad and had a beard and a tied-back, wild mane of hair. His age could be anything from forty to sixty. I'd no idea, but kind eyes stared at me. Even so, dressed in jeans, a tee, and a leather waistcoat, he was threatening. I stilled.

"Don't go there, lass. I had plenty of time to disappear with you. Come in. This here is my bar. We'll get some food and see what you need," he rumbled, and I almost leaned into his voice. Rich and smooth, with a hint of huskiness, it was warming my lonely soul. The biker strode towards the building and yanked a key from a pocket. I noticed it was attached to a chain hooked on his jean loops. And I followed because I had nowhere else to go.

"Hell!" I spoke aloud, giggling, and waited for the earth to open and swallow me. When it didn't happen, I swore again. "Shit," I stated hesitantly.

The biker stood there, looking confused.

"Girl, you okay?"

"I was taught if I cursed, then the ground would eat me. And I'd be sent to the fiery depths of hell and purgatory," I whispered. A giggle escaped. "Crap!"

The biker's eyebrows drew together. "If you want to swear, fuck, motherfucker, and asshole are good places to start."

"Fuck!" I exclaimed loudly.

The biker watched intently with a hint of a smile as I cackled like a witch.

“Asshole, motherfucker! So another lie!” I mused.

His brows descended as he shoved open the door and walked in.

“Come on, let’s eat.”

“What’s your name?” I called. It was impolite to enter someone’s house without knowing their name.

“Magic.”

Oh, I liked that. Strong, although it smacked of heresy. Only God could create magic, but this man appeared to be magical. He was so kind.

“I’m Alexis,” I said, still standing on the threshold.

“Alexis, get your ass in here, girl and stop fanning about. It’s too cold today, and you’re letting heat escape.”

Oh, I knew about that, so I rushed inside and stopped as the doors shut behind me. My eyes widened as I peered around and absorbed the sight of the bar. Obviously, I’d never been to one in my life. Although the Elder Ministers sometimes snuck off, women weren’t allowed to do that. But women were not authorised to gossip either.

This was unlike anything I’d seen before. The walls and floor were wood, the floor scarred from boots walking on them. The walls were what the First Minister had in his office and were called tongue and groove. They were covered in photographs. At least, that is what I heard the Fourth Minister call it. All around two walls were booths that could seat six to ten individuals, and in the middle of the floor were tables and chairs. One wall held a couple of cubicles that looked to fit twenty or more people in.

At the far end was a stage with various musical equipment. To the left was a long, wide wooden bar that Magic disappeared behind. I noticed four steps in the middle of the booths on the right-hand side, craned my neck, and saw three tables covered in green with balls on. I think it was called a pool table. There were rumours the Minister’s compound had them, but I’d never seen them. No woman had. The only

people allowed to clean the Minister's home were the Recruits.

But I recognised the equipment on stage. We had instruments in church, too. The ceiling had hanging lights that dimly lit the bar, and I could see sunken lights buried into the plaster. Each booth had a wall lamp offering a cosy atmosphere. Barstools were placed neatly at the wooden counter, and I loved this.

“Come on, Alexis, do you want a coke?” Magic asked.

I cocked my head. *What was that?*

“Huh?” Magic sent me a stare that I couldn't interpret.

“Coke's a fizzy drink. The bubbles go up your nose,” Magic said slowly.

A smile crossed my lips.

“That sounds exciting!” I exclaimed and hurried over to the bar. I hopped on one foot as Magic stared again.

“What you waiting for?” Magic inquired.

“Permission to sit down,” I replied.

A scowl descended across Magic's face as soon as the words left my mouth, and I stilled. Immediately, I bowed my head, curled my shoulders inwards, and placed my hands over my belly. All signs of submission that we'd been taught. Magic drew in a sharp breath, a finger tucked under my chin, and lifted my head.

“Never do that again, girl. Never! Wherever you came from, whatever you've fled, you're free, and you don't defer to no man!” Magic stated hoarsely.

“But the church says women must submit. It's their role to serve and worship men. Except there is something wrong with me because I escaped.”

“Ain't nothing amiss with you, sweet girl, but whoever taught you that shit needs an ass beating. Now try this,” Magic said, placing a glass of black bubbling liquid on the bar. “Can't

believe the kid's never had a fuckin' coke before," Magic muttered as he turned.

I picked the drink up cautiously, as if it would explode in my face, and sniffed. Not smelling anything nasty, I sipped, and my eyes widened as my tastebuds exploded. Oh wow. This was nectar. I took a huge swallow, and the fizzy bubbles tickled me. And before I realised it, I released a burp. My eyes enlarged in horror, and I placed the glass down and instantly assumed the apologetic pose. My head ducked down to my chest, my arms bent at the elbows, and my palms faced upwards. A smack from Magic would hurt, but my manners had been lacking.

Two rough hands grabbed mine, and I froze in fear. My palms were only touched when the punishment was going to be severe.

"Alexis, look at me. No, right now. Lift your head. The bubbles made you burp. Why are you cowering and offering me your hands?" Magic asked, confused.

"Because I displayed bad table manners. I should be punished. Usually, it's a ruler across them to remind us to keep our manners in front of God," I explained, and fury crossed Magic's face.

"No one will punish or strike you here. Not me or any of my patrons. I'd put a bullet in them first. Bring your coke and come with me to the kitchen," Magic gritted out.

Obediently, I followed and waited in the doorway as Magic bustled about. Was he making me food? Blast, I was confused again.

"Sit your ass down there, and tell me what meat you like in your sandwich," Magic demanded.

"Don't know," I replied, and Magic stopped moving.

"Huh?"

"For breakfast, we get gruel, although sometimes we have eggs, but rarely. Or we have toast. For lunch, we have bread and butter with salads. And for dinner, we eat stews or soups," I responded, as Magic's face displayed disgust.

“Darlin’, I’ll make you a sandwich,” he muttered while preparing food. “Try this,” Magic said, handing me a pickle.

My nose wrinkled, and I went to bite into it before he snatched it from me.

“Sorry!” I exclaimed, leaning away.

“Starting to get the idea that your life has been full of bullshit rules and regulations. My rule number one, I ain’t gonna hurt you and will kill anyone who does. Number two, if you dislike it, you don’t eat it. Three, if you want something here, drink or food, you help yourself. You’re fuckin’ skin and bones, girl!”

Oh wow. I looked down at my frame. We were told by the Ministers that extra weight was an offence to God. Now Magic was telling me differently. I should have been confused, but somehow, I knew Magic was stating the truth. Because some of those Ministers were fat and had horrible wobbling bellies. Only the women had to remain slim.

Magic placed a plate in front of me, and my mouth dropped open in awe. My new favourite word, hell, broke into my mind. There were two thick pieces of bread filled with ham, I think the meat was, lettuce, tomatoes, juicy ones, and cucumber. I sat there waiting for approval to eat as Magic stared. A light clicked on in his eyes, and he frowned.

“Rule four, I put something in front of you. Don’t wait for permission!” Magic said, and I snatched the food and took a huge bite.

I groaned as flavours hit my tongue. I’d tasted nothing so delicious. The meal was amazing. Much of the foodstuff I’d eaten in my life had been to nourish my body. But this, this was heaven. Hungrily, I devoured the sandwich and licked my lips before draining the glass of coke. A little burp escaped, but I raised my hand and covered it. Magic watched in amusement as he placed a second on my plate, and I attacked. This was different meat, chicken, I thought, but I didn’t care. Magic also put chips on my plate. Chips!

Again, they were snacks I'd seen but never eaten. The Ministers ate them, but not us ordinary folk. They tasted of cheese and onion and were crunchy. Wow! The outside food was fantastic. I licked my fingers and stared at Magic.

“Okay, honey, let's talk. Because I can't let you loose on the world alone. Some fuckin' perv would snatch you within hours. Did you have a plan? No, forget that. Tell me about your life,” Magic requested, sitting. Kind eyes bored into me, and I bit my lip. Discussing the church was against every rule. But then I'd broken so many today, so who cared?

“I grew up in the Whispering Willow Church of Godliness. I don't recall my mother. Mother died when I was three. Father is the Eighth Minister and has three wives. Sadly, I was his only child. Father claimed I was to be the First and Second Minister's wife because I was perfect. So God had already blessed him.”

“Tell me about the church,” Magic asked, his fingers drumming on the worktop.

“We pray for an hour every morning. One minister will lead the service. Everyone not a minister must attend. There is no excuse, even if you're sick or in labour. You must be there or be beaten. Then the Ministers disappear while the women begin our endeavours with the animals and harvesting the vegetables and salads in the fields. Then a Disciple rings the bell for lunch, and we eat for thirty minutes before returning to work.

“We all have different roles. Some ladies do laundry, and others serve in the kitchen. A few are cleaners, child carers, and workers in the fields. We have a dedicated team to look after the elderly and sick, but they are high-ranked women. I worked in the fields as I loved growing things.”

“What do the men do?” Magic said, but with an odd tone, almost as if he'd guessed.

“Well, the new recruits watch us working and ensure we are safe from outsiders. They are called the Recruits of God. The next level for the fellows is the Servants of God, who do important things like guarding the church and our homes.

They ensure no outsider sets foot on sacred land because they are heathens who don't love God. Once they have progressed beyond Servants of God, they become Voices of God. They teach the women and children lessons, which we have every night between seven and eight. The Voices also take classes with the youngsters during the day, teaching them God's Words and their roles in life.

"Then there are the Disciples of God. Once you reach that high level, you may start taking wives. They can marry as often as they wish because that is what God wants. It is not unusual for them to share wives, either. The woman's role is to serve her husband first and then God. Because God put men on earth to protect women, we owe them allegiance first. Women are there to serve men and have children to ensure our church remains strong. We are ready to marry as soon as we begin our first bleed..." I broke off as Magic loudly ground his teeth.

"S'okay baby, continue," Magic said.

I hesitated, but Magic nodded in reassurance.

"Above the Disciples are the Ministers. There are twelve of them, and they speak with God's voice and tell us what God wants. They watch over and protect and ensure the rules are kept. The Ministers also confirm or deny marriages and arrange them, too. Suppose a woman is reluctant to marry a man. In that case, they take her into the Reaffirmation Centre, so she remembers her place in God's Creation, Laws, and Rules.

"When she leaves, she marries who the Ministers say. It is frightening in there because God is so angry at them. They come out skinny and silent and often have bruises from where God makes the Ministers punish them. And they have to be taken in front of the congregation to prove their love and loyalty to their husband."

"Taken?" Magic demanded, his voice a low growl.

"Yes, the entire church has to watch them copulate, so we know she belongs to her husband and has capitulated fully to God's commands."

“And what if she cries or fights?” Magic asked.

“Oh, they often cry. The Ministers say it’s joy because of knowing they’ve obeyed God. But I see the pain in their faces and eyes. Magic, I disagreed,” I answered and covered my mouth. It’s the first time I’ve commented on it.

“Why were you running?” Magic inquired, trying to keep his voice steady.

“Because today I turned seventeen. Father claimed I was to wed the First Minister and then the Second. And I don’t like them. I didn’t want to visit the Reaffirmation Centre either. So I broke God’s Law and pretended, but God didn’t seem to pay attention because I plotted to escape, and he didn’t stop me. And my escape was successful. So, God couldn’t have wanted me to marry them.

“The First Minister is old. He’s sixty-one and rules everybody and everything. The Second Minister is fat and smelly. He is tall, and I’ve seen him be cruel to others. I didn’t wish to couple with them. Plus, I had to do it in front of everyone, which shamed me. I didn’t want people to see my body or copulate, either. So I escaped.

“The women are not allowed outside the church, but I know what cars are and motorbikes as we have them. Once, I climbed a tall tree and watched the world and spied a road in the far distance with many vehicles. So I planned to escape through that. Yesterday, Father came to me in the morning and told me it was time to fast. I was given toast and nothing else. Then last night, the ladies bathed and shaved me in preparation for the wedding, and today they dressed me.

“I asked for a moment to pray to be an obedient wife, and Father granted me prayer time. That was when I escaped and ran. A hole had appeared in the fence near where I worked, so I climbed through that. I heard the hounds and knew they would catch me, and God sent me you. Which means I did nothing wrong, and God did not want me to marry the First Minister or Second Minister,” I stated firmly.

“Fuckin’ cults!” Magic muttered under his breath, and I tried to figure out his meaning. “Baby girl, what was your plan once

you escaped?”

“Oh, I didn’t have one. Magic, I trusted God would set my feet on the right path.”

“Fuck me! Luckily, I found you! There’s a load of evil in the world!” Magic exclaimed.

I flinched, and Magic cupped my chin.

“Don’t. As often as you need it, Alexis, I’ll keep saying it until you believe me. I will never harm you. But I see physical punishment was something your fuckin’ whack job cult practised?”

“Yes, we were punished, hands, the belt, whip, paddles. There are stocks and a cell deep in the ground too, which heats terribly during daytime and freezes at night-time. But they claimed it was for our benefit. I didn’t believe them!” I declared loudly.

Magic nodded. “Alexis, you may be innocent and have no idea about life outside the church. But your gut did you right. What they are doing isn’t normal. It’s abnormal. They’re lying to you and abusing women. Always listen to your gut. Now the question is, what do I do with you? Can’t let you flee. The animals out there will tear your innocence apart, and you can’t work. I bet you don’t have any papers, and you’re too young for the bar,” Magic said as he rose to his feet and began making hot drinks. Moments later, he handed me a dark brown liquid, and I sniffed at it dubiously.

“Yeah, those reactions will set every fuckin’ perv, pimp, and asshole on you. They’ll see you coming a mile away. No education, shit, no idea of how dangerous life is outside,” Magic kept muttering.

Curiously, I sipped the mug, and my eyes widened as I stared in sheer delight at the beverage. What was this? I wanted this daily. Quietly, I sat, waiting for Magic to determine my fate. God had sent me to him, and there was a reason.

“The church is evil, isn’t it? The life we live is wrong. I’m right, aren’t I?” I suddenly blurted out.

Magic turned and shook his head. It was the confirmation I'd craved. I was right.

“Breaks my heart, baby girl. What they made you and other women suffer is called abuse. Yes, what they are doing is terrible and illegal. It's slavery and rape. What's the bet half of those who started to bleed are girls under sixteen? Having sex with a child is against the law of this country. The motherfuckers can't legally marry a kid in South Dakota, so fucking kids makes them paedophiles, which are the lowest scum on earth.

“The whole concept of your church is fucked up and ran by evil assholes who need taking out. Honey, real life is nasty, but women are respected out here. They have the right to drive, vote, do the job they want, and marry who they wish, Alexis. You escaped what we on the outside would call a cult, where people are brainwashed into being servants and slaves.”

I sucked in my cheeks at Magic's words. I had always known deep down something was wrong with the church. Women shouldn't be treated the way they were, but it had been bred into me. There was no basis for me to argue because I'd had no contact with the outside.

“Is school a real thing?” I asked. A faint memory of a woman talking about school came to me.

“Yes, honey. History, Geography, English, and Maths are all lessons children learn, and so many others. The cult kept you uneducated, so you did not discover you had rights in the real world. The assholes isolated you because they didn't want you to fight back.”

“Is it too late for me to attend school?”

“To attend, yes. But to get an education, no. There is online learning, and I can hook you up with that.”

“And what do you request as payment? Do you want to copulate with me? Magic, you are better looking than the First Minister and Second Minister. I could couple with you,” I offered, and Magic looked appalled.

“Fuckin’ hell, Alexis. No! No copulation at all. Jesus Christ.” Magic stumbled back, putting a considerable space between us.

Was I wrong to offer Magic my body? The church always said kindness should be repaid and copulating with Magic wouldn’t be too hard. I had nothing else to offer him.

“It would be easy to copulate with you,” I announced, thinking Magic thought I was unsure.

“Alexis, stop that train of thought! That would never happen. Christ, it would make me as guilty as those fuckers! This is what’s happening, Alexis. Upstairs, I have an apartment that you can stay in. I’ll find you some fake documents for identification, and don’t worry; the guy is that good. No one will know they are fakes. They would even pass federal inspection.

“As of tomorrow, you’ll live here, out of sight. No doubt those assholes are searching for you. They’ll want to bring you back, so you can’t tell anyone what is happening. Once I have your documents, I’ll register you for an online school, and you can learn during the day. The apartment has stairs which lead to that hallway.” Magic pointed to a door, and I glanced across. “That also takes you to the kitchen for food; however, keep out of the bar. We don’t want people to see you. I’ll keep you hidden and safe. And you will get an education and behave yourself. Alexis, you can cook me dinner each night as a thank you.

“Then, when you’re old enough, you’ll begin working for me. You could clean during the day when the bar is shut, and I will teach you how to tend the bar. You’ll waitress and bartend and earn good money for it. Now I need to get a laptop and order some fuckin’ clothes. And I bet you’ve got no idea what size you are,” Magic muttered, looking grumpy.

“No. We wear free-flowing gowns. This rag is a wedding gown. When we work in the fields, we have overalls and long-sleeved tops. What are sizes?”

Magic tossed my gown a disgusted look.

“Burning that fucker. Ah, hell. Alexis, I will have to measure you, but it’ll be nothing sexual. And keep your hands to yourself. No ideas about intimate favours as a thank you!” Magic ordered, going red, and I laughed.



I stayed still as Magic measured me, amused as he grumbled under his breath. We were standing in the apartment upstairs, which was more space than I’d ever seen for one person. It was nicely decorated and had a huge bed. I’d never realised they could even be that big. At church, I lived in a tiny, grey, concrete cell with a bed and a table and the church’s bible. There was a rack on which I hung my few clothes and nothing else. Once I had turned thirteen, I’d been moved there to prepare for becoming a wife and adulthood. Somehow I’d lasted four years without being touched.

The idea was finally sinking in how wrong my life had been. Seventeen years had been stolen from me that I couldn’t get back. Magic said animals got treated better than me, and while I wouldn’t know, I agreed. Now Magic was measuring my body and writing them down so I could buy clothes and female shit, as Magic called it. I had no idea what that meant, but it sounded interesting.

Magic sat me down in front of something called a laptop. I was amazed at the concept of the internet. Phones had already confounded me. The ability to speak to people miles away or in a different country instantly was beyond belief. Now I was looking at a relatively unexciting black box, which opened into a new world. Magic clicked on several things he called tabs and told me to go nuts. I looked at him blankly. Go nuts with what?

When Magic grasped I had no idea what that meant, he began muttering about handing in his man card as he clicked on the laptop. He showed me pages of women wearing clothes I’d not seen the like of before, and I was overwhelmed and dazzled. It took most of the afternoon, but Magic finally convinced me to purchase clothing named jeans, skirts, shorts, blouses, and tees. I also bought shoes, and Magic had to stop

me after ten pairs, laughing as he said he knew what to buy for my birthday and Christmas.

Magic then showed me hair products, bows, ribbons, ties, and clips. My hair was always kept in a bun with pins. When I undid the bun, he saw how long it was, and Magic's mouth dropped open. My hair fell to my mid-thighs. Touching it gently, Magic asked if it was heavy, and I nodded.

"It gives me headaches," I responded in answer to his question. Then my eyes lit up. "Can you cut it?"

"Oh baby girl, I ain't no hairdresser," Magic replied, and then had to explain what a hairdresser was.

"Get some scissors, gather it back up, and cut straight across," I suggested.

Magic looked bemused but obeyed. When my long ponytail hit the floor, I felt fear flood me before a wave of relief swept all that angst away. Magic chopped at my hair, straightening it up, and finally, it hung just below my shoulders.

"No bangs," Magic muttered as I shook my hair across my shoulders. It felt so freeing.

"I love this!" I squealed and threw my arms around Magic and kissed his cheek. Overjoyed, I danced, giggling and throwing my hair around. Magic laughed at my antics before blushing and making me sit back down.

"Baby girl, you need underwear. I don't really wanna pick them out with you, so look, Alexis, this is the site. Order whatever you wish. I'll show you how to choose your sizes and then go nuts." Magic named a figure I could spend, showed me how to choose, and left me alone to fetch drinks.

I spent the budget Magic gave me, overwhelmed by the choices, colours, and styles. When I paid, I sat back and waited for Magic to return. When he did, he carried two mugs, one with the dark-coloured drink again.

"That is my favourite!" I exclaimed, and Magic looked down.

“Hot chocolate. You can add cream or marshmallows to it. It comes in different flavours, too,” Magic said, handing me the mug.

“Now we need to buy girlie shit.” Magic sighed. Not knowing what I liked, I allowed Magic to purchase shampoo, conditioner, soap, and shower gel. Items that were often basic at the church. Then he bought perfume, deodorants, and sanitary products, which made us both blush. He ordered something called face creams and lip gloss. Magic laughingly said he’d yet to meet a woman who didn’t like lip gloss. I shrugged. I’d no idea what it was. But one thing I was sure of: I was damn lucky to meet Magic on the road and not one of those perverts he ranted about every so often. Magic was destined to be in my life and make it magical!

CHAPTER TWO.

June 2020

Alice.

Anxiously, I sat on a bench and spun a pack of lies to Bunny. The guilt crept up, but better that Bunny thought I was running from an abusive husband rather than a cult. Magic and I understood they could still be searching for Alexis. I'd been with Magic for eleven years but still didn't stop looking over my shoulder. For four years, all I'd done was study like mad. I soaked up knowledge hand over fist, and Magic kept commenting on how bright I was. And I got my GED and two two-year diplomas in editing and copywriting. Now, I worked for six authors on my time off, editing and checking their books. That paid well, and I could afford to rent a house alongside my wages from the bar.

Magic had been a father figure. He'd got me a new identification, which gave me the name Alice Rain, and I'd learned to drive. Magic supported me with every step I took. Eleven years on, I understood what a fuck up the cult was.

Of course, the scar on my chest hadn't come from an abusive ex-husband. When I'd turned nineteen, I'd been taking some trash outside, and a man had grabbed me. I'd screamed for Magic before the asshole got a hand over my mouth.

He'd been ripping my clothes off when Magic barrelled out. As Magic caught the asshole molesting me, his knife cut into my chest. Better that than my throat, I suppose. Magic had snapped his neck and stood there, waiting for condemnation. I was still quite pious then, although I knew my entire life at church had been a lie. But the scar gave my supposed abusive ex credence, and Bunny bought the story.

It was one I'd told a couple of times. A cover Magic and I had come up with to keep everyone at bay. Three months after Magic had rescued me from the roadside, the Whispering Willow Church of Godliness had been raided by the FBI. I'd been stuck to the TV for days, watching the reports coming

from there. They spoke of women emaciated to the point of starvation, kids who were neglected, and multiple rapes and kidnappings. Ninety per cent of the males died in the fire, but most of the women and children were rescued.

All twelve Ministers escaped, and the FBI still searched for them. The media speculated there was another compound. For days, the talk had been about the fire and subsequent rescues. Then the press hit with a bombshell that rocked me backwards. Bodies had been found. Magic sat with me as I cried and learned the final horror of the cult. For that was what I now understood the church to be. The Ministers had sent the Disciples out to kidnap women off the streets and then raped them until they were spent and killed them. They'd been buried behind the Minister's building, where we weren't allowed to go.

Also, several women had been identified as those who'd tried to escape. We all believed they'd gone of their own accord. But clearly, they had been caught, and the coroner had stated that there were signs of rape and torture on their bodies. They'd never left, as the Ministers claimed, and I was deep in shock for weeks. Would that have happened to me? I had nightmares hearing the baying of those damned hounds chasing me. Magic had stayed at the apartment because I was too terrified to sleep.

The past was behind me, and I was stronger, jogging and working out had fine-tuned my body. Nightmares plagued me occasionally, but my freedom had been honestly earned. I was now a modern-day woman, albeit shy.

Bunny patted my hand, disturbing my musings, and I smiled. She offered a friendship I'd not known before, but I couldn't take her up on it. The poor girl was already in danger up to her eyeballs. Bunny didn't need my shit, too. Especially as Magic and I had no idea where the Ministers were. They hadn't been the only ones to escape. Some of the Disciples had also fled, which meant a danger remained.

Therefore, I was surprised when I offered Bunny to share a meal the following evening. I was becoming weakened to the girl. Needed to get those barriers back up. I started

backtracking, but Bunny looked desperate for a girl's night, so I gave up.

Luckily for me, it never happened. The next day, I was in the middle of serving when Magic yelled for silence and announced there was a missing child and a wildfire. Shit, it never rained but poured. I put the beer down that I had been opening and immediately headed into the kitchen. I knew the drill. I had done this several times over the seven years I'd worked for Magic. Bunny and I needed to prepare lunches for the rescue teams heading out to fight the blaze and search for Logan.

Bunny seemed confused by what was happening, but I talked her through the process, and we got into a rhythm of making sandwiches. The fire was burning out of control, and when Bunny, Brett (Magic's cook), and I took a break, we could see the smoke getting closer. Magic was antsy, wondering if we'd have to evacuate. Truthfully, I was checking the closeness of the smoke. The fire worried me because the bar was my home.

"You need to leave. They're evacuating," Magic revealed, approaching. "We're in the direct path of the fire."

I stared at Magic in horror.

"Are you leaving?" I asked, and he shook his head.

Of course not. Magic would wait until the last moment.

"Then I'll be on the back of your bike when you leave," I said as I watched Bunny get bundled into an SUV by Big Al and Axel. "Give Bunny the bar's takings, and we'll go together."

Magic shot me a surprised look and opened his mouth to argue.

"You ain't got time. Go give Bunny the money and get her the fuck out of here," I ordered, and Magic snickered before lumbering away. I gazed at the bar, my heart breaking. This was more than my home. Magic's bar had been my salvation. Sadly, I watched as the convoy of cars left to drive down the

mountain. No, I'd made the right decision. I'd leave with Magic.

Minutes ticked past as Magic sat on his motorbike, ready to ride with me behind him. He cocked his head, and his face screwed up. We could hear the fire now, which terrified me, but Magic was calm, so I trusted him.

"Fire's changed direction, Alice. I can feel the wind. It's shifted. Look there!" Magic said, and we leapt off the bike as a firefighting team headed towards us. Despite their dirty faces and filthy clothes, I recognised them. It was Hellfire. Chance looked beaten, and I knew something was wrong. Magic stopped running as his eyes checked them over.

"Fuck," he said and rubbed his head.

"Magic?" I asked.

"Pyro's not there," Magic whispered.

My glance frantically searched the team, and I realised Magic was right. Pyro was missing. Diesel was heartbroken, and I took a bottle and gave it to him as he got closer. Poor Bunny.

"Thanks, babe," he muttered.

"Sit down, Diesel. Magic's recalling the others who left." I handed Diesel a sandwich, and he tore into it greedily. I grabbed another package and shoved it at him before racing around to feed and water the other members of Hellfire. Worry was etched clearly across their faces for Pyro. But I knew Diesel and Pyro were close, so I stayed nearby, offering silent comfort. Twice, Diesel shot me a grateful look, and I sent back a reassuring smile.

When Bunny returned, she planted herself firmly next to Diesel. Chance was itching to return to searching, I could see it, but he needed to wait for approval. The missing boy's parents bitched at people until Bunny blew up, and they shut up. I kept busy making more food packages and adding water bottles. Finally, I saw Chance and Hellfire standing to move out to look for their brother. Quickly, I shoved parcels at them, and Diesel offered a weak wink.

I watched, hugging Bunny, as they moved out. She clung to me, asking me to tell her Pyro would return. Deep in my heart, I believed Pyro would, and I hoped Bunny could hear that in my voice.

I nearly cried with her when Big Al bellowed Pyro and Logan had been found alive. And I disappeared for a cry when Hellfire crested the hill carrying Pyro, and Diesel held Logan in his arms.



A week later, I was serving and froze when Drake raised his voice.

“Shut up!” Drake roared. “Bunny, turn the TV up.”

I turned and saw the national news on and clicked the control. Silence fell as we watched Spearfish scrolling across the newsfeed. A body had been discovered six days ago and was confirmed an open murder. The victim was identified as Linus Spoke, who the SPD now revealed had been a suspect in the disappearance of Janet Revers. A reporter announced the police refused to clarify whether Linus was one of the vigilante killers, Justice’s victims. The woman continued to report that a video of Linus Spoke’s confession had been uploaded.

Bunny paled so quickly I thought she’d faint. Shotgun and Magic shoved her into the kitchen, and I followed with Diesel on my heels. I could feel the agitation spilling from Diesel. We both entered and found Bunny a mess of emotions.

“We need to get her somewhere safe!” I exclaimed as I rubbed Bunny’s back.

Bunny was so panic-stricken she was gasping for air.

“Bunny’s fine here,” Diesel rumbled.

Annoyed, I spun on him. “Is she?” I snapped.

“Alice, they put Janet Revers’ picture up. Janet is nothing like Bunny. No one will link them together!” Diesel retorted.

Fuck that! Those were fighting words, as was the tone of voice Diesel used.

“Diesel, how many of those patrons tonight are regular customers? Half of these assholes don’t even ride a fucking bike. The bar’s hot because of the fire and rescue of Logan. I don’t recognise most of them, and it takes one asshole to work out who Bunny is, and the shit hits the fan!” I whisper-shrieked at Diesel.

“You’re panicking her!” Diesel accused.

Oh, Diesel didn’t accuse me of that! Temper flaring, I went toe to toe with him, to everyone’s surprise. They were too used to quiet, fade into the background Alice, and I saw Magic eyeing me warily. Magic knew my act in the bar was just that, an act. I’d blossomed in eleven years, but not to the point of drawing attention to myself.

“Bunny should be terrified. She needs to be looked after and safe with her picture plastered all over the media,” I fired at Diesel. I caught Bunny glancing at Shotgun as I squared up to Diesel.

“Let them two fight it out. Now, girl, Pyro’s on his way. He’ll stay upstairs and hobble down to the bar when you are in it. Magic will watch your back during the day, and some of Hellfire will be stationed here permanently. We’re taking twelve-hour shifts. Nothing’s gonna change. You’ve changed your image so much you’re not identifiable as Janet Revers,” Shotgun said to Bunny, ignoring Diesel and me.

“Don’t ignore me!” Diesel growled low in his throat, recapturing my attention.

“Or what?” I challenged.

Interest lit Diesel’s eyes, and he stepped into my space. Bar Alice would have walked away, ignoring Diesel’s provocation, but to hell with that. This asshole wasn’t making me back down. Diesel decided he had enough fighting and hauled me into him, and his mouth sank into mine. I stiffened in his arms. Hell, I’d never been kissed before. How did I react? Luckily Diesel had practice as my lips opened, and Diesel kissed the ever-loving shit out of me.

My body responded with tingles down my spine, and I melted into him. My tongue tentatively touched his, and that was all the encouragement Diesel seemed to need. Arms tightened around me, and Diesel deepened the kiss. Startled gasps erupted from behind me, and I wrenched my head back. Diesel stared at me with sexy, come-to-bed eyes, and my lips pursed as a smirk crossed his mouth.

My hand shot out, and I slapped him and stormed out.

Drake and Inglorious caught Bunny as she returned to work, and I saw surprise, and then resignation, cross her face. But Magic wasn't tearing heads off, so I guessed everything was okay with them.

Instead, Magic closely watched Diesel as he sauntered cockily towards me. I offered him a dark look and raised the tray in my hands, ready to brain him should he get ideas. As I swung it back, Bunny captured it and snatched it away.

Well, damn it, too high heaven!



The bar was crazy tonight. The reports had brought out the crowds again, and I was rushed off my feet, delivering drinks. Magic had been coaxed into relaxing his strident rules, but everybody had to wear face masks, take tests and temperature checks. He wasn't happy and was already grumbling about reinstating his rules. But it was so busy I was distracted, which meant I was entirely surprised when a guy put his hand on my ass and groped me.

“Get your fucking hands off my waitress now!” Magic bellowed and rounded the bar with fury. There was a rule in Magic's, no touching the waitresses. I was so shocked that someone had dared. I couldn't move away. Magic headed towards me, rage written all over his face, and, by the murderous intention on there, the man was about to join the others buried out back.

Before Magic reached me, a fist came out of nowhere and knocked the guy straight off his chair. Scared, I shrieked as a set of hands picked me up, carried me to the bar, and lifted me

over. Inglorious grinned cheekily before heading to Diesel, who was towering over the asshole who'd groped me.

"No touching the waitresses!" Diesel roared, and silence fell.

Without a word, bikers rose to their feet and closed together. The other half of the customers stared open-mouthed.

"Dude, it was just an ass touch!" one idiot defended his buddy.

Phoe pushed through the crowd and stood before the guy who'd spoken. Wickedly smiling, her hand shot out and groped his groin, and Phoe smirked.

"What the fuck was that?" the guy bellowed.

"Hey, it was only a dick grab," Phoe taunted. Phoe wore her Hellfire cut, proudly proclaiming her to be a member of Hellfire MC. Oh, this was Phoe's infamous temper coming to the fore.

Drake shook his head.

"I'm married. You can't touch my cock; that's sexual assault!" the twat spluttered.

Behind him, Tati approached with narrowed eyes. Tati ran her hand over his ass and squeezed. The man jumped and moved away.

"What the hell are you doing?" he said.

I began grinning at his indignation. He was outmatched and knew it.

"Stay down," Diesel warned the guy on the floor.

The man sank back to his elbows.

"Hey, it was just an ass grab. That's okay, right? Because your asshole buddy grabbed Alice's butt. So, by his actions, we can treat you like meat," Tati spat.

The idiot looked at Phoe and Tati.

My lips twitched as the two women threw down.

"That is sexual assault," he muttered.

“So’s what your friend did to my waitress. Now you wanna make something of it, boy!?” Magic yelled, hauling the guy to his feet.

The other three men rose, but they’d do nothing. They didn’t even register on Magic’s radar. The wall of bikers in front of them warned them not to.

“He meant nothing by it,” the man continued arguing.

“That’s okay; neither did we then,” Phoe sniped as Drake furiously pushed his way through the crowd.

“Why the fuck are you thrusting your cock into my wife’s hand?” Drake demanded.

My lips twitched because Drake’s face was sheer fury, and the guy flinched.

“Dude, your wife grasped my dick of her own accord.”

“My old lady was teaching you a lesson, and had you not been a fuckwad; you’d have learned it. How’d it feel when my wife grabbed your dick or Tati your ass? Violated? Annoyed? Well, that’s how Alice felt when your buddy groped her against her will. Now fuck off. This is a biker bar, not a fuckin’ yuppie bar,” Drake growled.

The guy on the floor moved, but Diesel put a booted foot over his throat. I wondered why Diesel was so het up; we’d rarely interacted, and usually, the guys sat back and let Magic deal with shit. Unless it concerned one of their women. I was confused about what was happening.

“I hear you ever touch a woman in disrespect again, you’ll be pissing through your ass. Understand me?” Diesel warned.

“We’re leaving,” one man who’d stayed silent said.

“Too damn right you are. Now fuck off; as I mentioned, this is a biker bar, and you ain’t fuckin’ bikers,” Magic roared.

A quarter of the customers headed for the exit without a word. I watched, concerned, but nobody seemed to want to start trouble. My hands had already moved towards the shotgun hidden behind the bar. The rest of the customers sat,

but there was an uneasy feeling in the air, not helped by the bikers' vibes.

Slowly, the men sat down, and conversation rose. The outsiders disappeared and the heaviness along with them. Magic checked me before sending me back to work. But I kept a watchful eye on Diesel, who seemed to stare at me. Everywhere I walked, so did his gaze. This was more than protective behaviour. It felt like I belonged to Diesel.

Well, I didn't.

I belonged to no man.

Diesel

Holy fuck, when he'd kissed Alice, he could swear she'd never been touched before. And that made him rock fuckin' hard. That damn woman had hidden under his nose for seven years, not anymore! Diesel had witnessed the fire in Alice's eyes tonight. He was damn sure she was hiding, and Diesel wished to know why.

He'd overheard the rumours she was on the run from an abusive husband. But something seemed off. Alice was so innocent. Diesel knew she was not related to Magic. Yet, Magic hovered over Alice for an entire year when she started working. Magic's possessiveness had sent a message that couldn't be ignored. Diesel had also heard that she'd been living there for four years, before serving at the bar. If Diesel was right and Alice was twenty-eight, she'd been at Magic's from seventeen.

But nobody could say for sure. None of them knew Alice was above the bar for an entire year after she began working there. She always wore jeans and tees and not ones that were cut low. Over the years, her body had changed. It had once appeared soft, but now there was muscle present. Diesel had a sneaky suspicion Alice was exercising somewhere. But where he wasn't sure.

Diesel's mind flicked back to her innocence. He'd first clocked it when Alice didn't know the difference between an android phone and an iPhone. Diesel had been bemused but

written it off, but then he saw several other warning signs. Alice had lived a very sheltered life, or her story of an abusive husband was worse than Diesel believed. Plus, she did not seem afraid of the bikers surrounding her. Diesel's experience of abuse stated she should be scared, and Alice just wasn't.

Alice looked to Magic for approval and protection, but more like a daughter to a father. And although Magic protected all his female staff, the man turned psycho on anyone who laid a hand on Alice. Nobody touched her, and Magic had made that very clear. To be honest, Alice didn't have the fire or spirit to draw attention to herself. Not like Bunny, who Hellfire realised was Janey. Where Janey had been like Alice, she was now the total opposite, which is how she'd been able to hide under their noses.

Was Alice hiding her true self under the meek and docile waitress act? Diesel rather thought she was after he remembered her flashing eyes. Oh yeah. That girl had a backbone. Genuine anger had been in Alice's eyes when she'd raised the tray to hit him with. And that reminded him he needed to buy Bunny a thank you for it. Because that fucking blow would have hurt should Alice have made contact.

A smile crossed Diesel's lips. The pursuit was on, and Alice was completely unaware. She'd be his before she knew what hit her. The enforcer of Hellfire was on the hunt, and his prey was in sight.

Two months later

Alice

As I approached the bar, I jogged back, keeping a steady footing over the uneven ground. Even though I had my home, I preferred to run out here. Here I was free, and the route was more challenging, building up my muscles. As Bunny lived in the apartment upstairs, I used Magic's bathroom behind his office. He had a small shower and didn't mind me using it. I entered the tavern, hot, flushed, and sweaty. Magic raised an eyebrow before tilting his head to his room. I saluted him and cleaned up.

Twenty minutes later, I was at the bar when, to my surprise, Chance, Diesel, and Bear walked in. I sent Diesel a snotty look and caught Bear's grin before he wiped it from his face.

"Everything okay?" Magic asked.

"Yeah, I've pissed Clio off, so headed out," Chance grumbled.

"What did ya do?" Magic boomed.

"Told Clio her ankles looked swollen," Chance said.

"Chance! Clio is about to drop your second child any day, and you said that?" Bunny blurted, entering the bar. She walked past the big man and smacked him around the head.

"Hey, at least I didn't do what Bear did!" Chance exclaimed indignantly.

Bunny and I both turned on Bear, and the walking mountain ducked.

"Bear," Bunny growled.

"Told Thalia that when she had her back to me, I couldn't tell she was pregnant," Bear admitted.

I puzzled that over.

Chance hitched an eyebrow.

"And then said Thalia looked like she swallowed a beach ball, and her stomach announced her arrival before her body," Bear muttered. My jaw fell open as Bunny climbed onto a stool and whacked Bear twice. "Earned that," Bear agreed.

Magic was staring over my shoulder through the windows at something in the car park. I wondered what he was watching and rose to my tiptoes. What I saw out there made me freeze in horror, and then I sank to the floor in terror. Shaking, I clutched Magic's leg as I heard the door open.

"Good morning, fellow brothers," a man said as I huddled on the floor.

My mind scrambled, and then I yanked out the blue bin that held empty bottles and crawled into its space.

“What do you want? We ain’t your type of establishment,” Magic demanded, ignoring social niceties. No, we weren’t.

Just from the brief glance, they were wearing cream linen slacks, with a white tunic over the top and a patch over their right breast stating their rank. I knew they would both be wearing simple loafers on their feet too. Those two stood out a mile away and didn’t belong here.

“We’ll get down to business. Have you seen this woman? It’s a picture of her when she was younger, but you can see her features well enough,” the Fifth Minister sought. His voice was smooth and calming, and I shook upon hearing it again.

“Could I see?” Bunny urged. “No, not seen her around, and she’s so beautiful that I’d have taken note.”

“Who is she?” Chance asked, taking the picture.

No, don’t give me up! I silently begged.

“Poor Alexis was a member of our church. She was injured in an accident and retained a head injury. Alexis became unstable and fled one night. We thought she was dead... until nearly two weeks ago. There was a report on a local wildfire and a scene where a missing boy was reunited with his parents. It was a report from two months ago, but one of our members caught it in a documentary about wildfires.

“The Black Hills fire was mentioned, and we caught sight of Alexis in the background. We have a screenshot, but that’s Alexis, just older. Our church would like to bring her home to her father, who is frantic with worry. The man hasn’t stopped searching for her,” the Fifth Minister replied.

Is that the lie they’d fabricated?

“Oh, that poor little girl. How awful,” Bunny expressed in a sad voice.

“That’s a shame when a family splits,” Chance drawled.

Oh no, he was going to buy the story.

“Ain’t sure that is her,” Magic announced, squinting at the image.

“Well, she’s older now, but have you seen her around?” the second man asked. I didn’t recognise his voice.

“Nah, dude, she doesn’t work here, and she ain’t local,” Magic replied.

“We’d have noticed a fine piece of ass like that,” Diesel stated in a tone that made me cringe.

“Please show some respect. Alexis is a very sick girl. When Alexis was little, she had an extremely vivid imagination. I can’t bear to think what’s going through her mind now,” Fifth Minister chided.

“Dude, girl ain’t from here, so got no idea,” Magic drawled. My magical man!

“Well, Alexis is serving food there, so someone must know her,” the other guy challenged.

“Calling me a liar in my bar is a huge mistake. There were so many people that day; she could have been from anywhere. The call went out, and individuals responded. That bitch isn’t from around here, and I ain’t got a clue who she is. Wish you luck finding her, but don’t insult me in my fuckin’ bar.” Magic growled.

“Our apologies. Seeing Alexis on TV was a shock. Now we are desperate to find her and ensure her safety. We are very concerned about Alexis and what she may have suffered these past eleven years. But thank you for your time. We’ll contact the local police departments and see if they can help. After all, that’s what law enforcement is for,” Fifth Minister said.

“You do that, and tell them you’ve spoken to Magic, and I don’t know her. But I’ll put up a missing poster if needed,” Magic growled out.

“If you have other copies, I’ll take some for my brothers,” Chance suggested.

I wondered what Chance was doing. My brain wouldn’t kick into gear, and I was just in pure shock.

“That’s mighty kind of you,” Fifth Minister replied.

There was rustling, footsteps echoed, and the door opened and closed. I went to move, and Magic’s legs locked me in place.

“Wait till I say so, Alice,” Magic whispered.

“Need help?” Chance offered quietly.

“Can protect my own,” Magic retorted.

“Dude, you got over eight MCs that will ride for you. Call in allies and get eyes on those assholes. Alice, honey, they are still in the car park and watching the bar. They are expecting us to produce you. Stay hidden, sweetness,” Chance murmured.

“Alice, hold on, baby girl. We’ll move you as soon as it’s secure,” Magic whispered.

I reached out and clutched his jeans, and he bent his leg towards me to show I was safe. I didn’t care. Tears were forming in my eyes and were sliding down my face. A panic attack was close. Eleven years I’d hidden, and because of some dumbass reporter, they’d found me.

Luckily, I kept myself to myself, but my neighbours would recognise me. I had to leave Rapid City and start again. That decade of saving money would come in handy. My bank balance was pretty freaking healthy.

“Chance, in my office is a black box in my top drawer. Can you bring it to me?” Magic asked.

Chance’s boots stomped away and returned minutes later.

“That what I think it is?” Chance sought as Magic placed the box on our side of the bar and opened it.

“Yeah,” Magic revealed and activated it. “Try dialling out.”

“No signal,” Chance replied.

Bear and Diesel must have checked their phones, because they both said the same.

“Those fuckers have dropped a bug somewhere because there is no reason to be hanging around,” Magic stated.

My hand tightened on his leg.

“Baby girl, it’s okay. I’m jamming them. Just hang in for a few moments, and then we’ll get you upstairs.”

“Okay,” I mumbled through numb lips. I didn’t want to leave here. This tiny, cramped hole was keeping me safe.

“Now, fuck off,” Diesel muttered.

I hope Diesel wasn’t aiming that at me. Footsteps pounded, and Magic stepped back. Before he could bend, Diesel had crouched by my hidey-hole.

“Come out, honey, they’ve gone,” Diesel coaxed. Magic growled behind him. I couldn’t move as fear soaked my bones.

“Diesel, fuckin’ move. Alice won’t respond to you, only to me. Bear, watch the window, see if they have gone, and we’ll move,” Magic said, crouching near me. He held out a hand, and I latched straight on to it. Magic didn’t wince, and I clung to him tightly.

Diesel backed off and allowed Magic to crowd me.

“No sign of them,” Bear called.

“Bunny, call Lance at Fallen Warriors. Tell Lance I need a sweep of the bar. It’s urgent,” Magic ordered.

I crawled out of the hole fully and dived into his arms. A meaty hand turned my face into his chest, and Magic carried me away. From the footsteps following behind, Diesel and Chance trailed us.

“Leave the jammer running,” Magic declared as he walked.

My secret was out, and I worried what Chance and Diesel might think. Magic brought me into the apartment and placed me on the sofa. No sooner had he done so than I sprung up and launched at him. For eleven years, Magic had been my saviour and father. I needed him now. Magic sighed, picked me up in his arms, and sat with me. I could feel Chance and Diesel’s

eyes burrowing into me, and I ducked my head into Magic's throat and ignored everyone.

"Whispering Willow Church of Godliness," Magic announced.

"Fuck me!" Diesel exclaimed.

"Alice is a survivor?" Chance demanded.

"No, Alice is the one that brought those motherfuckin' raping cunts down," Magic declared. Yup, that was me!

CHAPTER THREE.

Alice

“Alice brought them down?” Diesel exclaimed.

“Yes, but she was Alexis then. What the feds didn’t announce was the top men all escaped. They’ve been quietly searching for a second base, but it could be anywhere or any state. Alice and I guessed the feds were searching, but we kept it quiet. Alice was being forced to marry two of the top Ministers, and she escaped, and I found her. Brought Alice here and have protected her ever since. Alice is the daughter I never had,” Magic said with a glance at Diesel. There was warning in that look.

“That was the nutjobs that kept women subjugated, and they’d no awareness of technology and shit. They had no idea of their basic human rights and were used as sex slaves, amongst other shit. They went down about a decade ago?” Chance asked.

“Eleven years ago. After everything Alice told me, I got her permission to record it and sent it to the FBI. Alice was so important to the church that the FBI, who already had eyes on them, acted on her information,” Magic confirmed.

“That took guts, girl,” Chance said with warm approval.

“I’d no idea about the outside world. Didn’t understand how a phone or TV worked. Magic let me hide up here for four years while I gained my GED and then a diploma in editing. I work from home doing editing for a few authors and work here when Magic needs me. Magic wouldn’t let me work the bar until I understood the world better and wouldn’t stand out. Cramming seventeen years of learning into four was hard, but I did it,” I said proudly.

“You’re fuckin’ amazing,” Diesel said, and I cocked my head warily.

After that kiss, I’d avoided him. But I sensed Diesel watched me a lot.

Now I was calmer, Magic shunted me over on the sofa so he could get up and pace.

“After two weeks of freedom, Alice understood what the church did was criminal and asked me to contact the proper authorities to take them down. I liaised with just one fed. No one else knew where Alice was or who the liaisons were. It was kept between one fed and myself. That protected Alice because we guessed the church had enough money for bribes. Alice was a major part in getting the warrants to invade the church. What the feds discovered there was enough for arrests,” Magic explained.

Chance was typing something on his phone as Magic spoke, and when he finished, he shoved it away.

“So, what do you need? They clearly are looking for her again, and I don’t wanna consider them getting their hands on her. They may not have proof Alice was behind their takedown, but they’ll sure as hell suspect her,” Bear said. “I was listening from the stairs. The bar’s locked down, but Lance is riding. He’ll call when he arrives.”

“I need to run, collect my go bag from my house and run,” I said. My heart broke at the thought of leaving Magic and this behind. They had become my life and one I was happy in. To be forced to give this up now, for a near future of running, uncertainly bit deep. My heart already ached at the thought of leaving Magic. He would risk his life for me to stay.

“Need blackout curtains for every window in the apartment. Can you get Tati on it? Lance can fit me with extra locks and deadbolts. Want more than what I have. I want the doors electrified, the security cameras updated, and motion monitors incorporated. I want this damn place like Fort Knox,” Magic stated.

“Why?” I asked.

“Darling, no bullshit. Bunny’s moving in with Pyro. Bunny’s barely here anymore. This apartment is gonna be empty again. I’m gonna get a few guys to collect your personal shit, and you’re staying here. I’ll sleep in the pull-out in my office until this bar is secure. And you’ll stay up here, babe. No working

downstairs until we get this under control,” Magic stated and crossed his arms. Oh, I recognised that look and stance. No matter what I devised, Magic wouldn’t back down.

“I need to work,” I argued, feeling stronger.

“You can work on your editing! But not in the bar. Alice, they got a lock on you in this area. We gotta give it a few weeks, so they believe either you moved on or you weren’t here in the first place. Ain’t gonna lose you now, kid. So please, meet me halfway. If you have to go outside, go nowhere without a brother from one of the trusted MCs present,” Magic almost begged me.

I saw the fear in Magic’s eyes and didn’t want him under more stress.

“Okay, I can do that,” I agreed with a smile. “But the apartment has two bedrooms. You stay up here with me.”

“Baby girl, anyone coming for you is coming from downstairs. I need to be down there, guarding you,” Magic argued.

“Guard me from up here. The smaller bedroom is closest to the entrance. Use that. Have the alerts come to your cell. At least here, we can defend better. There’s not many entrances as we’re on the first floor,” I argued.

“That makes sense, Magic. Will put a couple of Hellfire downstairs at night for additional protection. The allied MCs can put brothers on the grounds. And you only need to ask Magic,” Chance said.

“I can protect my own,” Magic grumbled.

“Ain’t saying you can’t, but it would ease the pressure of you knowing Alice is completely covered,” Diesel suggested.

Magic frowned. He didn’t like accepting help, but this time, he needed it. As for me, I’d be content to flee, but it wasn’t the best idea, and I accepted that.

“Fine,” he grumbled.

“I’ll call the presidents and inform them we need two men night and day on the bar. I can put my men inside, and

Drake's," Chance offered Magic, who glowered but offered a sharp nod.

"What are we going to tell them?" I asked, worried. I didn't want my history getting out. People would treat me differently. It had taken years to shrug off the church's teachings, but I'd succeeded. I was no longer that naïve, stupid girl who blindly followed.

"Well, darlin', the rumour was you ran from an abusive husband. We'll leave it at that and say he's tracked you. Honestly, ain't much of a lie. If those fuckers get hold of you, they'll either want you to marry or kill you," Chance said, looking at me.

Magic growled, and I heard the denial in that.

"Okay," I said in a small voice. None of them said anything about blaming me, but I felt guilty that I was causing such upheaval.

Diesel.

Who the fuck would have guessed that Alice was running from a damn cult? And even worse, she was the key that had brought them down. Diesel rode his bike behind Chance and Bear as they headed back to Hellfire. Chance had called a meeting for the presidents, and they were coming. Lance had sent Bat to instal whatever Magic wanted, and they'd left the big man, telling them his wishes.

Their top security man, Owl, was listening and putting the order together as they spoke. The Fallen Warriors had opened a security shop this year and were doing well. They were also installing systems, and Worm, their internet expert, had opened another company providing internet security. The money was pouring in for the Fallen Warriors, and Diesel was pleased for them. As the three of them pulled up on Hellfire, Diesel noted the Harleys already present.

Drake and Ace's were there alongside Lance and his enforcer Sniper. They must have ridden together. Parked alongside were two Harleys with the Devil's Damned

Disciples' patch on their tanks. Jailbait and his VP's Wrench's rides, no doubt.

Chance, Bear, and Diesel pulled up next to them and headed into the clubhouse. No surprise that Phoe was present in her Hellfire cut proclaiming her a sister. She was sitting on Shee's lap and slapping him around the head. No doubt another bitch had messed with Shee's head.

Phoe glanced up as they entered and leapt to her feet to greet us. Drake watched but never said a word. He understood better than to come between Phoe and her brothers. It amazed Diesel that Drake, who was so possessive where Phoe was concerned, would let her hug and sit on a Hellfire brother's laps. It was something Drake never commented about. Diesel accepted Phoe's kiss and tilted his head towards Hellfire's church.

After greeting those present, Chance ordered the officers and guests into church. Several of Diesel's brothers shot concerned looks at them but knew better than to interrupt a meeting. Diesel walked in behind Inglorious and his VP Psych.

"Bear, can you wait and greet the others and bring them to church? The meeting won't start until they arrive?" Chance asked as Bear lumbered to his feet.

Diesel tapped his leg, restless energy flowing through him. His mind kept flicking back to how scared Alice had looked just before she dropped behind the bar. No woman should ever look that terrified.

Onyx, the President of Riders of Vengeance, and his VP, Venom, entered, followed by Tiger, the President of Satan's Warriors. They were followed minutes later by Crunch, the VP of Satan's Warriors.

"Just waiting on Scythe and Tinker," Chance said, naming the President and VP of Devil's Scythe. Chat rose as they waited until finally Scythe and Tinker entered. Bear shut the door, and everyone sat.

"What's the crack?" Scythe asked immediately.

“Magic needs our aid,” Chance said, and hisses were heard.

“Whatever he needs, he’s got,” Onyx stated.

Chance nodded. And turned to Diesel.

“You know the most. Explain,” Chance demanded.

“Everyone here is familiar with Alice, Magic’s girl. Today there was an incident where her husband sent two men to find her. Luckily, Alice noticed them and hid, but they made bones about heading to the cops. They’re claiming Alice was in an accident, and her real name is Alexis,” Diesel said, and Jailbait held a hand up.

“Can we stop the bullshit right here? Aware of what you’re doing, Diesel, protecting Alice and Magic. But I’m aware of the truth, and most of us here are too,” Jailbait said and glanced around the table. Diesel bristled as he saw several nods, although there were a few blank looks, mainly from Rage, Fallen Warriors, and Hellfire.

“Telling me Jailbait, you guys knew the truth, and we didn’t?” Chance asked in a dangerous voice.

“I guessed because the cult hit Summerset a few days ago, flashing her picture. None of my guys said a word,” Jailbait said.

“Devil’s Scythe knew because we investigate every fucker we encounter that affects our lives. Magic’s background cover was good, impenetrable, but he made one slip that we covered for him. Alice is a good girl,” Scythe announced.

“Took a liking to Alice but was worried the girl planned to scam Magic. We did a dig and found nothing. Background checked out. It must have been after you guys. But the cult hit Merritt a few years ago, and we saw a picture of her. They didn’t approach us, but Psych here snatched a picture, and it was Alice. We kept our mouths shut and patrolled the bar for a while, but nothing happened,” Inglorious elaborated.

“Someone wanna tell those of us not in the know?” Drake demanded irately.

“Diesel, go ahead. You’re claiming the girl.” Chance nodded at Diesel, who grinned. Inglorious groaned.

“What is it with you bastards claiming all the good ones?” he complained.

“Suck it up,” Bear fired back, and Inglorious flipped him the finger.

“Alice’s real name is Alexis. Not aware of her surname, not sure it matters. She was raised in a cult that subjugated women and made them servants and sex slaves. From what Alice has said, forcing women to marry older men and then have them rape them in front of the church was common practice. As soon as a female began to bleed, they were deemed ready for marriage,” Diesel said.

“You’re on about that fuckin’ church that was brought down a decade ago?” Drake asked, and Diesel nodded.

“Yeah, anyone need any more info on it?” Diesel asked.

“Nah, think we all followed the headlines on it,” Lance said, his face showing pure disgust.

“Well, Alice escaped from there on her wedding day. It was her seventeenth birthday, and she was gonna be married to an old man and a thug. Yeah, Tiger, they forced women to marry multiple men. Alice doesn’t understand why she wasn’t married off when she started her menstrual cycle, but she was the only one who wasn’t. She escaped when she was due to marry the two men, who also planned to rape her in front of the congregation. She ran through the woods and hit the road and found Magic.

“Magic took one look, put her on his bike, and rode away. He spent the next four years making sure Alice got an education once he’d created a fake background and ID. Once she gained a diploma in editing and copywriting, Alice began working at the bar alongside her chosen career.

“Alice moved out of the bar six years ago and rented a tiny house. Not far from Magic and the bar. She’s been hiding in plain sight ever since. Today two men came. They saw her on the news with that damn fire and headed straight here. The

church isn't dead like the FBI thought. Magic and Alice knew the Ministers, those who led it, escaped. They've found a trace of Alice and want her back. The question is whether to force her to marry or to kill her," Diesel broke off and looked around.

"Why kill her?" Drake asked, confused.

"Because Alice is the one who gave the FBI all the information they needed to raid the place. She sent in videos of statements and also used video links during trials. Alice brought them down," Onyx said.

"Alice did?" Inglorious exclaimed, surprised at the statement.

"Guess you didn't know that, asshole," Lance jibed, and Inglorious nodded at the dig.

"Hell no, the girl's so quiet, she doesn't say boo to a goose," Tinker spoke up.

"What do Magic and Alice need?" Crunch inquired.

"Bat is at the bar now, ordering security for it. It's going to be tighter than Fort Knox. Owl is rubbing his hands together," Lance said.

"We can hold Alice safe in Silver City," Onyx offered.

Diesel growled.

"Maybe not." Venom chuckled.

"What Magic wants is two men outside, twenty-four hours a day. He also wants two inside for backup. Magic ain't prepared to let a hair on Alice's head get hurt," Chance said.

"Four men outside. Makes it safer for the patrols. Two men and Magic inside is cool. They'll not be alone, as bikers are constantly present. But four men outside. We're unsure how big this cult is or how many are searching for Alice. The bar can be locked down easily by four men and defended until help gets there. Having an extra couple of men makes it that much harder to come at the bar," Lance said.

“Agreed. We need to place four men outside. Magic don’t ask us for shit, and he’s been there for us. We have to give back to him. Magic dotes on Alice as a daughter,” Drake said.

“No need to guilt trip, Drake. We’re all in agreement,” Tiger replied.

“Ain’t gonna leave Magic to swing in the wind alone,” Scythe agreed.

“I see Phoe out there? Get your woman, Drake, and we’ll make up a rota to commit to,” Sniper drawled.

“Stupid question, what were they dressed like?” Jailbait asked.

“What the fuck has that got to do with anything?” Chance demanded, puzzled.

“Because the fuckers we saw wore smart suits and looked decent guys,” Wrench replied.

“Ours wore jeans and tees,” Scythe replied.

“The ones at Magic’s screamed cult,” Bear interrupted.

“And they mentioned the cops?” Jailbait asked.

Nods answered him.

“Nobody seeing it?” Inglorious groaned as he spoke.

Blank looks were shot at him.

“Two decent-dressed guys approach the cops. Worried for their lost family member, who disappeared eleven years ago after a head injury. They discover she’s being held by a biker who is denying her existence. Who’re the cops gonna go after?” Jailbait asked.

“Fuck!” roared Diesel. He yanked his phone from his pocket and dialled Magic. “Get Alice into hiding now, not the apartment. Cops with a warrant are on their way.”

They heard Magic boom down the phone, and the line disconnected.

“Get on to Ramirez now, and you call Lio. Warn them something is going down. We need Magic’s FBI contact,”

Chance ordered, pointing at Tiny and Shee.

“No, we need an FBI agent who can keep their mouth shut. Magic thinks of Alice as his daughter. I ain’t about to let him lose her,” Drake said.

Ace was already nodding as he yanked his own phone out and dialed a number.

“Axel’s girl?” Tiger asked.

“Willow. She and her partner Grey are solid,” Drake elaborated as Ace spoke on the phone.

Diesel sat back, his mind on Alice. Magic had agreed to text him when Alice was safe. Diesel guessed, as did everyone else, that Magic had hidden exits out of the bar. And Diesel would bet his last dollar that Magic had a panic room. He prayed Magic got Alice there before the cops landed. His gut told them they were on their way. Those fuckers knew that Alice had been seen at the bar, so without an ounce of doubt in Diesel’s mind, they’d hit the cops.

And there was always one Officer Do-goodly who would take up on behalf of suit-wearing assholes and condemn a biker. Diesel’s feet itched to take him to his bike, but he knew better than to walk out on a meeting.

“Diesel, go!” Chance ordered. No sooner had the words left Chance’s mouth than Diesel was out the door. On his heels were Shotgun and Celt. They didn’t ask for an explanation but hit their bikes as Diesel did and followed him. Loyalty amongst brothers, Diesel thought as he throttled his bike and headed towards the bar.

Alice

I was startled when Magic raced into the apartment.

“Alice, move now. We got cops heading here,” Magic roared.

My feet moved of their own violation, and I followed Magic down the stairs and through the kitchen door. Brett was already present, preparing for the day’s orders, and we made him jump. Magic opened the door that led to the cellar and

yanked me down into it. I scrambled to keep my balance as we raced down the steps, and Magic moved amongst the shelves. He drew me into a corner and placed a finger over his lips. I nodded as he pressed on something I didn't see, and a section of the wall popped open.

In surprise, my eyes widened, and I followed him into a room. Magic glanced about and then motioned for me to sit down. As I did, I watched as he pulled a tv out from a closet and began plugging it in.

“Baby girl, this will allow you to see what happens in the bar. This console here will allow you to change the camera. Fuck the new system not being up and running. But I've still got pretty decent coverage. If someone tries to get in, press this,” Magic ordered, and I jumped a second door slammed into place across the first. “Then press here.” Magic pointed to a brick and pressed. Another door opened at the rear, and I spied a passage.

I tried not to snort at Magic's words concerning the new system. It hadn't even been a day.

“What the fuck?” I exclaimed.

“That moves you away from the bar and leads you to a cave where there's a bike hidden. Get on the bike and head towards Hellfire or Silver City. Don't stop for anything. Not cops, bikers or anyone. You keep going. Get to one of the MCs, and they will keep you safe. You know where they all are, so just keep going and don't stop,” Magic said urgently.

“What's going on?” I whispered.

“We think those assholes have gone to the cops. Cops would take them seriously as they've been wearing expensive suits. Just stay down here for now. There are books and shit in the corner alongside food and drink. I'll come for you, baby girl, no matter what the fuck happens,” Magic said.

“Don't get shot,” I whispered, and Magic's face softened.

“Only happened once, baby,” Magic promised.

Yeah, he'd been shot saving Bunny. I'd been terrified.

“I can’t do this shit alone, Magic,” I said, and Magic grinned.

“My sweet girl, you ain’t alone and will never be alone again. Eight MCs are gathering to protect you. You just obey me and survive because I will set the world on fire if you get hurt. And so will a certain biker,” Magic said teasingly.

I began to speak when Magic stiffened.

“No matter what happens, you stay here. You’ll be able to hear everything, but make sure the second door stays locked. It can only be activated here. I’ll be back, Alice, one way or another.”

Magic left the room as I stared after him, frightened, as he locked me inside the safe room. I hit the panel he showed me, and the second door slammed into place again. I turned to the monitors and saw a cop car followed by another car parking up. Shit. They had gone to the cops.

Magic went to the front of the bar and wiped it down as two uniforms entered it. I didn’t recognise them, but that meant nothing. Behind them strolled the Fifth Minister and the stranger. Both were dressed in sharp, expensive suits, and my back bristled. They looked like decent, caring men, but I knew differently.

“What ya want?” Magic boomed.

One of the officers smiled and approached.

“Magic, I’m Officer Douglas, and this is my partner, Officer Hawes. We’re investigating the disappearance of a woman.”

“Yeah, they were in here earlier but dressed differently. Where’s ya hippy clothes gone now?” Magic asked.

“They were our casual clothes. Now we’d like to know where Alexis is hiding, please. Please hand Alexis over; there’s no reason to get nasty,” the Fifth Minister announced.

“Can’t hand over what I don’t have, and you ain’t seen nasty yet, boyo,” Magic demurred. “These bring you out here claiming I’m holding her hostage or some shit? On what evidence?”

“Alexis was seen alive here, Magic, on a TV interview,” Douglas said.

I bit my lip. That fucking interview was going to haunt me. I watched as Magic leaned back and folded his arms.

“Are you fucking serious? Based on a glimpse of a woman I ain’t even sure they’ve identified correctly, you come here and harass me? Did you ask your chief? And Hawthorne? You harassing them? They were in charge during the fire. Do they know her? No, you not asked? What a fucking surprise. Because I wear a cut and run a bar, I’m automatically suspect,” Magic sneered.

The officers swapped glances.

“We got a search warrant,” Hawes said hesitantly.

“You fuckin’ go ahead. I’m calling your boss. Get ready, fellas, because he’ll rip you a new one. Harassing a legal businessman,” Magic growled. “And on no damn basis.”

Lio entered the bar, announcing, “My name is Detective Emilio Hawthorne. There’s no need for a warrant. The chief wants you two back at the station. And gentleman, you’re to accompany my partner to the police station to file a missing person report. Apparently, one has never been filed, which has made my chief curious, considering you claim she’s been missing eleven years and is handicapped.”

I recognised the man from when he did the search and rescue for the missing boy, Logan.

“Why are we to accompany your partner when this man is hiding a sick woman?” Fifth Minister demanded.

“Because something you didn’t tell the officers here is you belonged to a cult which abused women and children. Maybe still belong to. And you’re searching for a woman who’s supposedly been missing for over a decade. That hit me as suspicious. And why you’re focused on this bar, I don’t know. My chief is reviewing the footage from that day, and he concurred we can’t be positive it is the woman you’re looking for. And with your links, we want to know why you’re looking for this woman,” Lio replied calmly.

“Seems their shit don’t stink when actually they’re walking bags of shit,” Magic commented, and I stifled a laugh.

“And as for you two. You never, ever approach a judge without running shit through a detective. You overstepped and went too far. If this woman had been hiding here, you could have placed her in a potentially dangerous situation. Chief wants to see both of you as soon as you hit the station. Go!” Lio said.

Lio watched as the two officers sent the Fifth Minister and his friend a sharp look before heading out. I wriggled in my seat.

“This is Detective Phil Gold. Please follow him to his car. I’ll have an officer bring yours to the station,” Lio said.

“We regret, but we must decline. You have not arrested us, and therefore we are free to go. So we will take our leave now,” the Fifth Minister said.

Magic moved from behind the counter.

“I want to press charges for false allegations,” he stated. “You were both witnesses to that. I want them arrested.”

Oh, I wondered if that would work.

“Now, we can do it one or two ways. You come of your own accord, or we arrest you, as this man asks. Your choice,” Lio said with a hint of glee.

Fifth Minister and the man swapped glances.

“Fine, but we will require our lawyer,” the Fifth Minister said.

“Not a problem. Follow me, gentlemen,” Detective Gold said.

Magic tilted his head at Lio, who was already following the three men. Taking his partners back. I wondered if Magic would come for me and clicked on the car park camera. I watched as Lio and Gold walked the two men to an unmarked police car and locked them in the back. The two men exchanged words before Lio jogged back to the bar.

I saw movement on the cameras, and three bikes pulled up. Diesel, Shotgun, and Celt behind him. All three men moved swiftly towards the bar, and I flipped back to the inside. Magic was behind the bar.

“If you have her, lock her down, Magic. Something about those suited pricks has my spine-tingling,” Lio was saying.

“You buying their story that she has a brain injury?” Magic rumbled as Diesel and the others hit the bar.

“No. But smarmy assholes like those will have all their ducks in a row. Wouldn’t surprise me to discover they have fake medical records and who knows what else,” Lio replied.

“Willow’s going to be involved, Lio. Liaise with her,” Diesel said, and Lio shot him a sharp look.

“The feds? What the fuck is Alexis involved in? It’s more than a runner from a cult,” Lio demanded. Magic noted the use of Alice’s real name. Lio had guessed more than he was letting on.

“Dude, would love to tell you, but speak to Willow. She’ll have information and knows what to discuss and what’s confidential. But don’t let those assholes slip, Lio, they are dangerous,” Diesel warned.

I saw Shotgun and Celt swap confused glances, but they didn’t say anything.

Lio nodded his head.

“We’ll keep in contact. Magic, can’t stress enough, my trouble bump is pinging. Keep her safe! And don’t confirm to me she’s here. What I don’t know, I can’t lie about,” Lio said and walked out.

Magic shot around the bar in a flash and stopped.

“Are they gone?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Diesel confirmed.

Magic continued, and Diesel followed.

“Stay here, I’ll bring Alice up,” Magic warned, and I watched Diesel stop. Nobody would cross Magic. I pressed the

button to release the second door and realised I had no idea how to open the first. Therefore, I had to wait for Magic to let me out. I raced into his arms, and he hugged me tightly.

“Shit’s gonna be okay. There’s a secret way in your apartment to the cellar. I’ll show you later. Any crap ever happens, you use that and hide here. Remember where I pressed?” Magic asked, and I nodded.

“I didn’t know how to get out. I opened the second door, but not the first,” I replied.

“There’s a lever, I’ll show you,” Magic promised as he led me back upstairs.

Diesel hurried towards me and grabbed my arms, checking me over. Once satisfied I was okay, he stepped back.

“Someone wanna explain?” Celt asked, hooking a stool and sitting down.

I sighed; this was turning into a horrendous fucking day!

CHAPTER FOUR.

Alice

“Oh, sorry, are you new here?” a woman asked, and I nearly leapt out of my skin. It was dinnertime, and I’d popped down to get something to eat. I couldn’t be bothered to cook and needed a change of scenery from the apartment.

“No, I live upstairs,” I stammered. Shit, only Brett or Magic was supposed to be in the kitchen. I guessed this was the new barmaid.

“Are you allowed down here?” she demanded, folding her arms.

I straightened my shoulders and stared her down. Or rather, peered up at her. The woman was at least five foot seven, give an inch or two. She had dirty blonde hair cut in a bob and green eyes, which watched me carefully. I envied her curvy figure.

“Yes. Magic’s like a father to me. Why are you back here?” I challenged. Magic had ruled the kitchen off limits to everyone, apart from Brett, from five to six, so I could come down and eat and socialise with Brett. We both eyed each other suspiciously until Magic barged in and, smiling, made a beeline for me. Magic kissed my brow, and his eyebrows descended as he spotted the stranger.

“Natasha, what are you doing here?”

“I was coming to place my dinner order. And I’m guessing this is why the kitchen’s off-limits,” Natasha announced.

Magic’s stare turned murderous.

“What’s that meant to mean?” he demanded.

“Oh honey, I’m old enough to recognise when a woman is in trouble. Your overprotective alpha male stance merely confirms that. Blonde, not dumb! Whatever, I’m no threat to

either of you. Hello missy, I'm Natasha Kemmer, married with a teenage boy," Natasha said, holding out a hand.

"Alice."

"The infamous Alice! Wonderful, the waitresses mentioned you but thinks you left. So as far as I'm concerned, I didn't see you, nor do you live here. So, can I get some dinner?" Natasha demanded, turning to Magic with her hands on her hips. "And why don't you go upstairs, and I will keep you company?" Natasha asked.

Bemused, I glanced at Magic, whose mouth was opening and shutting, before nodding and heading up the stairs.

"Alice, I'll grab some jacket potatoes and salad. Go back to guarding the bar, Mr Grumpy Pants!" Natasha chided Magic.

I giggled. Nobody called Magic on his moods. Natasha was taking the bull by the horns.



There was a tentative knock on the apartment door, and I checked before opening it to let Natasha in. She was carrying three plates, and her pockets were bulging.

"Brett gave me two huge jackets and three large scoops of chilli girl! Hope you're hungry. He also sent four cans of coke and dessert, which are balanced precariously on top. Grab it, Alice!" Natasha exclaimed as the top plate wobbled.

I snatched it and sighed happily. Chocolate fudge cake.

"Sorry, I didn't bring utensils. I guessed you'd have them. Where are we sitting?" Natasha asked, barrelling into the apartment.

Bemused once again, I followed and motioned to the sofa and armchair.

"Yeah, let's not stand on ceremony. I'm pretty down to earth," Natasha continued as she handed me one plate and sat on the settee. I took the chair, which was my favourite place to sit.

"Thanks for this and for keeping my presence a secret," I said, lifting the cover off the food. Damn, Brett, this looked

wonderful. *Thank you*, I silently told him. A large jacket potato smothered in chilli with a side salad and two thick slabs of bread adjourned the plate.

“Fuckwad of a husband or bad relationship? Mind you, they’re both the same, I suppose,” Natasha said, sniffing her dinner. “If I wasn’t married, I’d snatch Brett up!”

“Husband.”

“Guessed you were running from something. Honey, the way your body moved to flee gave it away. Magic is protecting you? Not keeping you against your will? If he is, tip me the nod, and I’ll get you out of here,” Natasha said, holding my eyes.

“No! Magic’s the only family I have,” I gasped.

Natasha searched my face. “Can see you mean that. Okay, honey, I understand. As long as you’re fine, that’s all that matters. How long have you been hiding?”

Honestly, I couldn’t decide whether Natasha was nosey or genuinely caring.

“A week now. I was getting cabin fever, which is why I came down. Usually, Magic brings me food, and we chat during his breaks. But I felt claustrophobic today. I had to escape these four walls,” I replied, watching Natasha carefully.

“Can’t say I have ever experienced an abusive partner, but that doesn’t mean I’ve not encountered one. Seen friends suffer, and it takes a lot to break free. You did, Alice, so be proud of that fact. Lean on your friends, honey, and let them take the weight while you heal. And I don’t mean physically. Mentally can be far more harmful. And when those voices in your head start up, you tell me, and I’ll whack them into submission!”

It was impossible not to laugh at the image of Natasha wielding a bat and whacking thoughts in little clouds above me.

“You’re on. Could I ask why you are working here?”

“Yeah, ain’t got nothing to hide. My car blew up, and I mean a big boom. I took it to the Hellfire garage, and they shook their head in despair. I’m a stay-at-home mom, but I needed the car back on the road. My hubby, the kid, and I usually live comfortably. Still, I required a whole new vehicle, and this year’s budget didn’t include one. So, I got a loan and took this job to help pay. Hubby thinks I’m crazy. He says it’ll be tight, but we can afford it, but it’s always on his shoulder.

“If I work a few months, that’ll take a load off his shoulders. It’ll help make the payments until the holiday is paid, and then we’ll be fine. He’s a good man and a bit averse to me working in a biker’s bar, but he’s popped in twice this week and seems reassured.”

“That’s great.”

“Although I’m not sure how calm Hubby should be with me surrounded by hunks all day. I don’t know how you restrained yourself with them. There are quite a few I’d like to tie to my bed!”

“Guess I’m immune. At first, I was shy and content to hide behind Magic. And Magic made it very clear I was hands off to everyone. And nobody messes with Magic. By the time I found my footing, I was used to hunky men, and they didn’t bother me. But there is some real eye candy down there,” I agreed, my thoughts going to Diesel.

Ever since our kiss, he’d been on my mind. Had that been a one-off thing? I doubted it because Diesel watched me. I would sense eyes in the back of my head, and I’d turn, and there he’d be, watching. Although I had little interaction with men, I believed Diesel was interested in me. The question remained, though. Could I trust Diesel enough to try a relationship?

Diesel was a typical biker, all alpha male and ego. His personality would overwhelm mine, and that caused me to hesitate. Diesel was Hellfire through and through, and I knew his rank was enforcer. Working in a bar meant you got to know their positions quickly. Otherwise, you risk offending

someone. But could I handle everything that came with Diesel?

“Oh ho, I see that glint in your eye. Who is it, honey?” Natasha crowed, interrupting my thoughts.

“No one. I’m not actually dating anyone.”

“But there’s somebody you like?” Natasha pried gently.

“I don’t know about like. He grabbed and kissed me, and I’d never been kissed before, so it was a shock. And I hadn’t experienced the feelings he aroused in me,” I answered honestly.

“Your ex needs an ass-kicking. How did this kiss make you feel?” Natasha asked.

“Out of control, excited. I wanted to explore. But also scared. Who says he won’t let me down if I allow myself to fall?”

“Oh, Alice. That is a part of life, honey. Taking a risk is a big thing. When situations happen, you can only go with your gut. Everybody fears being hurt. Hubby and I are very much in love, but even to this day, I worry that he’ll hurt me. That’s because he holds my heart in his hands. When you love someone, you take a chance and give them the power to upset you. But trust plays a huge part. I trust hubby not to hurt me, so I give him all the love he needs.

“Hubby does the same. He trusts me to not betray him as I hold his heart. Male or female, we hurt the same way. Our emotions are no different. Men hide them behind a front, while women wear them on their sleeves. But I will tell you, if you think he is worth it, go for it. Take a chance, honey, and something beautiful might happen. Alice, your heart may get broken, but there is also the possibility of a wonderful life waiting for you with him,” Natasha said kindly.

“You know, I’ve never had a female friend. Bunny was the closest I had. Now she’s all wrapped up in Pyro. Would you be mine?” I asked shyly.

Natasha’s face saddened before lighting up with joy.

“I would love to be. Even if I think you’re hiding shit. In time, Alice, everything comes out in the wash. How about we build this friendship when I am on break? I’ll bring your meals, and we can gossip like old ladies!”

“That would be amazing. Natasha, I’m bored here,” I replied happily.

“Then, honey, we gotta get excitement into your life. Do you have this biker’s number?”

“Yes?”

“Take the bull by the horns and message him!” Natasha suggested, rising to her feet.

“What?” I squealed.

Natasha grinned as she collected the dirty plates.

“Send him a text, ask him how he is, offer dinner. Honey, text him!” Natasha announced and left the apartment.

I picked up my mobile, intending to do just that, when I paused. Diesel may think I’m being too forward. Worse, Diesel might think I’m a hussy. My fingers hesitated over the keypad, and I put the phone down. Then I snatched it up and sent the message.

Diesel

Diesel was swinging off his bike and grumbling under his breath. Sleeping on Magic’s fucking pull-out was killing his back and making him grumpy. Fuck, he wasn’t that old, but boy did Diesel know about that damn mattress. His phone pinged and, muttering, Diesel yanked it from his pocket. His heart skipped a beat when he saw Alice’s name, and his jaw dropped open in surprise when he read the message.

Magic had smothered Alice this last week, so Diesel hadn’t had any chance to make a move, and here she was, offering him dinner tomorrow night. Diesel frowned and re-read the text several times. Yup, Alice was asking him over for food. Diesel fist-pumped the air without meaning to and let out a soft whoop. He caught Chance’s attention in one of the bays

and saw his brother's long strides eat the distance between them.

"What?" Chance asked, eyeing him curiously.

"Nothing," Diesel immediately demurred.

Chance sent him a curious glance and snatched his phone before Diesel could stop him.

"Yeah, nothing!" Chance smirked as he read the message. "What ya gonna take?"

Diesel's head snapped around, and he stared at Chance.

"What?"

"Brother, you don't turn up at someone like Alice's home without a gift," Chance chided. Diesel frowned.

"What's going on?" Bear demanded, approaching as Diesel still tried to grab his phone back. Bear snatched it from Chance and read the message.

Diesel folded his arms and sent his pres and VP a threatening glance. Not that either of them cared.

"Don't go visiting Alice empty-handed. Not if you are claiming her brother," Bear said.

"Ain't chocolates and flowers a bit by the by?" Diesel complained.

"Yup, so I'm going to do you a solid." Bear grinned.

Diesel automatically eyed Bear in suspicion.

"Give me fifty bucks, and I'll send Thalia out; she'll know what to get," Bear replied.

"Fifty bucks on a first date? Won't Alice think that's overboard?" Diesel asked.

"Not with the shit Thalia will buy!" Bear whined, and Diesel decided he didn't want to know. Diesel yanked his wallet from his pocket and gave Bear some cash. Bear waggled his fingers, and Diesel stared at them.

"My tip for helping you out!" Bear teased.

Diesel let out a growl and launched at Bear, taking him down.

Chance grabbed Diesel's flying phone out of the air and stepped back. He tapped in a response to Alice, mumbling, "Looking forward to it," as he typed, and turned the phone off to observe.

"Watch the elbow! Right there! Diesel, whack him now!" Chance bellowed as he grinned. He shrugged as brothers and mechanics came out of their bays and the clubhouse. Chance began laughing as he watched money change hands.

"Diesel, you fuck, don't bruise him too hard! I need a fuck tonight!" Thalia yelled from where she stood with Clio. Rain, their brother, stared in horror, and Chance grinned again. Rain looked positively disgusted at the thought of Thalia having sex. Chance craned his head for the fourth quint, Polly, but she was missing. Must be at the gym with Tiny.

Diesel roared as Bear got a lucky kidney strike in and dragged Bear up to headbutt him. Thalia shrieked, and Diesel heard Chance laugh.



Diesel gazed at the pretty bag in his hand and wondered about his man card. Fuck was he walking through the bar carrying that. He'd already seen the Riders of Vengeance bikes in the car park. Magic remained on a tear about having one MC at a time because of Covid. No point pushing Magic's buttons further. His hair was hanging floppily over his forehead, hiding the bruise from head-butting Bear. Screw him; the asshole had a head made of concrete.

Chuckling, Diesel walked around the back of the bar where he could enter through the kitchen and avoid everyone else. He wasn't ashamed of going on a date with Alice but wanted to protect her. Diesel banged on the door, and Brett opened it, looking surprised.

"Something wrong with the front?" Brett asked, stepping back.

“No. Just to dodge those fuckers out there and Magic yelling face mask. I’m fuckin’ sure that’s his new mantra.”

“You’re telling me. I am sick of hearing it.” Brett hesitated and took the initiative. “Alice has put some real effort into tonight, Diesel. If you are looking for casual, walk, and I’ll inform Alice something came up.”

“Claimin’ her,” Diesel grunted, and Brett nodded, relief relaxing his shoulders.

Diesel nodded. Took a brave man to confront a Hellfire member. Diesel wouldn’t forget Brett’s loyalty towards Alice.

He took the stairs two at a time and hoped the gift Thalia bought was appreciated. For some strange reason, Diesel felt a pinch of nervousness. He knocked at the door and waited.

Alice

Oh God, he was here. I quickly checked the apartment and opened the door. Diesel stood there, looking as sexy as ever. But he’d made an effort. He wore dark blue jeans, a red long-sleeved Henley, and his shitkickers. His hair had been shaved freshly at the sides, leaving it longer on top. Diesel’s beard had been trimmed, and his brown eyes were smiling at me. Then heat hit them as he saw what I was wearing, tinging his cheeks pink.

After inviting Diesel for dinner, I’d panicked and texted Natasha. I only had a few pairs of jeans and tees at the apartment, as nobody had collected my stuff yet. Magic had reported that my house was being watched, and they didn’t want to send anyone in from an MC in case they tracked back to here. The less the church had, the better. Natasha had taken my sizes and told me not to fret. When Natasha arrived today, she’d bought a lovely white knee-length dress. It had lace at the bottom and around the low-cut vee. It was most definitely my style.

At first, I thought it was the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen until I spotted the neckline and froze. My scar would be on display. Natasha hadn’t known about it, and when I’d explained, she made me try it on. All I could view was the scar

and nothing else. Natasha totally ignored it and forced me to see myself in the mirror, and I looked pretty good. There had been some strappy sandals to wear, and Natasha suggested leaving my blonde hair down in a silky sheet. Not one for makeup, and I wouldn't know how to apply it, I went for a fresh-faced look.

“Angel,” Diesel murmured, his eyes holding mine captive.

I twitched nervously, and a beautiful smile crossed those gorgeous lips.

“I'm sorry! Come in!” I exclaimed, realising we were standing staring at each other.

Diesel followed, and as I turned, he trapped me against the wall in his arms and bent his head.

“I'm having dessert now,” Diesel announced and kissed me thoroughly. By the time he'd finished, I was pressed against his body of my own accord, and my hands were round his neck.

“Like that look on you, Alice,” Diesel muttered.

A ping came from the kitchen, and I gasped and slid out of his embrace as I hurried to the oven and turned it down. When I left, I saw Diesel standing in the living room, staring at the table.

“Is it too much?” I asked, worried.

“You did this for me?” Diesel replied with a strange tone in his voice.

I'd set up a table for two, with a snowy white tablecloth, wine glasses, the best silver the apartment boasted, and scattered rose petals. Candles stood with flames flickering, and I'd put out a jug of water, a bottle of wine, and a beer. A breadbasket was in the middle.

“Too much,” I confirmed dejectedly.

Diesel swept around and yanked me into his arms. His kiss once again left me putty in his hands, and his eyes smiled warmly.

“Nobody has bothered before, Alice. This takes my breath away that you thought I was worthy of such consideration,” Diesel muttered.

Diesel’s words gave me a glow, while his kiss left me in a daze.

“Wanted it to be perfect,” I whispered.

“Sweetheart, nothing is ever perfect and certainly not me, but this is as close to heaven as I imagined,” Diesel replied. “Shit, here, this is for you!” he announced and handed me the bag. It was too large for wine and chocolates, something Natasha assured me was the norm for a date. I opened it and was hit with a range of scents, all yummy and gorgeous.

“Chocolates and flowers seemed cliché,” Diesel added uncomfortably.

The bag was filled with tealight candles, oils, incense sticks, and cones. I spotted a small burner and incense holder at the bottom.

“Oh, I love this!” I exclaimed as I spied wax melts.

“You do?” Diesel asked as I smiled.

“Yes, this is wonderful! Thank you!”

“Glad you like it. I wanted something you’d enjoy,” Diesel replied. He sniffed the air and rubbed his stomach. “What have you cooked, babe? It smells fuckin’ amazing.”

“Prawn cocktail alongside chicken strips, breaded mushrooms and toasted bread. I didn’t know what you liked, so I made two starters. Then, for mains, mashed potatoes, chicken in a red wine sauce and side vegetables. And for dessert, strawberry pavlova and a chocolate fudge cake. Again, I wasn’t sure what you’d like. If you don’t like the mains, I also prepared a roast chicken and can mix up a gravy.”

Diesel’s eyes grew wider as I spoke, and I wondered if he hated all of it.

“You didn’t know what I liked, so you cooked two meals so I could choose?” Diesel sounded strangled.

“Yup,” I said, toeing the carpet and thinking I’d done wrong.

“Fuck me. Nobody has ever bothered about what I eat. Or ever bothered to cook two dinners to make sure I had one I would enjoy,” Diesel muttered. The warmth in his eyes was unnerving me, and I smiled tentatively.

“That’s a good thing, yes?”

“Alice, that’s amazing, babe.”

I blushed and urged Diesel to sit. Hurrying out to the kitchen, I placed the starters on a tray and carried them carefully. I didn’t want to trip or drop them. Diesel was pouring us both two glasses of wine.

“Thought you might like beer, but I wasn’t sure,” I said.

“I’ll have it after dinner when we’re relaxing,” Diesel replied as he helped me unload the plates. He gazed in surprise at the quantities of food in front of us. The bread basket was full of homemade white and wholemeal rolls. The prawn cocktails were generous, and the chicken strips were long and thickly cut.

“You cooked this all yourself?” Diesel urged, taking the tray and pulling my chair out for me.

I sat, and Diesel shunted me in before taking his own seat.

After spending the first seventeen years of my life on a basic and rationed diet, I liked to indulge occasionally now. “Yeah, I like to cook, now that I’ve learnt,” I said, and a shadow crossed Diesel’s face.

“You didn’t know how?” he asked, scooping up a bite of prawn cocktail. His eyes widened as the flavours hit his tongue. “Wow! Cook this anytime, babe.”

Happy Diesel enjoyed the food, I lifted my fork and dug in. I was starving, having not eaten all day. “No, we were taught basics at the church. Nothing like this. It might have given us ideas.” I laughed.

Diesel didn’t.

“Hate you went through that shit. But I am so fuckin’ proud of you for standing up to them and holding your own. Can’t imagine Magic’s without you. You’ve been here years.”

“Easily overlooked part.” I chuckled.

Diesel pointed his fork at me. “Nope, we all knew you were there, but you obviously weren’t open to offers. I’m the lucky one who got in first as soon as you become available.”

“Don’t be silly,” I said, tearing a bread roll and buttering it before dipping it into the cocktail sauce.

“Think Inglorious wouldn’t make a move? Or Bat, Tiger, Onyx? Or my brothers? Honey, we all watched, waiting for a sign you were ready to date. None of us was going to push because Magic would have torn us apart with his bare hands. But there were eyes on you!”

I think Diesel saw I didn’t know what to make of that because he changed the subject quickly and asked me about my copywriting and editing. The conversation remained pleasant as we continued eating.

I cleared the plates a little while later, and Diesel voted on the mash potatoes and chicken in red wine sauce. For dessert, we had both.

“I feel bad, but not too bad,” Diesel said as he helped me clean up.

“Oh?” I sought.

“Well, I know you have starters left over, roast chicken, and put those two desserts together, and you’ve got a full one. Guess I’m going to have to come for dinner tomorrow!” he teased.

“Are you now?”

“Yup, can’t expect you to eat all that alone, Alice. Would you like to watch a film or go for a ride?” he asked, changing the subject.

My head lifted at Diesel’s words.

“Magic says I can’t, as it’s not safe.”

“Back of my bike. I brought Bunny’s jacket and helmet for you to wear. If you put them on now, no one will recognise you.”

The offer was too tempting. I’d been locked up for an entire week and not been outside once. Surely Magic would be fine if I wore a helmet to disguise myself?

“I’ve sent Magic a text,” Diesel mentioned, reading my mind.

“Okay, let’s ride,” I replied excitedly. It was only when I said those words I realised what they meant. “Oh.”

“Alice?”

“Hellfire only put a woman on their bike that they are serious about,” I muttered.

Diesel waited patiently.

“Alice, I am serious. This is me dating you, and Hellfire doesn’t date. We claim. But I think if I claimed you, I’d end up out back with the rest of the bodies.”

I laughed. It was a standing joke that Magic buried the remains of those who angered him. What would they say if they realised it was the truth? Because it was. Magic buried people deep in the woods behind the bar. The man who attacked me was there alongside another who’d got handsy, and Magic had killed.

I suppose Magic’s murderous intent in protecting the women in his life should bother me. It did not. Magic saved and then boosted me to heights I wouldn’t have achieved on my own. I owed Magic everything. So no, I didn’t care he’d murdered bad people and buried them. Magic had done the world a favour. If the cops ever brought cadaver dogs, there would be a field day. Magic certainly had hit double digits. But he was still the man who acted like my father, and I loved him. If the law didn’t deal with evil fuckers, then others would. That’s how I saw it. The legal system failed, and people picked up the slack.

I followed Diesel down the stairs and through the kitchen. Brett glanced up from where he was cooking fries and offered

a nod. Diesel kept me slightly behind him as he scanned the area for any intruders and told me to wait while he got his motorbike. I saw Diesel wave at someone, and then pipes roared, and Diesel came around the corner. His bike had a cream tank with a black wave on it. Plain and simple. It was all glistening chrome and was like nectar to me.

Unsure how to climb on, I let Diesel show me where to put my feet, and then I sat behind his muscular body. His hands reached behind me, and he pulled me in even closer, pulling my pelvis to his ass and wrapping my arms tightly around his waist. Diesel checked my helmet was secure and then, with a roar, shot out of the car park. A startled scream left my lips, and Diesel patted my clenched hands in reassurance as we hit the road and headed out.

It was slightly tricky to lean when Diesel did, but I soon got the hang of it. I'd not even been out on Magic's bike, as he kept telling me he wouldn't rob me of that first experience. Now I knew what Magic meant. The engine's throb between my legs and the vibrations of the road were doing all sorts of things to me. Pressed up tightly against Diesel was doing more!

We rode for a couple of hours. I had no idea where we were going, but I enjoyed the feeling of freedom until Diesel finally pulled up. I removed my helmet as I gazed around. We were at the top of a hill, and as Diesel helped me off his bike, I stared around in awe. The night twinkled with bright shining stars in a dark midnight sky of satin. On the horizon, I could see lights twinkling from what I assumed was Rapid City, but it was so far away now.

"Sit with me," Diesel spoke and took my hand. He laid his jacket on the grass and sat down, pulling me between his legs. He immediately wrapped his arms around me and pulled me against his chest.

"When I'm troubled at night, I come here. It helps me think and work problems through," Diesel murmured.

"I can see why. It's stunning and so peaceful," I replied softly. Somehow, loud voices here seemed wrong.

“I discovered this by accident ten years ago but come back whenever I need perspective. And this place certainly gives you it. Look at that sky. As big as our problems are, they become insignificant when you gaze upon that. No matter how big or important we think we are, we’re merely a speck of dust, which means nothing to the universe. It puts an ego to shame,” Diesel continued.

His words were almost poetic. I understood him. Right now, the church, Fifth Minister, and his zealot follower were nothing. They were mere nuisances in the meaning of life and were reduced to being petty and small. They’d never look at this sky and be filled with wonder because they were incapable of understanding its magnificence. Around me was the world as she was meant to be. Mother Gaia is at her very best and most beautiful. And it was a privilege to share this one moment with Diesel.

I burrowed into Diesel’s chest and placed my hand on his heart as we sat quietly and let Gaia surround us with her love, safety, and peace.

CHAPTER FIVE.

Diesel.

Magic was going to murder him. Keeping Alice out all night had not been part of the plan, and Diesel could only imagine Magic's murderous thoughts. Fuck! She'd fallen asleep in his arms, and Diesel hadn't wanted to disturb her. In fact, Alice felt right at home in his embrace, and somehow he'd managed to lay them down, and he'd dozed with her. But Alice was more or less Magic's daughter, claiming or not Magic would kill him.

"Alice, honey, we fell asleep," Diesel said, giving her a shake. He loathed to wake her, especially as Alice was draped all over his body. Alice murmured something in her sleep, making Diesel chuckle. She didn't want to wake up. Hell, he'd be happy to lie here all day, but Magic would be digging a hole already. No need to compound it. It was dark, but the sunrise wasn't far away.

Alice yawned and burrowed into his chest. Diesel smiled; he loved the feel of her body against his. Until she curled up and her knee jabbed him right in the balls.

"Fuck!" Diesel wheezed, and Alice sat up, looking startled, and elbowed him in the gut.

"What?" Alice exclaimed.

"Baby girl, stop moving!" Diesel whined as he tried to catch his breath and slipped a hand between them to cup his nuts. Alice's eyes widened as she realised she was on top of Diesel, and he nearly wailed when she moved and caught his balls.

Diesel rolled into a ball, cupping his abused manhood, and tears leaked from his eyes.

"What happened?" Alice cried, alarmed, and Diesel reached out and patted her knee before holding himself again. It took several minutes for him to control his breathing, and Alice looked like she might cry when he did.

“It’s okay, baby; you were on top of me and moved your knee. You caught me by accident,” Diesel said, wiping tears.

Alice sat staring at him, horrified, but Diesel could not take his eyes off her. Her hair was still in a straight sheet, and she was gorgeous in the rising sun. He couldn’t take his gaze off the vision before him, and not even bruised balls could make him.

“So God damned fuckin’ beautiful,” Diesel murmured, reaching out to touch Alice’s cheek gently. She turned into his hand, and something melted in his heart. This was it for him. How she’d managed to hide from him for seven years, Diesel didn’t know. But this woman owned him. He moved and yelped as pain shot through his groin. Alice looked guilty. Her mouth worked as she tried to find an apology but came up with nothing.

“Sweet girl, if that was an accident, I’d hate to feel your knee if I pissed you off,” Diesel muttered with a sheepish giggle. With a groan, he sat up. He had moments before the big surprise and wanted Alice to see this. Diesel hadn’t planned to keep her out this late, but now they were here, he’d show her another reason this spot was so special.

“Help me up, baby,” Diesel moaned, rolling on his knees. He needed a damn ice pack, and riding an hour back to Magic’s wasn’t something he looked forward to. Alice helped him, and he limped to the bike and stood next to it. He suddenly realised he was topless and remembered taking his Henley off to use as a pillow. Diesel only arrived at that memory when Alice couldn’t take her gaze off his chest.

Fuck, sore balls and dick or not, Diesel puffed out as Alice’s eyes widened. He was broad and muscled.

“Your pecs are bigger than my boobs!” Alice muttered, and Diesel began laughing as she stared, mortified at her words.

“Come here, sweet girl; I want you to see this,” Diesel said, beckoning her forward. He perched Alice on his bike, sitting sideways and leaned against her and the Harley to stop it from falling. In her white dress and blonde hair, she looked like an angel.

“Watch,” Diesel urged.

Alice turned her face to the horizon just as the sun broke. Her gasp told Diesel everything he needed to know. An awed expression stayed there as the sun rose and lit the land below them. The sky was filled with orange, red, and yellow rays, and darker clouds were hovering. Alice examined the sky, spellbound, while Diesel watched her. The rays began creeping along the ground, highlighting the green and brown fields.

“When you watch something that miraculous, how does anyone doubt God exists?” Alice murmured.

“Good question, baby,” Diesel said, moving a strand of her hair away from her face. The vision below her completely enraptured Alice. As often as Diesel had seen it, he’d never once failed to be awed. But this morning, his concentration was on the angel sitting on his bike. He knew she was the one for him, and this proved it. She liked the simple life like he did. Alice wasn’t high maintenance; experiences like this would always mean more than a pair of shoes. Fuck, if he wasn’t already head over heels, this would have tipped him over the edge.

Diesel reached out and cupped her face, turning her head to him. Tears shone in her eyes at what she’d watched. Slowly, he bent and kissed her lips gently. Alice’s fingers fluttered against his chest, but Diesel did not deepen it. This moment was perfect, and he didn’t need to rack up the passion between them. This morning was about something pure and innocent and the wonderment of the magic of the world.

He didn’t care if that made him sound girly. Scenes like this always took his breath away, and now he had someone to share them with. He ended the kiss and pulled her head against his chest as the sun broke into the sky. New beams of colour swamped the land and fell upon them. Alice tipped her face to feel the rays and smiled serenely.

“We need to go. Magic’s gonna kill me,” Diesel murmured.

“One more moment,” Alice replied.

Diesel allowed her to soak up the scene before moving to grab his Henley and cut. He limped to the Harley, silently cursing the ride home as Alice slipped back into Bunny's riding jacket and helmet.

Diesel cursed as he climbed on his bike and adjusted himself as best as possible. Despite the pain in his balls, it had been worth it. The look on Alice's face would stay with him until he died.

Alice

The time I'd spent with Diesel had taken my breath away and showed me a different side of him than the one I knew. The rough and burly biker faded into a sensitive and caring man. Someone who wanted to share something special with me. My thoughts were tumbling around as we sped back to Magic's. I'd loved last night, and this morning had been magical. The roads were empty as it was early, and I was still revelling in this morning's display when we pulled up at the bar. I hopped off, and Diesel swung off behind me.

"Fuck dude, you in serious shit," a voice said, and I jumped.

Appearing out of the shadows was Shane. He was the cousin of one of the Rage women, Ali-kat, I thought, and he didn't look happy.

"It was innocent," Diesel revealed, not looking too bothered.

"Magic ain't buying it. We all know he thinks Alice is his daughter," Shane replied.

The bar door opened, and as I turned, a hulk flew past me and landed a right hook that rocked Diesel backwards. A second followed before Diesel could even get his guard up.

"Stop!" I screamed as arms latched around me and dragged me away. My fear-filled scream forced Magic to pause as I struggled against whoever held me.

"Let her go!" Diesel bellowed as I began fighting back. I was released, shot across the short distance, and threw myself in Diesel's arms. Without warning, I climbed his body and huddled into his neck. My legs wrapped around his waist as I sensed Diesel sending a death stare at someone.

“What the hell?” Magic boomed.

“Let’s get her out of sight. We’re too open here,” Diesel ordered, and I felt Magic’s dark glare.

“You’re a dead man walking!” Magic threatened Diesel.

“Fuck sake, check facts before throwing punches. I took Alice to my place in the mountains, and we fell asleep. I woke up before dawn and let her watch the sunrise. All that goodness I gave her, you just took away. And really, Buster? You grabbed her from behind!” Diesel snapped.

I didn’t lift my head, but I recognised Buster was from the Devil’s Scythe. He was a big guy named Gutbuster because of the amount of food he could eat. But he was all muscle and leanness. More fondly called Buster by everyone, the man rarely spoke but was known as a gentle giant.

“Didn’t mean to scare Alice. Saw her moving to get between you two, and if one of you had hit her, the other would have spilled blood!” Buster said in his deep voice.

I clung to Diesel as my heart raced. Usually, I wouldn’t have panicked and would have got out of Buster’s arms. But I was worried about Magic and Diesel fighting. Magic stomped behind us as we entered the bar, and I sensed eyes watching us. I didn’t lift my head as I kept my death grip on Diesel.

“Why are you limping?” Chance demanded.

“Alice fuckin’ caught me by accident this morning, twice,” Diesel said, and a snicker broke out. Diesel’s hand rubbed my back, soothing me.

“By accident?” Drake asked as I recognised Bear’s chuckle.

“We fell asleep watching the stars, and Alice used me as a mattress and then kneed me as she woke up. Worse, I got an elbow to the balls. Laugh it up fuckers!” His last words were met by more laughter, including Magic’s, and I finally felt brave enough to lift my head.

Magic’s eyes were the first I met; they were annoyed but also worried. He sent me a reassuring look.

“We honestly fell to sleep,” I whispered, and Magic stepped close to Diesel. His hand reached out and rubbed me.

“I believe you, baby girl, but this asshole needs an ass-kicking. My fuckin’ heart stopped when Brett told me you were out on his bike. Your text said spending time together!”

“I didn’t mean to scare you,” I murmured.

“Next time, give me a heads-up. Some courtesy,” Magic said, aiming the last words at Diesel.

Diesel nodded, and I began to relax and slipped down his body.

Magic pulled me in close and dropped a kiss on my head.

“Go and shower, baby girl. You stay put!” Magic warned Diesel.

I sent Diesel a guilty look and scurried away, avoiding everyone’s eyes.

Diesel

I waited until I knew Alice was safely upstairs, and I rounded on Magic and let my right fist fly. Magic reeled back but didn’t move a pace.

“She had a wonderful night stargazing, and she was in heaven. This morning I saw wonderment on her face. Sheer unadulterated joy, and you took that from her. That gift I gave her will always be scarred by you lashing out. Alice was with me. Magic, you really believed I’d harm Alice? She’s no skank or barfly. I’ll court and treat her with respect. Ain’t looking for a roll in the hay, and you just disrespected Alice and me!” I yelled.

Bear and Chance appeared at my sides. Whether to defend or back me up, I didn’t know.

“You motherfucker, my girl was gone, and those cult members are sniffing around. What if one was watching and snapped a picture of you riding away?” Magic roared.

“Why do you think I put a helmet and Hellfire jacket on her? Give me some fuckin’ credit. You stand to lose your baby girl,

well Magic, so do I!”

Magic studied me and finally deflated.

“Took her to your special place?” he asked.

“Yeah, and we fell asleep. Perfectly innocent!”

“Fuck, I was so riled. Couldn’t think past the danger you put her in. We’ve got the bar surrounded, and you swanned off. Did you give that a thought?” Magic fired.

“Alice was safe,” Diesel fired back.

“Until she wasn’t. Chatter and Pyro caught a man lurking last night. He’s now under Hellfire’s kind hospitality,” Chance mentioned, and Diesel paled.

“Someone was here? Is he one of them?” Diesel sought.

“Had their Badge,” Magic rumbled.

Fuck, Diesel had messed up.

“Who’s here?” Diesel asked, loathe to leave Alice.

“Four in the bar and six outside. She’s protected,” Chance answered.

“I’ll be back. Make sure she knows she’s safe and loved. Tell her I’ve gone to change clothing,” Diesel said, glancing at Chance and Bear.

They nodded, and he followed them out of the bar.



“Now I am asking once,” Diesel shouted at the fucker strung up. It was the second asshole who’d been present the day the church came looking for Alice.

“Ain’t telling you shit. God is with me,” the idiot yelled.

“Good, the hard way, and I am feeling pretty fuckin’ dark,” Diesel growled. He landed a punch in the asshole’s kidneys and quietly worked his anger out on the screaming fucker who thought to threaten Alice.

After the fifth blow, the guy began yelling for mercy and enough, but Diesel wasn’t ready to let him off yet. A few more

punches landed hard, and Diesel stepped back.

“I’ll tell you everything!” the man screamed.

“Name,” Chance demanded quietly.

“Euan Ender.”

“Now, Euan, tell me and leave nothing out,” Diesel threatened.

“Alexis is at the bar. Fifth Minister is sure of it, and he wants her bad. If he can grab her, he can move up a position. First and Second have hard-ons for her. They thought the bitch was dead until we saw her on TV. They’re offering a promotion to anyone who finds her, which means I’ll become a Minister and Fifth moves up in ranks.”

“What do they want with her?” Chance asked.

“To marry her off. Something about money. Once she is married to First, he can legally claim her shit. And she’s being wed to Second because he breaks women. He’ll break Alexis. She’ll regret being alive by the time he’s done. The husbands refuse to share their wives with him because of what he does. He wants Alexis badly,” Euan screeched.

“You’re kidnapping an innocent girl to be raped by an old fucker and a motherfuckin’ woman beater?” Bear demanded.

“We’d all get a go once they’d broken her in front of the congregation,” Euan admitted. Diesel let loose a blow that had Euan spitting two teeth on the ground. Rape his princess, his angel? Beat her until she was broken?

Never.

“What else? Where is the church?” Chance asked.

“Can’t tell you.”

“You’ll fuckin’ talk. Do they know for sure Alexis is at the bar?” Bear inquired mildly.

“Ain’t telling you anything more!” Euan yelled.

Diesel strode forward and continued his beating. But Euan was more scared of the church than Hellfire. Ten minutes later,

Diesel stepped back and eyed the man.

“Get my tools and Pyro. What you don’t realise is I know what he is. He’s my brother, and I noticed way before every other fucker. So get me Pyro,” Diesel snapped.

Bear and Chance swapped glances. They thought they were the only ones, apart from Bunny, who knew. Diesel snorted and let loose a roundhouse punch.

Euan groaned.

“I’ll get him,” Bear said and left.

Diesel glanced up as the door opened, and Sunny entered. He was unsure of his lieutenant, as were most of the inner circle. Having been believed dead, Sunny reappeared in Bunny’s dramatic rescue a couple of months ago. His story made sense on paper, but each of the Inner Circle was watching him closely. It was made worse because he’d yet to bring Olivia around, his daughter.

“What can I do for ya?” Diesel demanded.

Sunny looked at the man they were torturing before turning to Diesel.

“He spilled anything useful?” Sunny asked.

Chance and Diesel exchanged glances.

“Not about the cult,” Chance replied.

Sunny nodded, reached into his pocket, and drew something out. Diesel’s eyes widened as he saw the knuckle dusters in Sunny’s hand.

“Stand back, Diesel,” Sunny ordered and, without another word, smashed them into Euan. “You and I have a problem, asshole. See, I despise men who abuse women and children. And I hate kiddie fuckers even more.” Sunny slammed his fist into Euan’s ribs.

Everyone heard the crack.

“Stop!” Euan wheezed.

Sunny ignored him and punched again, shattering a rib. “I got me a daughter, beautiful as fuck, and some child fucker like you had his eyes on her. I killed him before they took me out. And the bad news, bud, is they didn’t kill me. So, I got a lot of hate for assholes. Worse, I signed up; you don’t wanna know what I did in the army.”

Sunny reached behind him and pulled a bowie knife. Diesel sat back and watched. Sunny slipped it across Euan’s fatty thigh and then made a matching one on his other leg.

“I can slice and dice you in lots of ways. I’ll make you scream for your fucking mommy. Now, let’s tell these nice gentlemen what they want to know.” Sunny grinned, and it was evil. Half an hour after spending time with Sunny and then Pyro, Euan gave them everything they wanted.

“Call church,” Chance said, looking at the sorry mess Euan had made. “Someone put him out of his misery and get rid of the carcass.”

Euan squeaked, the only noise he could make, before Sunny slit his throat. Sunny watched him bleed out and turned back to the others. “I’ll have the prospects put his body in the incinerator and clean this place up.”

“Let’s roll,” Chance ordered.



Diesel observed as Chance looked around church, everyone was present, but the information he was about to share would set some of them off. Chance kept a close eye on Pyro, who he knew was the alter ego and serial killer Justice. Justice often tracked those who’d escaped justice and dished it out for their victims. Diesel carefully checked Pyro’s eyes and saw Pyro was in control.

“Let’s get shit started,” Chance said.

“What we got?” Tiny asked.

“A fuckin’ mess. Magic needs to hear this,” Chance replied. “Anyone have a problem with me dialling him in?”

Diesel dialled Magic when Chance received headshakes.

“You’re on speaker, Diesel; explain what we just learned,” Chance ordered.

“The cult is still active. It’s now based near the Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina. The one here was a smaller version of their main camp. There are over five hundred bodies there. Two hundred and fifty men roughly and one hundred and fifty women and a hundred kids. It’s been established there for fifty years. This fuckin’ First Minister started it and rules the roost.

“The Second Minister is his nephew and a brute. They are still working the same practices, kidnapping women from the street and forcing them to be whores. Marrying women to multiple guys and ordering kids into sexual marriages as soon as girls begin their menstruation.”

“Fuck!” Magic roared. “This shit doesn’t stop.”

“The good news is there are no other cult camps. The bad news is these fuckers are gun happy. Anyone going in is shot on sight. And they are playing cleverly. They send men out to kidnap girls from other states. If the women are a little used when they arrive, who cares? They have a cunt and ass, and that’s all that’s required,” Chance sneered in disgust.

“Christ,” Shee whispered.

“Once the ladies are worked, they are killed; their bodies are removed in two ways. Seems the Second Minister has pythons, and they’re given to them, or they’re thrown into a hyena pit. Apparently, the ten pythons, once fed a full human, don’t need feeding again for five to six months. So ten weren’t enough. And worse, sometimes they are fed to them alive,” Chance said, closing his eyes.

Diesel felt bile rise in his throat. He’s swallowed it while listening to Euan confess, but hearing this in their sanctuary was vile and invading. Silence met Chance’s words as Diesel watched his brothers absorb this.

“They feed them alive to those animals?” Big Al asked in disbelief.

“Yeah, brother,” Chance answered suddenly, looking his age plus ten years.

“They sedate the women and children of the compound when they do and view it like a gladiator fight,” Chance said.

“Jesus fuck,” Chatter murmured.

Magic was quiet on the phone.

“They haven’t stopped and have got worse. They hide in houses built amongst the trees deep in the forest, where most don’t go. Any trespassers are taken, their women raped, and the men fed to the hyenas. Then when they’re finished with the woman, she joins them. Euan, a Disciple high up, almost a Minister, offered up a room where there were hundreds of identification cards and, lacking them, pictures and names of the victims. He wasn’t exaggerating, either. There are hundreds. The cult is serial killer land,” Diesel said.

“The bastards are armed to the teeth. They have buried landmines, traps, old fashioned pike pits. Their armoury rivals an army base. The weaponry mentioned included AK-47s, surface-to-air missiles, hand grenades, and rocket launchers. You name it, they have it. Anyone coming at them is going to bleed. You’d need the army to take them down, and it would lead to heavy casualties. The entire compound is built around defence. This isn’t some whack-job cult-like Branch Davidians. These fuckers are ready for anything.

“They’ve no plans for a mass suicide; they are ready for war. And should they be breached, the women and kids are locked in a bunker, and the men guarding them are Disciples. They will open fire. It is a blood bath waiting to happen,” Diesel elaborated.

“And these pricks want my baby girl?” Magic demanded.

“Yeah, and sorry, Magic. Alice is in for a hard time,” Chance said and nodded at Diesel.

“Alice’s father isn’t her real dad. The fucker we had played innocent, but Sunny and Pyro got the truth from him. Alexis is called Alexis Adams; her grandfather is Willoughby Adams,” Diesel explained and paused.

“We’re talking the one and only Willoughby Adams? The fifth richest guy in the world?” Magic whispered.

“Yeah. Willoughby had two sons, Edward and Charles. Edward married Hillary Mayflower and basically was a good guy. Charles went through women, drugs, and booze and ended up cut off. Edward and his wife had a baby girl, Alexis Willow Adams. They were home one night when Alexis was four, and their house was broken into. Hillary was raped, sodomised, and mutilated before dying of her wounds. Edward was beaten black and blue and tortured. Alexis was gone when the police arrived. Willoughby put out a huge reward, but nobody’s ever seen a hair of her,” Diesel said.

“Until eleven years ago, when I placed her on the back of my bike!” Magic exclaimed.

“Yup. If they legally married Alexis to the First Minister, he could claim the old man’s billions and then off her. And he would inherit everything. And her ‘father’ is really her uncle, and he organised the hit on Edward and Hillary, bitter he’d lost everything,” Diesel said, holding his temper in check.

Alice had suffered enough and was about to experience further pain and grief. This was horrific by anyone’s standards, and Diesel knew Alice had a gentle soul.

“Do we contact Willoughby?” Magic finally asked.

“Not yet. The man is in his early sixties but fit as a fiddle. He can last a few further months not knowing where Alexis is. But it gets better. First Minister is none other than Willoughby’s own fuckin’ brother. Also thought dead. Randolph set the example for Charles,” Diesel said.

“What the fuck is with that family?” Tiny demanded.

“Magic. The reward for Alexis’s safe return was fifty million dollars,” Chance announced, and someone whistled through their teeth.

“If a hint of her existence gets out, we’re gonna be fighting people off left, right, and centre,” Magic hissed.

“Yeah, so I think this needs to stay between us for now. No allies, including Rage and Alice, can know yet. Tell her about

the cult, but not why they want her alive,” Diesel stated.

“Fuckin’ agree,” Magic stated softly.

“Alice is going to freak when she hears. Let alone her true lineage. We need DNA testing before we spring it on her. Don’t wanna get her hopes up that she has family remaining, only to be wrong,” Diesel mentioned.

“Agreed. It can be done quietly. What’s the next step?” Magic asked.

“Bring Willow and Grey in urgently. Any direct assault is going to result in bloodshed on both sides. Need to find a quiet way to take these assholes down, and this time we can’t allow the top twelve to escape. The allies must be up to speed because nobody expected a shitstorm of this magnitude. Outside groups, the Juno group, the Delta Force team Rage are fuckin’ about with, and Washingtons. James still has a solid security group. I think Master Hoshi also needs briefing with his teams,” Chance said.

“Hawthorne’s, too,” Diesel added.

“Yeah, Dylan won’t like missing out on this shit,” Chance rumbled.

“We’d need Leila and Nigel, at the very least, to hack their systems. Together, we might find a way to keep this on the lowdown and take them out quietly,” Celt stated.

“Agreed, and a federal judge. Feds would require warrants from someone who can keep their mouth shut,” Rooster said.

“We’ve got one on lockdown. We can access her anytime, Judge David. She just got promoted to Supreme Court Justice. We could contact her direct when we have to,” Chance replied.

“Fuck me, how does this exist?” Magic wondered.

“No idea, but we’re going to need firepower. This ain’t no pussy shit women trafficking ring. We’ll require everybody who can hold a gun. This is gonna go bad and fast. For now, Alice needs to stay off the radar. No leaving the apartment for anything. Escape routes secured. Alice is our priority,” Chance said, nodding at Diesel, who relaxed.

“Promise me, the first sign of trouble you get her out of there,” Diesel almost begged.

“Don’t ask me for fuckin’ stupid promises, asshole. I’d lay my life down for her. Would you do the same?” Magic challenged.

“You know it, brother,” Diesel replied.

“Gonna wait for you to get here before we tell her this shit. She’s gonna need both of us,” Magic murmured, and Diesel agreed.

Alice’s world was about to get blown apart, and they weren’t telling her the worst!

CHAPTER SIX.

Alice

“Is everything okay?” Natasha asked as we sat having lunch. Thoughtfully, I nodded as I chewed a bit of a sandwich.

“Yes, bored stupid, but Diesel has been spending a lot of time with me, which is nice,” I replied with a blush.

“Oh, ho! Diesel is it!” Natasha crowed, and I groaned and rolled my eyes.

“It’s new, but Diesel’s been treating me well. He snuck into my house two nights ago and grabbed my clothes and toiletries. According to Shee, who accompanied Diesel, it was like something off the TV. Diesel lowered cases from my bedroom window, and Shee caught them and ran them to their SUV.”

Natasha laughed in amusement.

“Yeah, I can see Banshee doing that. Shee has a mischievous side, but Diesel seems so stern,” Natasha replied.

“Diesel has a side he doesn’t show anyone. His best friend is Pyro, and they are close, and, by default, that makes Bunny his sister. And Diesel is as soft as fuck with Bunny. Diesel did take me for a bike ride, and it was amazing. I watched the stars in heaven, and everything else seemed to slide away, and then we saw the sunrise.”

“Wow, that’s very romantic,” Natasha said, looking surprised.

“And now I’m on lockdown. Diesel’s been up to all sorts of distractions. We’ve watched movies and played monopoly, and he cheats, by the way. He has even bought me this tiny model house we have to put together. He’s more impressed than I am with it. Although I adore the kit, so he’s ordered others in a different style. They fit on your bookcases and hide amongst the books. They are so cute!”

“Seems to me Diesel is doing his best to keep you occupied, so why the unhappy pout?” Natasha asked shrewdly.

“He won’t go beyond kissing me!” I hissed, and Natasha threw her head back and laughed.

“You’re complaining Diesel’s being a gentleman?”

“Yeah! I want to go further, and Diesel stops me every time. Shit’s frustrating. I might order a vibrator to scare the hell out of him!”

“That would maybe encourage him! Have you talked to Diesel about this?”

“Yes, he says he wishes to do right by me! No. I require a little dirty in my life!”

“Then tell him! Diesel strikes me as a man who wants to make his woman happy. And he’s been hanging around here a lot with you. Try opening that conversation with him, and say you want to experiment,” Natasha said, smiling.

“Honey, I’m going to tie Diesel to the bed,” I grumbled.

“Or that will work. Any news on your ex? Has he been seen?” Natasha asked.

For a moment, guilt hit. Honestly, I was lying to this lovely lady, but I couldn’t tell her the truth. Not when it could put us both in danger. I shook my head.

“No, but Diesel thinks he is hanging about. So, for now, I’ll be the princess locked in the tower,” I sighed.

“And you make a gorgeous damsel in distress,” Natasha agreed before smirking.

That was the story of my life!



I had a plan and was ready for when Diesel reached the bar. Diesel had texted to say he’d arrived but was planning to speak with those on guard before coming up. I sent an okay back and checked myself in my mirror. I was wearing an old jean mini skirt that was faded but looked good on me and a vee-necked tee. Surprisingly, my confidence had bloomed

concerning my scar and a world of outfit choices had opened up to me. My hair was loose as I'd discovered Diesel loved that too.

When Diesel knocked, I was ready. I opened the door, and Diesel glanced at me and then again. Heat flashed on his face as he took in my long legs and the curve of my breasts. While he was looking, I reached out, yanked Diesel inside, and caged him against the wall with my body. Diesel's hands landed on my hips as I wriggled close.

“Kiss me now!” I ordered. Diesel's eyes flared wide with surprise, but he dipped his head and kissed me chastely. Bleh, I glowered and pushed a hand between us and cupped his hardened cock.

“Kiss me!” I demanded, finding myself growing moist. Wow, I liked this.

“Alice, I...”

Enough was enough. I reached up and pulled his head down and instigated a kiss. Diesel hesitated and then responded, kissing me breathlessly. While Diesel was distracted, I undid his belt and jean buttons and slipped a hand down the front. To my glee, there was no barrier between us. Just hot, silky flesh. I touched the tip of Diesel's dick, and he jolted. Before Diesel could pull away, I had his cock in my grip and was rubbing it in slow movements, up and down. A hiss escaped Diesel's mouth because even as he stopped the kiss, he left his cock in my hands.

Taking the bull by the horns, I slid the jeans down his legs, corded with muscle, and stared at the sight in front of me. Diesel's balls were drawn up tightly, and his dick was long and thick, with a deep vein running through it. I bent forward and traced the vein with my tongue, and Diesel's cock twitched.

Obviously, the magic of the internet and what I'd seen at church meant I knew what men's anatomy looked like. But in person and feeling, it was a completely different experience. Diesel's cock was so hard I thought it would break, but it was silky soft over the hardness. A complete contradiction. I bent it slightly as I sunk to my knees and placed the tip in my mouth.

A strangled cry left Diesel's lips. That was good, then. Diesel enjoyed that. I sucked the top of his dick, and Diesel thrust forward against my mouth.

Gently cupping his nuts, I opened my lips further and took his length in. Diesel was too big to take fully, but I took him as deep as possible. I ran my tongue around his shaft as Diesel pulled out and pushed back in.

Diesel groaned as he slowly fucked my lips. His balls tightened even further as I massaged them lightly. The feel of his cock hitting the back of my throat felt strange, but I became used to it and wondered how to deep-throat someone. Maybe Diesel could teach me. I released his dick with a pop and gazed up at Diesel.

"Take me to bed," I demanded, and his eyes widened. Diesel's mouth opened to speak, and I cut him off, "No, my pussy is soaking wet. I feel sensations I've never experienced, and I want you to fuck me hard. If you don't, I'll get my vibrator out and fuck myself in front of you!"

Diesel's eyes almost crossed as he swooped down and yanked me into his arms. His body shifted as he kicked his boots and jeans off and marched into my bedroom. Gently, he placed me on the bed as he took off his cut and folded it neatly before ripping his Henley off and removed his socks. Diesel pulled me back up, claiming my mouth as he stripped me of my clothing. Before the kiss ended, I was naked and pressed against him.

"This means you're mine," Diesel growled, breaking the kiss. His hands were massaging my ass as he held me tightly. His cock was a stiff rod against my belly as his fingers roamed my butt and claimed me in a kiss again. Slowly his mouth broke the kiss and trailed featherlight touches down my throat. Diesel kept moving down, falling to his knees as his hands cupped my breasts and brought them one at a time to his lips.

Staying on his knees, Diesel moved to my stomach and kissed lazy circles around my hips as he continued downwards. A finger slid between my folds, and I froze at the intrusion. It wasn't unwelcome, but more unexpected. His

finger did nothing but rub back and forth, allowing me to get used to being touched there. Meanwhile, Diesel's mouth caressed my hip bones, and I discovered how sensitive I was there.

My legs gave way, and I collapsed. I was trying not to drown in the overwhelming sensations Diesel was arousing, but I couldn't control myself whatsoever. Diesel shunted between my legs and, grasping them, placed them over his shoulders as he drew my hips towards the edge of the bed. His tongue pried between my folds, and I nearly came off the bed. My hands slipped into his hair as his mouth fucked me. Whimpering cries escaped my lips. Diesel inserted one finger inside me and then a second. My pussy clamped down as he slid them back and forth, stretching me slowly.

"Diesel!" I shrieked as he pulled them out, leaving me empty.

He crawled up my body, and I felt his dick at my entrance.

"When you first cum, I want it on my cock, baby. You on protection?" Diesel gritted as his cock poked at me, almost as if it realised it was close to what it desired.

"The pill for periods," I gasped out.

"I'm clean," Diesel said and, grabbing his dick, started to feed himself into me. At first, I pushed back against his intrusion. He was so fucking big that I panicked. Diesel held himself rigidly still as my pussy fluttered and clenched around him, getting used to his size. When I nodded, Diesel took me in one sharp push, and his lips swallowed my cry as he broke through my virginity.

Diesel kept himself still until I stopped shoving against him and slid out gradually before pushing back in. A shiver ran through me at our connection, and our eyes met. Diesel sped up slowly, repeating his movements as my hips acted of their own accord and met the deep thrusts. My lips parted in sighs of pleasure as Diesel's face showed his tight control.

"Let go!" I cried, and Diesel's iron will broke.

He crushed me to him and pounded into me as he held me tightly in his arms. Holy fuck! My head threw back as I panted for air as our bodies slid against one another. A pressure built up in me, and my legs wrapped around his waist.

“Give it to me, baby,” Diesel demanded, thrusting deep and hard.

A scream left me as the pressure broke, and I rode the wave of pleasure. Diesel continued to plunge a few more times before he stiffened, and I felt wetness flood me. A few more lazy pumps and Diesel collapsed on his elbows, his head bowed and panting.

“That was sex? Fuck, I’ve been missing out!” I teased, and Diesel chuckled before sliding out of me.

“Let me get a washcloth, baby,” Diesel said. He strolled away, comfortable with his nakedness, while I lay sprawled on the bed. I couldn’t even raise a blush when Diesel reappeared and took in my body.

“Never thought I’d have beauty, but there you are,” Diesel murmured as he approached. He gently cleaned between my legs, lips pursing as he saw my blood. He dumped the washcloth on the floor, climbed into bed, and hauled me into his side.

“Sleep, baby. That would have worn you out,” Diesel muttered.

Even though it was still early, I obeyed as I wanted more later. And I was shattered, but it was a fulfilling tiredness. I burrowed into Diesel and sighed. This was living.

Diesel

Diesel glowered as his mobile pinged again. Gently, he shifted Alice and climbed out of bed. He strode to the living room just as his phone rang.

He snatched it up and answered, “What?”

“We have five vans heading in this direction. Get Alice out now!” Shee barked.

Diesel cursed, yanked on his jeans and boots, and headed into Alice.

“Baby, sorry, but wake up. Unwelcome company is coming,” Diesel said, shaking her. His eyes glanced across Alice’s naked body, and his cock responded. Talk about an inconvenient time.

“Huh?” Alice asked sleepily.

“Get dressed. The church is moving,” Diesel repeated.

Alice’s eyes fluttered closed and then flew open. She sat bolt upright in bed and reached for her clothes. Alice was slamming her feet into boots when his mobile pinged again. Data from Devil’s Damned Disciples confirmed the vans turning into the car park. Diesel glanced at his phone. It was eleven at night, which meant there’d be brothers present, but the bar would be mainly empty.

“Need to get you out of here,” Diesel explained, grabbing Alice as somebody knocked. Diesel thrust Alice behind him.

“It’s Natasha. Magic sent me. He says Alice knows a way out, and we’re to leave now!” Natasha cried.

“Diesel, move. Need your weapon!” Magic roared from below.

“Magic showed me an escape route. Go!” Alice said, and Diesel hesitated. “Trust me, I know a way out!”

Diesel snatched Alice to him as the door opened, and Natasha flew in. He kissed Alice long and deeply before releasing her.

“Get out of here!” Diesel ordered and, after one last glance at Alice, stomped down the stairs.

Alice

“Alice, get her out of here. Natasha has a kid!” Magic roared from downstairs.

“Fuck, I love you both,” I whispered.

“You can tell them that once you’re safe. Now let’s go,” Natasha urged.

I spun to the bedroom, ignoring the crumpled covers, and opened the wardrobe. I pressed the knot Magic had shown me, and the wall slid back. An opening appeared with a thin ledge. I stepped onto it and motioned Natasha forward, and closed the door. Eerie green lights lit up the tunnel we were in.

“Who the fuck are you guys?” Natasha demanded.

Gingerly, I reached for the fireman’s pole and began sliding down, wrapping my arms and legs around it. The pole brought us to the basement, and I handed Natasha a blindfold kept next to the pole. Magic had made me promise to cover up any prying eyes, and while Natasha balked, she did put it on. Quietly, I led her to the panic room and opened it before pushing Natasha in and closing it and the second door.

“A few more minutes, and you can remove the blindfold,” I stated, and Natasha nodded. I unlocked the rear escape and led her through before shutting the entrance. Before I did, I grabbed one of the emergency lamps and switched it on.

“Where are we?” Natasha gasped as we looked at the long, dark tunnel.

“Truthfully? No damn idea, but let’s go,” I responded as I heard a distant thudding sound. As I moved away, I realised I recognised the vibrations. The bar was being shot at. Panicked, I stopped moving and turned around.

“Alice? We need to leave,” Natasha replied.

“The bar is being fired upon!”

“And their sacrifice will be for nothing if you’re caught,” Natasha responded. A loud boom shook the tunnel, and we both looked worried as small dust clouds fell.

“Natasha, I can’t leave them.”

“They are fighting to save you. Are you going to throw that away? Because I’ll tell you something, Alice, if I have to knock you out and carry you to the escape, I will,” Natasha spoke, and I turned in surprise. Natasha’s tone had changed, and she was no longer friendly. Instead, Natasha seemed all business.

“Who the fuck are you?”

“A friend, but one who’s gonna make sure you get out of here alive,” Natasha answered. “You know the plan, Alice. Once they end this fight, where are they heading? And if you’re not there safe, what’s the next target? The main compound of the church, and they have discovered it! Now let’s move before you start a war your friends have no hope of winning alone!”

Natasha’s words sunk into my head, and I replied with a dark look.

“You and I are going to talk when we’re safe,” I threatened, and Natasha shrugged.

Half blind, I began leading the way down the passageway, stubbornly ignoring the sounds of explosions and fighting happening above our heads. Forty minutes later, just as I thought this would never end, we burst into a cave. As Magic had promised, there was a bike with a helmet and leather jacket.

“Can you ride?”

“No, only as a passenger, can you?” Natasha asked me.

“Nope, but I’m taking a crash course. Get on behind me,” I ordered, and Natasha sent me a crazed look. “We either stay here, wait for someone to find us and hope it’s my guys, or we stick to the escape plan? I’m going with the plan.”

I threw a leg over the bike, and Natasha shook her head.

“Wait,” she stated and looked around. “Magic would have left weapons, too.” Spying a box in the corner, Natasha hurried over and opened it. She took out several handguns and packs of bullets, and a shotgun.

“Nice!” Natasha whistled.

“Huh?”

“This is a DP-12. Holds six shells and is simple to reload. We’re taking it,” Natasha said, searching in the crate. Natasha yanked out a rucksack, shoved the ammo and guns into it, and placed them on my back.

“Makes it easier to reload!” Natasha said. She attached a strap to the shotgun and slung it over her shoulder.

“Who the fuck are you?” I mimicked Natasha’s earlier words and kick started the bike. Natasha settled behind me, grabbed a hair tie from her wrist, and tied my hair before thumping the helmet on my head.

“Go!” Natasha yelled over the noise, and I slowly rolled out of the cave.

For the first five minutes, I didn’t go above twenty miles per hour as I recognised where we were. Magic used to bring me to picnics up here. Guess Magic ensured I knew how to escape. As I got used to the bike’s movement and how it handled, I sped up to thirty. As we crested a hill, I braked and stared in disbelief at where the bar stood far away. Even from this distance, we could see fires burning, and the wind carried distant sounds of bullets being shot.

“Oh my God, it looks like a war zone!” I gasped.

Although her words were muffled, Natasha’s voice floated to me, “Ain’t surprised knowing Magic.”

No, I wasn’t either. I pointed the motorbike towards the road that would lead to Hellfire and, keeping the lights off, we rode off. I knew to avoid the main roads, the church would have lookouts, so it was a fucking good job Magic had me driving all over the Black Hills. I stayed on the back roads until I saw the lights of Spearfish approach. Anxiously, my gut clenched, and I pulled over and switched the bike off.

“What’s wrong?” Natasha asked.

“It’s a trap. Can feel it. Somebody’s waiting,” I said, studying the road leading into the town.

“Can’t see anyone,” Natasha argued.

“They’re there,” I whispered, my eyes searching the darkness.

“Alice, I see nothing. Sure you’re not being paranoid?” Natasha suggested a few minutes later.

Suddenly beams from a car lit up, and I started the bike and pulled out.

“Fuck, go, go, go!” Natasha yelled, yanked a gun from her waistband, and began shooting.

Shit, I was cut off from Hellfire and Satan’s Warriors in Deadwood. Devil’s Scythe, Rage, Unwanted Bastards, Devil’s Damned Disciples, the Riders of Vengeance and Fallen Warriors were my remaining options. My mind scrambled for a second base, and I sped down the road, keeping the distance between the vehicles following. Natasha kept firing, and one skidded and crashed, but I didn’t stop. Natasha dug into the backpack and reloaded. She carried on firing as four cars closed in. The bike had sped up and was doing fifty, but they were gaining. My only hope was the back roads, but I could kill us both at this speed.

Natasha and I shrieked as someone fired, clearly fed up with being target practice. I spotted the opening and rode straight off the road onto a field. Car tyres screeched as they braked and gave chase. On this ground, I could hold the distance. I made a wide circle and aimed at the highway, jumping the lanes and skidding as I fought to keep the motorbike balanced.

As soon as the Harley’s tyres gripped, I opened the bike, opening her up. The Harley leapt forward as Natasha whooped. I was going to Piedmont, where the Devil’s Scythe were the closest allies. I darted in and out of cars, trying to keep the distance between the church and myself. Natasha had stopped firing as I belted down the I90.

I was exiting Sturgis when two vehicles spun out on my tail. Natasha yelled as the bike wobbled and I swerved. Then, ignoring the danger, I raced across the lanes again and took the exit onto Vanocker Canyon Road. I had an advantage over the cars following and gunned the motorbike. Several screeches came from Natasha as she clung tightly.

We reached Nemo Road, and I headed towards Silver City, where the Riders of Vengeance were. They were the last MC anyone would expect me to flee to, and I hoped it would put

my chasers off guard. As we hit Norris Peak, a car shot into place behind, and Natasha yanked the shotgun from her back. The boom of the weapon nearly made me piss myself, but the vehicle crashed off the road, and Natasha whooped.

Finally reaching highway 44, Natasha began firing at another truck. Natasha sure as fuck loved that shotgun because it took the assholes out on the third blast. The noise we were making echoed off the surrounding hills, but I exited the highway and hit route 385. We were close to safety.

The exit for Silver City Road appeared, and I took it, my shoulders relaxing as I noticed we weren't being followed. We'd lost the church in the Hills. With a sigh of relief, I turned onto Edelweiss Mountain Road and saw the lights of the Riders of Vengeance compound. I blasted the horn as I neared the heavy, thick metal gates that were shut. A window opened in the door, and I blasted again as I approached at breakneck speed. In a panic, I wasn't planning to stop, and the guy gaped and slammed the gate open before I plastered us into it. The bike skidded and nearly took Natasha and me down as the prospect on guard stared agog.

"Onyx!" I screamed, yanking my helmet off as I came to a stop. Men flew from the clubhouse in the centre of the compound, Onyx in the lead, as he snatched me up. My legs gave way, and I clung to Onyx with everything I had.

"Gotya Alice. Venom, call Magic. Madcap phone Diesel, Viking get on the blower to Chance. Storm and Whirlwind contact the allies, tell them we have Alice and to stand down. Everyone else, into position. Anyone unknown approaches, shoot to kill. Let the allies know Riders are in lockdown and to let us know as they approach," Onyx bellowed as guys hurried about.

"Natasha isn't what she seems!" I gasped and flinched as the sound of guns being cocked echoed. Fuck, I blinked and looked up as six men surrounded Natasha with weapons drawn.

"Venom, reach into my top pocket. My badge is in there," Natasha said without flinching.

In the middle of his call to Magic, Venom stepped forward and reached inside the jean jacket Natasha wore.

“Seems your other barmaid is hiding shit, too. Natasha’s a dick,” Venom growled down the phone.

“Pat Natasha down and then take her inside,” Onyx ordered.

Natasha stood calmly as Madcap, Onyx’s enforcer, checked her for weapons and disarmed her. Meanwhile, Onyx held me in his arms, bride style, and moved me into their clubhouse. I didn’t have a chance to be nosey as Natasha was escorted into a room that Onyx carried me into.

“Someone get Alice a drink. You talk and don’t leave shit out,” Onyx ordered, pointing at Natasha.

“I’m a PI who specialises in cold cases concerning missing children. My name is Natasha Kemmer. Look me up online,” Natasha announced as I stared wide-eyed.

“Why’s that concern Alice?” Onyx demanded.

“Can’t say, client confidentiality,” Natasha answered.

Onyx slowly drew a gun from his belt and aimed right at her head.

I gasped.

“Natasha, you’re on my land, lady, in my world. What do you want with Alice?”

“Pull the trigger because I won’t say,” Natasha said and crossed her arms.

“Last chance,” Onyx warned.

Natasha stared. And Onyx glowered.

“Lock Natasha up. Hellfire has first claim,” Onyx declared as he put the gun away. “You’re either fuckin’ stupid or got more balls than a man.”

“Or I studied the people around Alice and know most of you ain’t murderers. Oh, you’re killers, but not cold-blooded ones,” Natasha replied, and Venom led her out of the room.

“Magic and Diesel are riding. We’ve told the allies to stay at home for now. No fuckers are coming through our walls. Alice, I’m sorry, girl. Magic asked me to prepare you. Diesel took a shoulder wound. Rider’s doc will patch Diesel up. But the bar is fucked. Magic nearly blew it sky-high. Crazy fucker. Between the land mines Magic had planted, the bullets and two rocket launchers, the bar is gonna need a lot of work,” Madcap was gentle when he spoke.

“But everyone got out alive?”

“There’re injuries. The worse is Blast from Fallen Warriors, but they’ll live. The cultists, on the other hand, sustained heavy losses. They are down at least forty members. Cops are all over the scene, but Willow swept in and is handling shit,” Madcap elaborated.

I sighed and leaned back against Onyx in relief. I closed my eyes as fatigue hit, as adrenaline faded. Onyx shifted me in his arms, and I was asleep before I touched the sofa Onyx gently laid me on.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Diesel

His heart was in his throat when he left Alice with Natasha to flee. As he hit the bottom of the stairs, he gaped at the weaponry on the bar that Magic had placed there. Holy fuck! He knew Magic had an armoury. It made sense, but this was more than he'd imagined. Raddock from the Fallen Warriors jogged past him carrying a rocket launcher, two assault rifles, and three handguns.

"Hercules, Rocket, and Blast are taking the roof with me," Raddock said, referring to Shane Jackson, who had finally accepted the name of the Greek hero. Shane hated being referred to as a hero, although that was what he was. And Rocket was Carter, who'd been injured while captive by terrorists and was shot protecting Ali-kat at her ranch during a Rage shootout. Blast was Scott, a quiet man who looked positively euphoric. The men jogged past, armed to the teeth, and followed Raddock.

Fuck me, Diesel thought. Those soldiers seemed almost gleeful.

"Wanderlust, Bishop, Spawn, and Ratchet are all manning the outside wall," Magic informed Diesel.

Diesel nodded at the four maniacs from the Devil's Scythe.

"Got Bone and Wraith on those windows," Magic continued, pointing to the Hellfire prospects. "Poison and Razor are covering that window." Magic bent his head in acknowledgement at the Unwanted Bastards' brothers, they were arguing over who had the best weapons.

Diesel rolled his eyes. It was a fact you had to be insane to join that MC.

"I'd put Lex and Ezra on that window and Calamity and Fanatic at the door," Diesel said. He had no qualms about putting Chance's nephew in the line of fire. Fanatic had joined

them so he wouldn't be babied. So no babying. And out of Rage and Hellfire, Diesel was the ranking officer.

"Who's outside other than the Devil's Scythe four?" Diesel asked.

"We got Banshee, Data, and then there's Zoom, Zippy, Judgement, and Grease from the Devil's Damned Disciples. They're hidden in the treeline. Gonna be our snipers alongside Raddock's team on the roof," Magic explained as Diesel grabbed an AK-47 and several handguns.

"Entering the car park now!" Calamity called.

Diesel knew Fanatic and Calamity were well protected behind it. The door was a foot thick, and bullets couldn't break through easily. Both Calamity and Fanatic had opened the little windows and had shotguns aimed out of them.

"I am going out," Magic said.

"No!" Diesel replied and reached for him.

"Think I'm gonna sit here and let them blow my bar to heaven?" Magic asked.

"Over fifty men are getting out," Raddock's voice crackled over a radio.

"Fifty for one woman?" Ezra demanded, rolling his eyes.

"Jesus, they really have a hard-on for her," Bone commented.

"They can't have her, brother. She belongs to Hellfire," Wraith growled.

Diesel appreciated the prospect's attitude. No, they couldn't fuckin' have Alice.

"Inside the bar. You have Alexis; bring her out now, and this doesn't have to end badly," a smarmy voice announced, and Diesel stiffened.

"It's that fuckin' Fifth Minister!" he grumbled.

"Walk the fuck away. There's no Alexis here," Magic bellowed.

“Hand her over, asshole. And we will leave you in peace. Be a shame to kill those with you,” Fifth Minister shouted back.

“I’ll show you peace!” Magic grunted. “Raddock!”

Above Diesel’s head came a whoosh, and then an explosion happened as Raddock’s rocket launcher hit one van.

“Holy shit!” Calamity and Fanatic exclaimed and high-fived.

Diesel rolled his eyes. Fuck, he felt old. Gunfire erupted as the Fifth Minister screamed orders. Everyone ducked as glass shattered and bullets rained into the bar. Diesel kept low and watched, making sure no one was injured.

“Snipers go!” Magic bellowed down the radio.

Diesel couldn’t make much sense of the return fire because the assholes were still pouring bullets into the bar.

“Take cover!” Fifth Minister screamed as five of his men hit the ground dead, and three more were wounded. Raddock fired again, and a second van exploded.

Whoops came from the roof, and Raddock’s team started firing. Devil’s Scythe began shooting at their targets while the snipers did their business.

“Everyone duck!” Magic hollered. He pressed a button on a black box, and explosions boomed one after another. Diesel counted six before they stopped.

“What the fuck was that?” Raddock demanded.

“Mines,” Magic replied.

“You couldn’t tell us this before?” Raddock asked.

“Why ruin everyone’s fun?” Magic grumbled.

“Incoming!” Data yelled, and everyone hit the floor. An explosion blasted the side of the building, and Magic lifted his head.

“My kitchen!” he howled.

Diesel thought he was correct. The kitchen was gone, and flames could be seen.

“Take them out!” Raddock ordered, and once again, the allies opened fire.

The cult was running around trying to find cover as Raddock calmly blew up the last two vans. The mines had taken out the fifth, much to his amusement.

“Kill them all!” Fifth Minister screamed over the noise of gunfire being exchanged. Diesel realised he did not care about anything other than killing them and getting Alice. There were already twenty bodies on the ground, fifteen of which were moving, and the Fifth Minister didn’t seem bothered.

“Cover!” Magic shouted, and the allies stopped firing as Magic hit another button. A second round of explosions happened outside.

“Fucker’s crazier than Axel!” Lex yelled, lifting his head.

“Open the doors!” Wanderlust yelled, and the four Devil’s Disciples rolled as Calamity and Fanatic fired off their shotguns.

“You motherfuckin’ asshole. Didn’t you consider where the debris might land?”

Bishop groaned.

Magic looked shamefaced, and Diesel snorted.

“Fuckin’ redneck lunatic,” Spawn spat and took a stand at the window with Ezra and Lex.

“Fire in the hole!” Magic howled and hit a series of buttons.

“Fuck me,” Diesel whispered as his head bobbed with each eruption.

“Team coming from the back!” Hercules announced, and gunfire was exchanged again.

“Any alive?” Magic asked Raddock.

“Yeah, about ten still standing; they’ve got cover. Snipers, pinpoint their positions and wait for them to raise their heads,” Raddock ordered.

“Aye, Aye, Cap,” Zippy crowed.

“Shut ya mouth, nitwit, before you give away our position,” Zoom retorted.

“Who you calling nitwit, asshole?” Zippy demanded.

Diesel exchanged an incredulous stare with Spawn as the two brothers from Devil’s Damned Disciples argued. A lone bullet was fired during the exchange.

“Shit, if Zoom shot Zippy again, I ain’t explaining to Jailbait,” Wanderlust muttered.

“That just missed my head, you bastard!” Zippy bitched.

“That twat was creeping up on you!” Zoom howled in indignation.

“How the hell does Jailbait suffer them?” Shee asked over the radio.

“Will you two motherfuckers shut up and shoot the enemy?” Judgement demanded, sounding tired.

Diesel couldn’t help it. Despite his worry about Alice and her escape, and they were in the middle of a firefight, he laughed.

“Clear the doors!” Raddock ordered, and Calamity and Fanatic dived in opposite directions. The doors exploded as a rocket burst through them and missed Magic’s head by a whisker as it blew up the back wall.

“Man down!” Raddock yelled.

“On my way,” Ratchet replied. He grabbed a medic’s bag as he rushed up the flight of stairs that had somehow remained intact despite the kitchen being blown up. Magic saw the Fifth Minister with the rocket launcher through the now-open entrance. The fucker was trying to get another missile loaded.

“Bull fuckin’ shit!” Magic roared and rose to his feet. In each hand, he held a shotgun, and he walked forward as Diesel gaped.

“Magic!” Diesel shouted and leapt to his feet, only to find himself on his back moments later, as his shoulder burned.

Magic stormed through the fiery opening and opened fire on anything that moved.

“Stay still!” Bishop yelled as he checked Diesel over. Like something from a damn action film, Diesel watched as Magic swivelled his head as he fired.

“Come to my bar, blow it up over a woman who ain’t here. Who we don’t fuckin’ know, and you wanna cause a war? I’ll give you a war, assholes!” Magic shouted, dropping his shotguns and yanking something from a bag wrapped around his chest and began throwing shit.

“Grenades!” Zippy announced in glee. Flashes came from the treeline as grenades were thrown from there, and the entire car park lit up in fire and flames.

“Want to fuckin’ play with the big boys?” Diesel heard Magic roaring.

Well, at least he was still alive!

“Because you can rape women and children, ya think ya got big dicks? Ain’t no one got a bigger dick than a biker! Trash my bar, shoot at my people, here I am! Wanna come at me like a man, you cowardly cunts? Come on! I’ll take you hand to hand, rip ya fuckin’ heads off, shit down ya throat, tear ya limb from limb!” Magic roared.

“Holy fuck. I want to be him when I grow up!” Calamity said, his eyes focused on Magic.

It was a sight. In the middle of the burning car park, amongst debris and bodies, stood Magic, legs splayed wide, chest thrown out, head tossed back and beating his chest with his fists. Magic bent forward, crunched his arms, and shoulders into a curl, and roared wordlessly.

“And that’s why we don’t mess with the fucker!” Raddock said.

Amused snorts came over the radio as a gunshot echoed, and a man creeping up on Magic with a knife in his hand, fell. Magic gave an enraged roar, picked the asshole up, lifted him above his head, and threw him.

“Oh, I really wanna be him when I grow up.” Fanatic sighed.

“Magic’s hulked out!” Wraith expressed, amused.

“Threaten his daughter and see what happens,” Judgement commented darkly.

“Get me my phone. I need to see if Alice made it to Hellfire,” Diesel ordered, wriggling. Bishop yanked the mobile from Diesel’s pocket, and Diesel hit the number.

“What is going off up there?” Chance roared. It sounded like he was riding. “The explosions can be seen miles away.”

“Did Alice make it to you?” Diesel demanded.

“Alice? No!”

“Fuck. The cult attacked, and Magic forced Alice to flee through an escape tunnel. She was meant to be heading to Hellfire!” Diesel exclaimed.

“Bear and I are riding. We got reports of gunshots and a crash at the town’s entrance. The road she would have used to reach us,” Chance replied.

Diesel felt his gut sink. If she didn’t make Hellfire, where was she? Had Alice been captured?

“Scythe reported gunshots fired just outside of Sturgis,” Bear declared.

“Alice tried to get to you and headed towards Devil’s Scythe,” I whispered, trying to figure out where she’d go next.

“She’ll head for Rage or Fallen Warriors,” Chance guessed.

“Dunno,” Diesel replied as we heard sirens.

“Contact all allies; we had a firefight up here, but get them to keep their eyes open for Alice. She wasn’t alone; she had Natasha with her,” Diesel said and cut the phone.

Cop cars and fire engines were screeching into what remained of the car park, and Magic was sitting at his bar, watching with a glass of whiskey. Diesel admitted he looked as cool as fuck. During his conversation, most weaponry had

been locked away again, and everybody had returned to the bar.

The first people through the door were uniforms with their guns out. They were swiftly followed by Lio and Phil Gold.

“What the fuck happened?” Lio asked, astounded.

“Got attacked by that whack job cult,” Magic stated calmly, all Hulk persona gone.

“They attacked? Magic, it’s a fuckin’ war zone out there!” Lio yelled.

“Enough. No one talks to them apart from my team,” Willow said, stepping into the bar.

Lio crossed his arms and glared.

“Now you turn up? Been trying to get hold of you for two weeks,” Lio spat.

“Shit was happening, which I couldn’t talk about. I can elaborate somewhat now. But I have to secure this scene and interview the witnesses. Make sure your trigger-happy officers do not go arresting the MCs!” Willow warned.

“Willow, don’t tell me how to do my job because you’ll need me sooner than I need you!” Lio snarled, clearly insulted, and stomped away.

“Give your statements to Grey quickly, and you two get out of here. There’s some shit landing soon, and Alice will need both of you. I’m gathering she escaped as she’s not locked in one of your embraces,” Willow asked astutely.

“She fled,” Diesel confirmed.

“Give Grey your statements and scat!”

Diesel watched as she turned her back and began giving orders. Damn, what happened to the shy kid he’d first met? Axel’s girl was one to be proud of. Diesel spent the next half an hour giving his statement. He had been antsy to leave, but five minutes into his account, he’d had a call saying Alice was at Riders of Vengeance and safe. He and Magic both relaxed

on hearing that. Though they'd both stiffened at the news of what Natasha was.

“We done? I need to get to my girl,” Diesel asked.

“Go. Willow said not to hold you two longer than necessary,” Grey agreed and waved them off. Miraculously, nobody's bikes had been harmed. They were dusty and dirty, but there wasn't a scratch on them. Diesel snorted as they throttled their motorbikes and rode out. Someone up there liked bikers.



Diesel followed Onyx and Magic to their cellars under their clubhouse, where they did their wet work. Natasha sat calmly in a cell and watched them approach.

“Oh, forget about posturing; I'm not impressed. What I want to know is how much have you told Alice before I open my mouth?” Natasha demanded.

“Think you're able to make demands?” Magic asked incredulously.

“I know more than you. Such as the cult still exists, it's in North Carolina in the Nantahala Forest. They're searching for her because she's Alexis Adams and heir to Willoughby Adams' billions. And yes, I've tested her DNA, and she is his granddaughter,” Natasha said, and their mouths snapped shut.

“Who are you working for?” Diesel demanded.

“Who do you think? I specialise in cold case missing kids, as I told Onyx,” Natasha stated.

“Willoughby knows about Alice, doesn't he?” Magic guessed.

“And he's on his way. So instead of seeing who has the bigger dick, we need to sit her down and explain. Otherwise, that girl is gonna get the shock of her life when Willoughby storms in here looking for his long-lost granddaughter, and she does not have a clue,” Natasha responded.

“How do we know you are telling me the truth?” Diesel demanded.

“Dial this number,” Natasha said. She rattled off a number, which Diesel dialled.

“Hello?” a gruff voice asked.

“Who’s this?” Diesel asked.

“Shouldn’t I be asking what you’re doing with my PI’s phone, asshole? Now, where is Miss Kemmer?”

“Identify yourself,” Diesel ordered again.

There was silence.

“Boy, I’m betting I am talking to either Magic or Diesel. For your own good, you better be one of those two because I’ll not forgive an insult by any random stranger. I’m Willoughby Adams, and by hell, you better have my grandbaby safe.”

“Diesel. Alice is fine.”

“Her name is Alexis Willow Adams. Alice was her nanny. Now, I am in the air. I will arrive in four hours. I want to see my granddaughter. Do not fuck me about. And let Natasha go from wherever you’re caging her. I don’t take kindly to my employees being fucked with.”

“I’m safe, boss, just behind bars,” Natasha said.

“Then set her free, assholes. She is one of the good guys. Fuckin’ amateurs. Natasha has some evidence to give Alexis so she believes you. Because if my grandbaby is anything like her mother, she will ignore everything and do as she pleases. Damn spitfire, my daughter-in-law. How my Edward handled her, nobody knows.” Willoughby growled.

“She prefers Alice,” Diesel argued, feeling this was important.

“Don’t give a fuck. She was named after her grandmother, my wife; God rest her soul. Now you assholes better text me where you are because I land soon.”

“Natasha will call you back,” Diesel responded and hung up the phone.

Natasha’s eyebrows rose and disappeared into her hairline.

“Willoughby will get even for that.”

“Don’t care. Let her out, Onyx. Natasha appears on the up and up,” Diesel said.

“We’ll be watching,” Onyx warned.

“Now we gotta go destroy my girl’s world,” Magic spoke, and Diesel noted his heart wasn’t in it. Hell, his wasn’t either.

Alice

“So, they are still going strong, and you’ve found them, but they’re better equipped than a military base?” I sought, pacing back and forth.

Onyx’s man had patched Diesel’s shoulder up before they woke me, and I was observing him. It proved an excellent distraction from what I was being told.

“Yes,” Magic said shortly.

“And they want me because?” I asked and watched as everyone swapped uncomfortable glances. They knew something I clearly didn’t.

“Spit it out!” I demanded.

Diesel took a breath, but Magic held his hand out.

“I’ll tell her. Alice, your name is Alexis Willow Adams. Your father was Edward Adams, and your mother was called Hilary,” Magic stated.

“No, they’re not,” I said as a nasty feeling hit me.

“Can I finish, baby girl? This is difficult for me, too,” Magic inquired.

“Go on.”

I listened as Magic explained my parentage, kidnapping, parents’ murders and everything else. Beyond horrified at what I was hearing, I paced back and forth and shrugged off any attempts to comfort me.

“So basically, I’m the granddaughter of the fifth richest man in the world. First Minister is my great-uncle, who wants to commit all sorts of sick shit and marry me to gain his brother’s

money. And Second Minister is his nephew in real life, and my father is my uncle who raped my mother and killed and tortured both my parents. I get all that, right?" I demanded.

"Yeah," Magic said.

"And you both knew," I asked, pointing between Magic and Diesel.

"Woah, hold on, babe, we just found out!" Diesel exclaimed.

"Doesn't matter. You both thought I was too stupid or vulnerable to deal with this," I snapped angrily.

Deep down, I knew it wasn't them I was angry at. They didn't deserve this rage I felt, but they were here and guilty of hiding shit from me. It may have come from a yearning to protect, but I was an adult.

"Alice," Magic spoke sadly.

"And you tracked me down and took my DNA without permission. What if I hadn't been his granddaughter?" I yelled at Natasha.

"Then I would have left quietly, and you'd have been none the wiser," Natasha answered.

"Wonderful, how pleasant for you. Roll into town, steal people's DNA, and then piss off if the results do not match. Hey, it doesn't matter if you violate them; they won't realise!" I let out a bitter laugh, and Natasha ducked her head.

"Oh, shut up," I sneered as she opened her mouth. "I've heard enough from you. Especially as my grandfather, a man I didn't know existed, is on his way to meet me right now! Who gives a fuck what dumb, pathetic Alice thinks. You all know better than me!" I screeched. I was out of control and realised it. Shit, I needed air. I could not breathe.

"I need air. None of you follow me. Leave me alone for half an hour!" I snapped.

Magic's face showed a depth of pain I couldn't handle, and Diesel looked like I'd slapped him. But I couldn't deal with it. My entire world just turned upside down. Literally, I wasn't some poor cult victim. I'd now progressed to kidnapping

victim. And a fucking billionaire heiress. Screw this. I yanked out my mobile and sent a text to the man I knew would stand against everyone.

“That will cause trouble,” Onyx said from the shadows.

“At least he won’t stab me in the back like every other fucker. Or think I can’t handle shit and need protecting from the truth.”

My phone beeped, and I saw a message telling me he was on his way. I bent over and drew in a deep breath. I slowly let it out and repeated the actions.

“Don’t leave with him without talking to anyone. I’ll tell the gate to let him in,” Onyx said.

Onyx thought he was playing clever. I heard him head inside. That everyone could talk me down. I wasn’t playing that game. I moved closer to the gate, inch by inch, as the prospect manning it watched me.

“Alice, I am gonna let him in,” Steam announced. The prospect smiled at me, and I smirked back. Minutes ticked past as I let my mind rest and shoved everything out. I was listening for bike pipes and perked up when I heard them coming.

“Steam, I’m sorry!” I said and stepped behind him and hit his vagus nerve. He froze and gaped before his eyes rolled up and fell backwards. I dashed to the gates and began hauling at them. They were heavy fuckers, and I was panting as I opened one wide enough to slip through. A headlight cut through the dark as I escaped.

“Alice!” Diesel yelled.

I didn’t hesitate and rushed to the rider. He spun in a circle, seeing me heading towards him, and I scrambled on his motorbike.

“Go! Go!” I screamed, clinging to his back.

Inglorious revved his bike and took off with me snug behind him.

Diesel

“Alice is getting air. She’s feeling suffocated,” Onyx said, returning. “Steam is outside with her. Look, I’ll pull up the front yard cameras.”

Diesel and Magic watched as the yard appeared, and they could see Steam by the gate and Alice moving towards him. Diesel dropped his head into his hands.

“We should have told her as soon as we knew,” he muttered.

“We only found out a couple of days ago!” Magic stated.

“Yeah, well, she is holding a grudge,” Onyx retorted, and silence fell.

Diesel watched Alice on the monitor. She was bent over, and he longed to comfort her, but she needed space. Minutes ticked past, and slowly they began discussing Willoughby’s imminent arrival. Natasha confirmed he was still in the air but would land soon.

She also warned us to expect him to bring an army with him. Willoughby had no intention of losing his granddaughter again. Diesel was listening with half an ear when he saw Alice straighten and look toward the gates. He leant forward, puzzled, as she said something to Steam, then lashed out. Silence fell in the room as they stared at the monitor in shock, and Diesel leapt to his feet as Alice yanked on the gate.

“Fuck!” he roared. Onyx flicked to a split screen, and we saw a bike heading towards the gates. Alice was slipping outside to meet it. Diesel took to his feet at a run.

“Alice!” he bellowed as soon as he got outside, but she was already through the gates.

A bike revved in reply, and Diesel was in a full-out sprint. By the time he made the gates, he saw nothing, just heard the faint roar of pipes as the unknown rider and his woman disappeared into the morning darkness.

“Alice!” Diesel roared once more, feeling hopeless.

Fuck him; what else could go wrong? Scratch that, he thought as a parade of cars headed towards him. Oh joy, the grandfather was here.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

Alice

I curled up in Inglorious's bed. My tears had soaked his Henley vest and now his pillow. So much evil, such greed and overwhelming agonising pain existed in this world. I couldn't understand how people lived with this. Inglorious had managed to glean most of the story from me and had stayed with me the entire time I cried. The poor man must have wondered what he'd walked into, but Inglorious was solid and steady until I calmed down. When I told Inglorious about the cult and my real family origins, he looked as shocked as me. Hellfire had kept this shit to themselves.

They'd no right to spring this on me several days after finding out the truth. And Natasha had betrayed me. I thought she was a friend. Well, now, I knew differently. She was no friend to me, just a hired hand employed to steal my DNA. I couldn't even call Bunny because she'd let Pyro know where I was, and I wanted time to assimilate to the horrible news.

I was torn between so many emotions. There was hate towards the man who proclaimed he was my father. Instead, I knew he was my uncle and had stolen me from a life of love and happiness. Guilt was prevalent because of how my birth parents had died and a sense of being cheated. I felt terrible for how they passed but also detached. I couldn't remember them, and I experienced the same emotions I did when I heard sad news. Yes, it was, but I was removed from the situation because I didn't know them. The same went with my parents.

Oh, I was angry at how they'd died and how I'd been ripped from them. Their manner of death tormented me, but not so intensely that I couldn't focus or operate. It was the sadness I felt when hearing of tragedy on the news. I thought I should feel more, but I didn't. They were strangers to me. There was curiosity about having a grandfather. Were there other relatives? Would they want this scarred human in their lives? And how could I relate to them? They'd probably

grown up with vast amounts of wealth, while I knew nothing apart from being in a cult and working a bar. Would I be shunned for that?

The questions kept ticking over in my mind before I finally fell asleep.

Inglorious

“She’s safe, and no, you can’t fetch her,” Inglorious stated as soon as Chance hit answer.

“Tell Diesel that!” Chance growled.

Inglorious didn’t flinch.

“Put me on loudspeaker,” Inglorious demanded.

“Give me my woman back, buddy, or there’s going to be a reckoning,” Diesel snapped moments later.

“No.”

“No?” Diesel sounded shocked.

“Alice came to me for space and support. I’m not betraying her,” Inglorious stated.

“This puts Unwanted Bastards and Hellfire at odds,” Chance warned.

“So be it. Any female, Hellfire or not, who turned to us for help would receive aid. I’ll not betray Alice’s trust because you hid shit from her and made her own choices,” Inglorious fired back.

There was an awkward silence.

“Be a shame for those years of friendship to circle the drain,” Chance replied.

Inglorious stiffened. He’d not be blackmailed.

“I’m gonna do you a favour and forget you just made that threat. Because it would be a real fucking shame to allow this shit to come between our clubs. I have a lady upstairs in my bed, sobbing her heart out because she is heartbroken. She’s been betrayed by those she thought were her family, only to turn out to be a kidnap victim. Alice is struggling with the

knowledge her uncle murdered and raped her parents. She has a living grandfather and is rich beyond her wildest dreams. On top of that, Alice was chased through the fuckin' mountains last night, and the bitch she thought was a friend isn't," Inglorious stated.

"I'm worried about her!" Diesel yelled.

"So am I. Alice turned to me because she trusted me to give her the space. She needs to get some clearance. I'm gonna give her that. If you want to lose her, keep pushing. Because Alice will fracture and run. Understand that you have feelings for her, dude, and so do I." A growl met his words. "You got in first, and I'll respect that. What I won't do is disrespect the trust your woman placed in me. As long as she requires it, Alice has a bunk at Unwanted Bastards. If you want to bring Hellfire to us, so be it. But be prepared. Unwanted Bastards will not hand her over. Make your fuckin choice!" Inglorious stated and cut the line.

He rubbed a palm over his face. What a fuck up. But he meant what he'd said. As long as Alice needed time, she'd get it.

Diesel

"Got a problem," Big Al mentioned, sticking his head in the room.

"Another one?" Chance grumbled.

"A convoy of cars just arrived. Guess the rich bastard is here," Big Al stated, and Diesel groaned. Again? This fucker wasn't backing off.

Last night Willoughby had thrown his weight around that Alice had fled. It had led to some nasty arguing, and Onyx had told Willoughby to get off his land. Now they were back on Hellfire; Diesel guessed it was time for round two. Diesel rose to his feet and followed Chance into the rec room.

"Found my grandchild yet?" Willoughby demanded.

"Yup," Chance answered and left it hanging.

"Where is she?" Willoughby asked.

“Somewhere safe. Alice said she needs time and space,” Diesel responded.

“Are you pissing with me, son? I haven’t seen my grandbaby for over twenty years. You’re going to tell me where she is, and her fucking name is Alexis!” Willoughby roared.

“Just because you have fuckin’ money, don’t walk in here thinking your dick’s bigger than mine. Alice, as she likes to be called, needs space, and she’s gonna get what she wants. Not what some rich asshole demands. Consider the shocks she has just been dealt. My girl needs time, and we’ll give it to her,” Diesel bellowed back.

He gave a mental shrug at the expression Chance shot at him. Yeah, he was parroting Inglorious. Who cared?

“Your girl,” Willoughby sneered.

“Claimed her. She is mine. Get used to having a biker for a grandson-in-law,” Diesel taunted.

Willoughby gave him such a look of derision Diesel was amazed his nuts didn’t shrivel up. But he wasn’t backing down. Willoughby surprised them all by throwing his head back, laughing.

“You got balls, son. Most would cringe and show me their ass. I’ve waited nearly twenty-four years. I can wait a few more days. Sit your fuckin’ asses down and tell me what my files don’t,” Willoughby said, moving and sitting down.

The door opened, and Clio pranced in with Thalia behind her. Maylene, their grandmother, and Rose, Shotgun’s grandmother, followed.

Willoughby’s eyes widened.

“Now then, no one informed me that Maylene Dixon was in town,” Willoughby spoke.

“Seems your boys missed something,” Diesel sneered as Maylene trotted across the floor and hugged Willoughby tightly.

“Found them?” he asked.

“Long story, but yes, Thalia discovered them,” Maylene answered.

Diesel watched as Thalia moved to greet Willoughby.

“Although it cost me this,” Thalia announced and held up her hand where she was missing a finger. Bear growled. “Oh, calm down; I can joke about it now.”

“I can’t,” Bear grumbled.

“Glad to see your family together again,” Willoughby said, standing and offering Maylene his seat. Maylene took it and crossed her legs at the ankles.

Diesel could swear he saw a hint of interest in Willoughby’s eyes as he took in Maylene and her graceful mannerisms.

“And I hear Alexis has been found. What a relief. It is about time our families healed, is it not?” Maylene said. “Come here, child,” she commanded Clio, who went to Chance’s side.

Diesel hid an amused smile as Chance automatically lifted an arm for Clio to snuggle in. He missed Alice and how she’d turned to him as Clio did with Chance.

“Now, you were throwing your weight around when we entered. Alice is a good girl but struggling with information overload. Bet she feels like she’s drowning. Why don’t we have a drink and talk your temper through?” Maylene suggested, and Willoughby laughed.

“Got any whiskey, son? Maylene Dixon likes a strong, rich taste,” Willoughby said and relaxed back. Who’d have thought it would be Maylene to tame the tiger in their midst? Diesel wondered as he moved to the bar.

“What do you want to know?”

“Tell me about the asshole who thinks he’s claimed my grandbaby,” Willoughby replied.

A growl left my lips.

“Oh, there isn’t any thinking about it. Diesel is as much hers as she is his. So let me tell you about my boys. Rose come

here, darling; this is an old friend Willoughby. Shall we spill their secrets? Willoughby, this is Rose; she is Shotgun's grandmother and knows all their naughty, dark, delicious secrets," Maylene said with a tinkling laugh.

Diesel watched as Willoughby gazed at Maylene with a smitten look. A smirk crossed his face as Bear and Chance swapped glances. Looked like they were gonna get a step-grandpa. The grin wiped off his mouth when he realised that went for him, too. Aw shit.

Rooster

Rooster stared at the monitors, bored. He hated security detail, but they all had a shift to cover. He made a mental note to get Chance to recruit some candidates who'd enjoy this mind-numbing job.

A shadow crept across his screen, and Rooster leant forward as he saw someone drop something at the rear of the clubhouse. He swapped cameras as the figure disappeared around the side, and Rooster frowned as he dropped something else.

"Chance!" Rooster leaned back in his chair and yelled. He kept following the trespasser, noting his appearance. He wore jeans and a hoodie with the hood pulled low over his face.

"What?" Chance asked, entering the security office.

"Intruder and acting suspiciously." Rooster pointed out the individual.

Chance muttered something and disappeared. Moments later, he appeared on camera, stalking the stranger. Rooster watched as the man placed one last bag. Chance moved, and the fucker took to his heels like lightning. Chance didn't bother to give chase and looked in the bag. His body stiffened, and he began running back as fast as he could.

Rooster leapt to his feet and dashed out of the security room. His gut told him to evacuate, judging by Chance's fear.

"Out, everyone out!" Rooster bellowed. "Evacuate!" Surprised faces turned to him.

He hit the fire alarms, making people move.

“Shee, Tiny, check the bedrooms; get everybody out,” Chance shouted. “We’ve got bombs and ten minutes left on the timer!”

Bear bent down, grasped Thalia, and raced out. Chatter grabbed Maylene as Shotgun headed for Rose. Willoughby’s men were already moving him out.

Rooster ran back to the security room and flicked through the footage for the shop and garage. Sure enough, the intruder had been there too.

“Clear the garages and parts store!” Rooster bellowed.

Thudding feet and cries from the women began flooding the air. Sirens shrieked as the garage and store alarms activated. Rooster ran straight for Clio, who stood stunned, and picked her up carefully before running with her. Clio was important. Louisa Mae was with Big Al, and he saw the man racing towards him carrying the precious baby girl. Tati raced to his side, flinging fear-filled looks over her shoulder.

“The clubhouse is clear!” Shee yelled, racing onto the forecourt with Tiny.

“Across the road, get off the forecourt!” Diesel yelled at the top of his lungs. He was waving people away.

“Get in the abandoned shops,” Chance bellowed.

Bear, the first to reach them, didn’t hesitate and kicked the door in. He placed Thalia on her feet and raced across the forecourt. Rooster checked the time, five minutes remaining, and people continued streaming off the forecourt.

He ran back to Chance and started forcing him away when Chance’s head snapped around.

“Fanatic!” Chance roared. Rooster’s head craned, and he saw locked doors to the painting bay. Fanatic was inside and hadn’t heard the alarm.

“Take Chance!” Rooster yelled and began running towards the garage. Chance started fighting Bear, who lifted him off his feet and carried him away. Protect the president, the first

rule of Hellfire. Chance fought as he was brought into the shop, and Tiny and Bear forced him to the ground, where they pinned him. Chance could only watch as Rooster headed into the danger zone.

Rooster pulled the doors open and spotted Fanatic. Fanatic had headphones on and jumped as Rooster burst in.

“Run! Bombs!” Rooster bellowed.

Fanatic stared at him and started moving slowly. Rooster reached out, grabbed the boy, and began hauling him through the forecourt. The ground rocked beneath their feet, and they fell to the ground as the clubhouse exploded in a boom. A second, third and fourth blast came from the clubhouse. Rooster lay on the ground, his body covering Fanatics. He could see directly across the street at Chance, also pinned down with a hopeless look.

Rooster knew they were in the immediate path of the garage and store explosion and was resigned to giving his life today. Chunks of concrete and debris fell around them, hitting Rooster on his back, shoulders, and legs. Something heavy dropped across his ankles, and Rooster realised he was pinned down. He just prayed his body would protect the kid under him. A roar came from the shop, and Rooster raised his head; he held Chance’s eyes with apologies in his own.

He’d do everything to defend the precious boy under him. Chance’s nephew and Drake’s eldest son. His thoughts couldn’t consider his own boys; the club would look after them. Shee was designated to adopt them. His beautiful sons would be okay. Fanatic wriggled, and Rooster knew the kid was alive when a yell rose above the sound of burning flames. Pyro and Celt ran towards them as Chey screamed Celt’s name repeatedly. The parts store blew, and Pyro and Celt were knocked off their feet at the forecourt entrance. Something hit Rooster’s head, and it was lights out.

Fanatic

Fuck, he was pinned under Rooster, and all hell was breaking loose. Things were hitting Rooster’s body, and he felt every impact. Fanatic tried freeing himself, but his legs were

under something heavy and Roosters. His hands reached out, scrabbling on the ground to claw himself free. He knew what Rooster was doing, using his body as a shield. Fanatic flinched as a lump of concrete the size of a tyre landed by his head, and he shoved out in desperation to stop it from crushing his skull. Luckily, it wobbled and fell away from him.

He'd no idea what was happening, but he could see his uncle screaming his name on the floor. Celt and Pyro ran towards him, and Fanatic felt a moment's hope; then, two more explosions blasted through the forecourt, and he watched as they were blown backwards. Fuck! Panic welled in his throat. He didn't want to die here, pinned like an animal with a brother giving his own life to save his. Four figures shot out of the shop as Chance and Bear bellowed for them to get back. Fanatic stared as the prospects headed straight for them.

"The garage is rigged to blow!" Bear's roar could be barely heard over the commotion. The prospects kept coming. Bone stopped, grabbed Celt, hauled him to his feet, and started staggering back with him. Smokey paused and tried carrying Pyro. Pyro was knocked out, and a round pipe had gone through his shoulder. Smokey swapped sides, half picked Pyro up, and began walking to the shop.

Fanatic could hear Chance almost foaming at the mouth as he screamed for them to get their asses inside. Bear and Tiny were using all their strength to keep his uncle down. Chance was clawing at the ground, and Clio was crying in fear behind him. Thalia was holding her sister, horrified, as she stared at Fanatic and Rooster. Wraith and Slaughter hit their knees beside them as they began moving rubble.

"Leave us!" Fanatic roared from under Rooster's body. He didn't want his brothers getting injured and knew Celt and Pyro were both down and out.

"The fuck we will!" Wraith shouted over the roaring of the flames.

"The garage is armed!" Bear bellowed again, and Wraith shot a look over his shoulder.

“Fuckin’ go!” Fanatic yelled, his body tense, waiting for the next blast.

Wraith and Slaughter ignored him as he began cursing as they struggled to free him and Rooster from whatever they were buried under. Fanatic listened to their grunts as they laboured to lift a heavy piece of building from their bodies. Suddenly Fanatic stopped having trouble breathing air into his lungs. Hell, he hadn’t even noticed he was. Wraith bent down, and Slaughter helped sling Rooster over his shoulder.

Slaughter grabbed Fanatic and began dragging him towards the entrance of the forecourt. Everywhere Fanatic looked was rubble. Heat blasted their backs as Wraith stumbled, carrying Rooster. Slaughter was close to him as they passed the forecourt gates; the garage erupted with a shrill boom that flattened them both. Wraith kept his feet as Shee dashed out, helped steady him, and yanked Wraith into the shop. Slaughter rolled himself and Fanatic behind the low wall and covered Fanatic.

“Get the fuck off me and get to safety!” Fanatic roared.

Slaughter ignored him as missiles flew. Fanatic watched in shocked, horrified amusement as wrenches, hammers, lug nuts, and various other tools rained down around them. Slaughter released several grunts and raised his head after what seemed like hours but was minutes. He slowly pushed himself up and grasped Fanatic’s arm, helping him to his feet, and they staggered towards the shop. Shee and Big Al rushed out, grabbed them, and hauled them inside as secondary explosions came from the forecourt.

Fanatic watched as Bear and Tiny got off Chance, and he got up, shaking them off and barrelled towards him. Fanatic remained still as Chance patted him down, looking for significant wounds. Satisfied his nephew was physically okay, Chance wrapped Fanatic up in a hug and rocked him back and forth.

Chance

“Chance,” Clio gasped out, and Chance and Fanatic turned their heads. His wife began falling to her knees, clutching her

stomach; Chance roared. Under her feet was a puddle of water. Thalia opened her mouth and screamed as she grabbed for Clio as Smokey, the closest person, slipped his arms under her. Chance lunged for Clio.

“I’m only thirty weeks!” the wail left Clio’s lips as Thalia paled, and Chance gathered Clio to him.

“Need a car now!” Chance roared.

“I can hear sirens. Cops and ambulances are coming,” Bear shouted from the door.

Chance raced outside, keeping his eyes away from the ruins of Hellfire, and waved down the first ambulance he saw. A paramedic jumped out with wide eyes as he stared at the forecourt.

“She’s thirty weeks pregnant, and her water broke,” Chance yelled, and the paramedic scrambled into action.

He loaded Clio straight into the ambulance, and Chance leapt in beside her as sirens blasted, and they raced away. Chance never saw Fanatic wobble and then face plant on the ground.

Diesel

Hellfire was gone, and Chance’s mobile was blowing up in his hand. He’d found it on the floor. Bear was trying to organise the paramedics for the wounded brothers and bullying the others into protection for the women. Diesel answered the phone, and Drake was roaring before he even spoke.

“Shut the fuck up!” Diesel bellowed. “Hellfire’s gone. Fanatic is injured. Get to the hospital.”

“My boy!” Drake yelled.

“Hospital!” Diesel ordered.

He hung up and took the next call.

“Onyx, we need backup. Phone the allies, put Unwanted Bastards on high alert and get two MCs over to them for extra men, because they have Alice.

“I think this was the cult. Hellfire is gone, man; they blew the fuck out of it. We have injured and need guards. Our women gonna need somewhere safe. We need all the bodies you can get us. We got wounded brothers, and Clio has gone into labour ten weeks early. Chance is off limits; Bear is organising everything. Rooster is down. Bear’s busy, everyone comes through me, make sure they know,” Diesel blurted down the phone.

“On it,” Onyx said.

Diesel answered the next call.

“What the fuck happened?” Magic bellowed.

“Get your ass to Unwanted Bastards and protect Alice. Hellfire is gone,” Diesel felt his voice crack this time. He shoved his pain and loss down.

“Diesel...”

“Go, we have a war zone here. Protect Alice. Don’t have time to talk. We’ve got injured, Magic. Defend my fuckin’ woman so I can concentrate here!” Diesel ordered and cut the call. He sighed as Tiger called next.

This was going to be a long day.



Diesel made it to the hospital an hour later, and the news wasn’t good. Clio, Rooster, Celt, Fanatic, and Pyro were all in surgery. Wraith and Slaughter were in x-ray, and Slaughter needed over one hundred stitches for a laceration across his back. Shee was with Diesel while Big Al had taken Tati and Louisa Mae with the twins, to the Unwanted Bastards’ compound, where they’d be safe.

Bear remained at Hellfire with Tiny and Sunny, who were talking to the cops. Diesel walked in and demanded answers as to his brother’s condition. He didn’t get any. Not messing about, Diesel called Doc Gibbons and told him to get him some information now, or there’d be hell to pay. Drake and Phoe, and Rage had arrived in force. They only knew that Fanatic had internal injuries and were operating.

Doc Gibbons came through for him. Pyro was having the hole stitched in his shoulder from where the pole had pierced him. There was some muscle damage, but he'd be fine. Celt had broken his arm in four places and was having pins inserted. Chey was frantic by now, as nurses weren't telling her anything. As soon as Diesel related the news, she and Bunny calmed down.

Rooster was in serious condition; his legs had been crushed while protecting Fanatic. Chance was down as his next of kin but out of commission because Clio was in labour and having an emergency C-section. She'd begun haemorrhaging and had been whisked away. Chance was with her. Doc Gibbons informed Diesel it was likely Rooster was looking at an amputation on his lower left leg, and his spine had also been damaged. His prognosis was not good. Fanatic had internal injuries, and his spleen and liver had ruptured. Rage was already lining up to be tested for donation should Fanatic need it.

Diesel dropped his head. The cult had struck and struck deeply. It would be months before Hellfire recovered and their injured brothers healed. A doctor came out and looked around.

"Family for Rooster?" he asked the name, puzzled.

"That's me," Diesel replied, squaring up his shoulders.

"Chance Michaelson?"

"No, he's in surgery with his wife, who's having an emergency C-section. You've got me. I am Rooster's brother," Diesel answered.

"I must talk to Chance."

"Fuckin' talk to me. I'm in command. Call Doc Gibbons if you need to, but look to me for the care of my brothers," Diesel growled.

The doctor looked around and swallowed hard.

"Rooster needs an amputation on his left lower leg below the knee. We can't save the limb; it's been crushed. The bones are mere splinters. If we're to save his life, we must operate now," the doctor said.

Diesel's shoulders sagged.

"If you don't amputate?" Diesel asked. Fuck this; he didn't want to make this decision.

"Your friend will die in excruciating pain, to be blunt. The limb will grow dead; sepsis will kick in and rot the leg before infecting your friend's bloodstream and killing him slowly," the doctor replied.

"Give me the paperwork," he stated into the deathly silence.

"Can you sign?"

"Hand me the fuckin' paperwork!" Diesel thundered.

The doctor held the clipboard out, and Diesel signed, praying Rooster would forgive him.

"We'll keep you updated," the doctor responded and hurried away.

"Diesel," Drake said, walking forward and putting a hand on his shoulder.

"Don't, Drake. Someone needs to go and collect Roo's boys," Diesel stated.

"That's not a great idea," Phoe spoke.

Diesel spun and stared at her.

"Rooster's going to wake up with half a leg. What's his first thought gonna be? Come on, you know, Roo," Diesel snapped.

"He'll want to put a bullet in his head," Phoe whispered as tears filled her eyes.

"Yeah. And if his sons are surrounding him, he can't. I ain't losing a brother. Someone needs to fetch his boys and get them here so I can fuckin' explain that their father is about to lose half his leg." Diesel growled.

"We'll go. Where are they?" Chatter and Levi asked.

"At the Unwanted Bastards' compound. Tati and Big Al were picking them up and keeping them safe. Get me those kids or Rooster will slit his wrists the moment he wakes up. And brothers... not a mention of what's happened. Tell them

you're meeting me at the hospital," Diesel warned. His gut was twisting itself into knots at the thought of telling his nephews their father was seriously injured. Diesel turned and stared out the window, his arm lifting to hug Phoe as she burrowed into his side.

CHAPTER NINE.

Klutz

“Parents of Micah Michaelson?” a lady in scrubs asked, entering the lobby. Levi and Chatter had left five minutes ago to fetch Kit, Finn, and Brax, Rooster’s sons. Everyone stared at the surgeon as Drake and Phoe stepped up.

“Yes,” Phoe answered with a tremor in her voice.

“Can we chat somewhere private?” the woman sought.

“No, this is Micah’s family. Talk in front of them,” Phoe replied. Her hand slid out to catch Drake’s, and Klutz guessed she knew this would be bad. Calamity hadn’t left their side, and he stepped forward with them.

“I’m sorry, Mrs Michaelson, Micah’s liver is too badly damaged to save. He needs an urgent transplant. I know several men here have given blood tests. There are two matches, Drake and Jacon Edwards.”

Klutz’s gut sank at the thought of his brother injured and dying. There was only one answer to this. His gaze caught Calamity’s expression, and Klutz yearned to wipe the pain written across it away.

“Take mine,” Drake responded instantly.

“No, you’ll have mine. Drake, no!” Klutz said, holding his hand up. “Hellfire is in disarray. Chance is down. If Clio survives this unscathed, Chance will not be fit for shit while the baby is in NICU. Rooster is down, and half of them are walking injured. Hellfire needs a Michaelson at the helm.

“It makes sense that Ace runs Rage, and you step up for Chance. You are family. Hellfire is gonna look to you and Bear to help them through this. Donate your liver, and you’re on the down-and-out list. Fanatic’s my brother. I can save him. You gotta let me do this, man. Phoe also needs you, and she can’t be running between you and Micah.”

“He’s my son,” Drake whispered, pale under his tan.

Calamity stepped forward and placed a palm on Drake's shoulder. Drake's hand rose and gripped it tightly, and Klutz watched Calamity wince a little.

"And my brother. Take me for further testing. If we match, take what you need. If I fail the tests, you can step up. But the weight of two MCs is on your shoulders," Klutz said.

"He's my son!" Drake argued, his voice gaining strength.

"Look around, Pres; Hellfire is barely hanging on. They need you, and so does Rage. I ain't as important. I can afford to be on the recovery list. You can't. Drake, you need to be the Rage president and decide. Phoe will need you to get her through this; seriously, man, you have to be on your feet," Klutz stated, and Drake winced.

"But I'm his father," Drake muttered.

"Let Klutz do it!" Diesel bellowed, startling him. "We need a fuckin' president! Both clubs need a fucking operating pres! You're a Michaelson, same as Chance!"

Phoe made the decision.

"Doc, please test Klutz further, and should he match, go ahead. How long can Micah hang on?" Phoe asked with a wobble.

"As long as it takes to test Klutz, we hope," the doctor replied. She faced Klutz. "Follow me, and I'll explain the process."

Klutz stepped forward, and Calamity grabbed him.

"Be safe. I can't lose two brothers today," he whispered.

Klutz offered him a nod and turned to speak to the specialist. "No need, doc; I was three weeks off qualifying as a surgeon. I know everything. Let's get these tests done," Klutz said and nodded at everyone before disappearing.

Chance

Clio cried in distress silently as they cut into her stomach. He couldn't see over the raised barrier, but he knew his wife was suffering. The baby was too early, and Chance was

stunned by the number of people standing by, ready to work on his child. Clio clenched his hand tightly as she murmured how she'd failed them. Chance bent his head and rested his lips on her brow as he tried to soothe her. But there was no calming her.

"It's a boy!" somebody said quietly, and there was bustling behind him.

"Found the tear," someone replied, and Chance stepped back. He didn't know who to attend. His wife or son. A tiny cry pierced his heart, and he knew the baby was alive. The sheer amount of people around his child meant he couldn't see him, but his heart beat more steadily on hearing that scream. They began getting ready to move his boy out, and Chance paused. Who did he stay with?

"Go with him," Clio said weakly.

Chance nodded and chased after the doctors and nurses moving his baby.

Clio watched him leave before her eyes rolled up, and she passed out.

"Fuck! We've got a bleeder!" a doctor cried, and a flurry of movement hit Clio.

Diesel

Half an hour had gone by after Klutz had left them. Wraith had re-joined them, being given the all-clear apart from bruises, a few cuts, and a slight concussion. Slaughter was being stitched up, and Pyro, Fanatic, Celt, Clio, and Rooster remained in surgery. They were waiting on word from Slaughter when a guy in scrubs ran into the lobby and glanced around.

"Chance Michaelson? We need him urgently," the man exclaimed.

"He's with his wife," Drake replied.

"No, he left to follow his son to the NICU, but Clio has complications. He's not there. We require his permission!"

"For what?" Diesel demanded.

“I cannot tell...”

“I’ve got consent if you want it. What is happening with Clio?” Diesel roared, his self-control breaking.

“She is bleeding out. We can’t stop it. We need to perform a full hysterectomy, there are too many bleeds and this is the safest option,” the man replied, eyeing Diesel with wariness.

“Give me the forms,” Diesel spoke and reached his hand out. He signed them and moved away. Would someone please give him peace? He didn’t want to be making these decisions. Rooster and Chance would probably blame him for the rest of their lives. Diesel wanted to curl into a ball and cry.

“Get your ass here, Bear! Diesel’s being forced to make life and death situations, and he’s the SAA, not the fuckin’ VP. Diesel is doing your job for you, and I’ll beat you if you ain’t here to remove this burden from him,” Drake growled down the phone.

Diesel watched the traffic outside and wondered how the hell everything could be so calm.

Chance

He walked into the waiting room, and the emotion hit him instantly. Drake held Phoe off to one side. Diesel, the ranking officer, looked fucked, and Shee was pale.

“What’s happening?” Chance demanded.

“What’s going on?” Drake asked. “You got fuckin’ walking wounded. Diesel is making life and death decisions and made a couple of calls he’s beating the shit out of himself for.”

“Update me now.”

“Get to your wife. When you were walkabout, Clio haemorrhaged. Diesel had to decide whether to give her a full hysterectomy or let her bleed out,” Drake stated baldly.

Chance lifted his head and stared at his cousin.

He staggered back, and Shee caught him as his legs collapsed from under him.

“Clio, what? I went with the baby to NICU before hitting the chapel. What’s going on?” Chance sought, feeling like he was about to pass out.

“Drake, sit with Phoe. She needs you. I’ll update Chance,” Ace said, crouching next to him.

“Yeah, do that,” Drake muttered, walking back to Phoe.

“He pissed because I was with Clio?” Chance urged, looking at his cousin as Phoe faded into his side. Drake wrapped his arms tightly around her and dropped a kiss on her head as he watched the double doors that the doctors used.

“No, but shit’s bad. Pyro has a wound in his shoulder. He has muscle and nerve damage. They’re stitching him up and immobilising his arm. Wraith escaped lightly with cuts, bruises, and a slight concussion. Slaughter is having over one hundred stitches for a laceration on his back. He’s got slight damage to his hearing, but it will heal, and he has a mild concussion.

“Chance, take some deep breaths. Rooster’s leg was crushed under the rubble. The surgeon offered Diesel two decisions. One to let him die in pain or to amputate his lower left leg below the knee. Diesel chose to operate. The boys are being brought here on Diesel’s orders, and I make him right. Rooster will wish to put a bullet in his brain. The first thing Rooster must see is his kids, so he knows he’s got a fuckin’ good reason to fight.”

Chance swayed. Fuck, everything they’d come through and some maniac with a bomb takes out his brother. Bile rose in his throat as his brain detached for a few moments. Swallowing hard, Chance reached out and gripped Ace’s shoulder. Ace clenched his hand.

“Celt is in surgery; his arm is broken in four places. It’s being pinned back together. Fucker’s in for a load of pain, but it will heal. Fanatic... Micah... was seriously wounded despite Rooster sacrificing himself. His liver was so damaged... they couldn’t save it. There are two matches, Drake and Klutz. Klutz is going ahead with the transplant because Hellfire and Phoe need him up on his feet.”

“Fuck,” Chance muttered, drawing the word out. Flashes of terror in Fanatic’s eyes hit him hard, and he swayed a second time. His nephew had been right there, and Chance couldn’t reach him. He should have made Fanatic join Rage; this would never have happened there.

“Stop those thoughts. It still would have happened because Hellfire deals with cars, and Fanatic would have been working for you,” Ace said astutely.

Chance nodded, feeling numb.

“After you left with the baby, Clio haemorrhaged. The docs couldn’t find you, and Diesel had to decide to save her life. He is beating himself up, thinking you and Clio will blame him for taking her womb. You need to tell him he’s made the right choices and get that guilt and pressure off him. Drake’s torn Bear a new one. Bear should have been here. Instead, he remained behind to deal with the cops and emergency services. Diesel should have been the one managing that. Give your brother some absolution before heading back to Clio. And don’t worry about anything else. Rage has Hellfire’s shit,” Ace said softly.

Chance nodded as he got to his feet. His mind was whirling, but all he could see was Diesel avoiding his gaze. Chance walked over to him and wrapped his arms around Diesel. Diesel stiffened, but Chance held him tight.

“Thank you for saving Rooster, my wife, the mother of my babes. And thank you, brother, for stepping up and wearing my boots,” Chance muttered in Diesel’s ear.

Chance heard a choked sob, and Diesel’s hands tightly clutched the back of his cut. Chance held him for a few minutes as Diesel regained control and stepped away.

“Gotta be with Clio and check on the boy. I got a son. You’re the first to know. He’s in NICU and is fighting. Pray for us,” Chance announced and kissed Diesel’s brow before walking away.

Eyes followed him, but Chance didn’t feel blame in their stares, just felt their prayers and best wishes.

Drake

“Mr and Mrs Michaelson?”

“Here!” Phoe cried, leaping to her feet.

“Mr Edwards is a successful match. He is perfect. He said to tell you to wish him luck as he’s preparing for surgery now. It’ll be some hours before we have news, but we shall try to keep you updated. It will be between four to six hours to remove part of Mr Edwards’ liver and five days for him to leave the hospital. Mr Edwards is to be on rest for three to four weeks and then can only take part in low-energy tasks.

“Micah will be in surgery for around eight hours. Recovery for Micah will be slower. Depending on his recovery time, he’ll be here for a fortnight, and he won’t be able to work as a mechanic for six months or more. He can return to design work after a few months, but any strenuous activity is forbidden. Micah will also need anti-rejection medication for life,” the doctor announced.

“I don’t care, just save our son,” Phoe replied as tears streamed quietly down her face.

“He’s in the best hands we’ve got,” the doctor mumbled.

“Can he hold on for six hours?” Drake asked.

“We have him on dialysis for now, and he is stable. The team removing part of Mr Edwards’ liver will then complete the transplant. They’re the best we have in Spearfish, which is why we aren’t currently taking Micah’s liver at the same time Mr Edwards undergoes his operation. Usually, that would be the standard practice. However, Micah is secure. Should that change, we’ll make the decisions. I’d like to get back to my team, if you don’t mind.”

“Of course,” Drake responded.

“I’ll have a nurse on standby for questions because I understand several of your club are in surgery. Please, can you keep the noise down and stick to the area you’re in already? We may have other emergencies arriving,” the doctor said kindly and took his leave.

Phoe collapsed against Drake, sobbing.

Apache

“We’re commanding Reading Hall as a base. Gonna flood the estate with men. No one will get close,” Apache spoke.

“Whatever,” Drake muttered.

Apache touched Drake’s shoulder in a gesture of comfort and moved away.

“Ace, gather the officers,” Apache ordered.

He nodded, and the Rage Inner Circle joined them one by one.

“Ace, you gotta be Drake’s eyes and ears for now. I’ve taken his phone off him, and you answer it and deal with anything that comes up. Gunner, gather our prospects to ask Hellfire their clothing sizes. Most of Hellfire got shit left apart from what they’re standing in. Axel, organise the prospects and candidates. They’re going on a shopping spree to buy what necessities are needed for Hellfire.

“Texas, contact all other allies, tell them Hellfire is reeling; they come through Ace and no one else. Hellfire needs time. Rage will deal with problems for now. Let each ally know we’ll be using Reading Hall. Fish phone Liz, update her and get maximum security for the Hall. Full motion sensors, infrared cameras, and all the systems Reading Hall have in place get them live. Inform Mrs Ames she has people incoming. The bedrooms and huts need to be stocked and ready for guests.

“Rock, call Hawthorne’s and Juno Group, see if they could send anyone alongside Delta Force. Manny, see if we can get Mrs Ames some help making the rooms up. The woman can’t do it all. Contact the MCs and ask if they could spare prospects to help,” Apache spoke and chewed his lip.

“They’ll need food,” Ace added.

“I’ll call the Hawthorne females,” Apache responded slowly and ignored the horrified looks he received. “Who else we got, brothers? Right. Hawthorne women it is.”

Apache looked up as a man staggered out of the double doors, and Hellfire raced towards him. He recognised the prospect, Slaughter, as Hellfire helped him sit and surrounded him.

“Get a couple of the ladies to bring food and coffee here and see if they can arrange a coffee run every hour. We’re gonna be here a long time,” Ace said, and Apache nodded.

Diesel

Slaughter looked like death warmed up, and he was ignoring the fact he should be in a bed. The fucker like Wraith had discharged himself and was now surrounded by family. Diesel sighed. Three hours had passed since any news of Celt, Fanatic, Clio, Pyro, and Rooster. Diesel was asking for an update when the doctor walked through the double doors. It was the one amputating Rooster’s leg. The boys had arrived a few hours ago and had been told their dad was severely injured. They’d curled into themselves and only spoke to Shee and Chatter.

“Doc?” Diesel urged, approaching him swiftly.

Bear still hadn’t arrived, and Diesel didn’t know what was happening.

“Rooster made it. We had a few complications. Rooster’s heart stopped, and we had to restart it. He’s stable and in recovery. He’ll be in the ICU and moved to a private room when he’s alert.”

“Thank fuck. Roo’s boys are here. Can they see him?”

“Give me half an hour, Diesel, please; we’ll clean him up so we don’t frighten them,” the doc said, looking at the young kids.

“We’ve not heard anything from Celt, Pyro, Clio, and Fanatic. Any chance of an update?” Diesel asked.

The doctor frowned and then scowled.

“Celt was free of surgery two hours ago. I’ll find out who was in charge and deal with them. He’s already in a private room,” the doctor replied angrily.

“His wife is here. Can I take her to him?”

“Sure. Let me get his room number.”

Diesel led Chey through the hallways and entered the ward. He reached to open the door, and a nurse stopped him.

“Sorry, that room is off limits,” she spoke sweetly, but Diesel narrowed his eyes at the slight hostility in her voice.

“Why?” Diesel demanded.

“The police want to speak to him,” she sneered.

Diesel and Chey exchanged glances.

“You know he was the victim, right, bitch?” Chey snapped, and the nurse turned a surprised look on her.

“Excuse me!” she blustered.

“No, how fuckin’ dare you! Accusing my husband of being involved in something when he’s the victim!” Diesel stepped back and let Chey loose. “He was trying to save people when a bomb exploded, you stupid cunt. He wasn’t the bomb-maker! Get me your boss now!” Chey screeched, attracting attention.

A man hurried over, and his eyes widened as he recognised Chey.

“Is there a problem?” he asked, worried.

“Yeah, this dumb bitch is accusing my husband of being a bomber! Says I can’t see him when he’s the damn victim!” Chey spat.

“We had notification that the police needed to interview him as soon as he awoke,” the guy replied.

“For his statement!” Chey sneered.

As she spoke, Lio entered and took in the atmosphere.

“What’s up?” he inquired and was bombarded as the nurse, Chey, and manager talked at once.

“Woah, stop. That man in there is a victim. Not a suspect. Where you guys got the idea he’s wanted for questioning, I don’t know, but it wasn’t from us. Let us into the room,” Lio replied, eying the security guard outside.

“Oh, I’ll just check he’s awake,” the manager mentioned quickly.

“I want to see him!” Lio demanded. He shoved past the nurse and manager and opened the door. Lio’s explosion was high.

“Who the fuck said to cuff and restrain him? Get those off him now!” Lio yelled. His face turned puce as Diesel felt his own set. He turned to the manager as Chey dashed in with a distressed cry.

“You just lost your jobs. Do you know who Chey is? Yeah, good. Phoenix of the Trusts is also downstairs. Her son was the guy this one was trying to save. Once Phoe finds out you cuffed and restrained him, there will be hell to pay. What the fuck is with you people? You hear a biker and think we’re all criminals. Shit, you make me sick!” Diesel blasted them. “Lio, deal with them before I take matters into my own hands!”

Diesel strode past them all and entered the room. Celt was awake and watching Chey yank the restraints off.

“Brother,” Diesel said.

“Those raging assholes told me I was a terrorist and tied me up,” Celt roared.

“Apparently so. We’ll sort them out. How are you feeling?” Diesel asked.

“Fuckin’ shit. Ain’t had no pain relief, and I’m in so much pain with this arm!” Diesel spun on his heel and stormed back out.

Lio was still chewing out the nurse and manager.

“Arrest them. They’ve denied him medication. Celt’s in agony. Somebody get me someone who isn’t a prejudiced cunt and who knows medicine and not how to torture a patient!” Diesel roared his control, fraying.

Stunned nurses stared at him and then began scurrying around. Three got on the phone.

“Deal with this, Lio. I have enough shit on my hands. They’ve left Celt in agony because he wears a cut. By the time

Chey's publicity team deals with this mess, they'll be lucky to afford soup!"

Diesel walked back into the room. Chey had now got Celt completely unrestrained, and the security guard had taken the cuffs off. Diesel jabbed at his phone and waited. He was too angry to talk.

Minutes later, two hulking shadows appeared at the door. Diesel looked across and saw Bat from Fallen Warriors and Lowrider from Rage guarding the room.

"Don't let those pricks go anywhere near Celt. They restrained and tortured him with no pain meds," Diesel spoke loudly as Lio glowed at the scurrying nurses. "No one goes in unless cleared by Lio or Chey."

"Got it, bud," Bat said with a nod.

"Need to find Pyro. If they've pulled this shit with him, he'll burn the fuckin' hospital down," Diesel muttered, knowing all too well what Pyro was capable of.

He left the ward and cannoned into the doc from Rooster's surgery. Diesel quickly explained what had happened, and the doctor led him to where Pyro was. Luckily for the hospital, Pyro was unrestrained but out of it on meds. Diesel texted Bunny the room number and informed Shee to get two guards on Pyro. Bunny arrived first, flying into the room and curling up beside Pyro, who was happily mumbling about how much he loved her. His brother would be pissed at knowing how sentimental he was.

Blaze and Hunter took up a stance by the door, and their vibes were dangerous. A nurse challenged their right to be there, and Diesel told her to shove it up her ass and speak to Detective Hawthorne if she had an issue. With Phoe preoccupied, they needed someone with clout. Diesel dialed a number he'd never used before and ensured that Andrew Wainwright, the congressman for South Dakota, was in the know. Andrew promised to tell Antony Parker-Jones, the senator for South Dakota, as he was closer. Meanwhile, Andrew would call the hospital and rip them a new one.

Diesel wearily walked back to the waiting room. Drake lifted his head and gazed at him.

“All okay?”

“Yeah.”

“Antony is an hour out. Thanks for calling him and not asking Phoe,” Drake announced. Diesel noticed Phoe was missing. “Phoe’s outside, getting some air. She’s got Slick, Axel, Fish, and Texas with her. She is safe, Diesel. Antony has the clout needed to kick some ass. Chance came out, Clio is stable and awake. The baby is fighting for his life. The nurses have high hopes for him. Chance said he’s called Dax Aston Drake Michaelson.”

Diesel tipped his head. His name was Aston. It was incredible the pres had named the boy for him. He knew why Chance had done so. It was his way of saying thanks and offering respect for Diesel stepping up.

Diesel nodded and turned to the door as Bear lumbered through.

Diesel had never been so angry at a brother until he peered into Bear’s eyes. He opened his mouth to blast him, and Bear held a hand up.

“We got the fucker,” Bear stated.

Diesel’s words fled.

“What?”

“Asshole hung around to see the damage. Tiny and I spotted him acting dodgy. We gave chase with Phil Gold, and we grabbed the cunt. Sadly, Gold wrenched his ankle and fell behind. Tiny accidentally fell on the prick.”

Drake and Diesel both snorted.

“With Tiny’s height and weight, he had a few bruises when Gold caught up. He’s been nicked. Tiny and I had to give statements so Gold could hold him. Otherwise, we could have been chasing anybody. And Tiny had to access the cloud to get the footage of him placing the bombs. Got two lovely shots of

his face. The fucker's cooling his heels downtown while the cops decide whether to charge him with terrorism," Bear said.

"Where's Tiny?" Drake asked.

"At the cop shop. He's making sure the fucker doesn't walk. If he does, Tiny and Sunny will nab him," Bear replied. His eyes searched Diesel's face, and he reached out and squeezed Diesel's shoulder.

"Hawthorne women are behind me laden with bags, brother. Let's get you a coffee, and you can update me," Bear said gently.

Diesel nodded and let his VP lead him somewhere quiet.

Diesel watched as, two by two, Hellfire went and saw their pres and old lady. They never spent more than ten minutes, but all returned more hopeful.

Diesel raised his eyes and looked at the clock. Shee had taken the boys to see Rooster and remained with him. Rooster was slowly coming around, and Diesel couldn't bear to see his brother. Roo would hate him for taking his leg, but Diesel had no other option.

"He wants to see you," Bear said half an hour later.

Diesel was still in the same place Bear had left him when he'd gone to visit Rooster, then Celt and Pyro.

"Can't face him," Diesel replied.

"You saved his life," Bear argued.

"He'll blame me for not letting him die," Diesel said.

Bear grabbed his shoulders and forced him to look at him.

"Go see him now, brother," Bear ordered, and Diesel scowled. That was a direct order from his VP.

Diesel got to his feet and sent Bear a dark stare before walking off. He hung around the door, listening to Roo talk to the children. Kit and Brax were pestering their father while Finn was quiet. They needed to hear Rooster speak, and they badgered him.

“Hey, come on boys, let’s give Dad a break,” Diesel suggested, entering. “His brains were scrambled.”

“Dad’s brains are always mush,” Kit shot back.

“Maybe, but they’re more mush now, kiddo. Why doesn’t Uncle Shee take you and get you a burger? There’s some downstairs.” Diesel knew Thalia had put food aside for the boys.

“Not leaving him,” Finn whispered.

Diesel saw his fear. This morning when they’d said bye, Roo had been whole. Now he was injured and lost half a leg. Diesel crouched down near him.

“Look at me, son. I won’t let anything happen to Dad. I promise. Go with Shee and get food. You need to be strong so Dad stays strong. If Dad’s worrying about you getting ill and weak, he won’t get better quickly.”

It was emotional blackmail, but who cared as long as Finn ate? Diesel watched as Finn chewed it over before nodding.

“You don’t leave him, Uncle Diesel,” the boy whispered.

“He’s my brother. I’ll always have his back,” Diesel promised.

He could feel Roo’s eyes burning into him.

The boys left with Shee, and Diesel shut the door on Spawn and Ratchet from the Devil’s Scythe. He took a couple of moments before facing Rooster. Rooster’s red eyes burned deep into his soul, and Diesel felt shame and regret rise.

“Couldn’t do it, brother. Could not let you die. We need you; the children need you. Weren’t gonna let you pass in agony,” Diesel blurted.

Rooster said nothing.

“Know you blame me for choosing your life over your leg. I get it. You don’t want me around. I’ll transfer to an ally. Shit’s cool. Whatever makes life easier for you.”

“Makes life easier for me?” Rooster finally spoke. “I have half a leg, asshole.”

Diesel's shoulders rounded. Here it came, the hate.

"But I'm alive. My boys have a father. Thanks to you for making the tough decision. I'm fuckin' glad they cut the thing off if it saved me and gave me more time with my kids. So, thank you, bro, for making sure my babies weren't made orphans today. Can't imagine what's going through your head. Shee's been telling me about the shitstorm you had to deal with. But brother, I mean it when I say thank you," Rooster said and bit his lip hard.

Tears were in his eyes, and they matched the ones in Diesels.

"Thought you'd hate me, blame me," Diesel muttered.

"Get that stupid shit out of your head, dumb fucker. I'd have haunted you if you let me die," Rooster responded with a broken laugh.

"Glad I didn't then, asshole," Diesel said, approaching the bed and taking Rooster's hand. They gripped one another tightly, their unspoken words meaning more than the spoken. Diesel felt a weight lift from his shoulders, threw his head back, and drew a cleansing breath. He'd needed that.

Diesel glanced around. A thought hit him. Where the fuck was Alice's grandfather? He'd been present when the bombs exploded but hadn't come to the hospital, nor had anyone approached him. Diesel sent an urgent text to Inglorious, warning him to be on guard. The last thing Alice needed was Willoughby approaching her without a support system.

CHAPTER TEN.

Alice

A loud commotion brought me out of my funk. The roars of the bikes and shouting from the rec room indicated something big was happening. I wearily hauled myself out of bed and walked into Inglorious's tiny bathroom. I looked like a mess and winced. Running hot water, I washed my face and used some of his deodorant. Honestly, I craved a shower but didn't want to take liberties with Inglorious.

It had hit me sometime this afternoon that I'd put Inglorious in a difficult position, and I owed him an apology. The poor guy didn't deserve to be stuck in the middle of my drama. But when things went tits up, Inglorious was the person I'd thought of. A lot of bikers held him in high esteem. So with Chance, Drake, Diesel, and Magic out of the equation, Inglorious was the one I turned to. There was something about him that made women trust Inglorious immediately. My hair was a tangled mess, and I took a few moments to brush it before leaving and moving to the rec room.

The frenzy hit me no sooner had I stepped through the connecting door. Brothers were rushing everything. Weapons were being passed around, and brothers were arming themselves. Inglorious stood in the middle bellowing orders, and I swear some of the Riders of Vengeance's men were here, too. Trip and Bomber saw me first and headed towards me at speed. They were enforcers for Unwanted Bastards and hulking guys with little to say.

"Stick with us. Hear me, Alice," Bomber demanded, and I nodded.

"Only leave with the pres. Let's get you coffee and fed," Trip grunted and hauled me toward a door. Fear was running up my spine; shivers crept up body. Trip dumped me gently onto a stool and began making sandwiches. Bomber stood by the door, guarding it with his weapon out.

“Are we under attack?” I asked, my mouth dry. Trip slid a soft drink in front of me, and I popped it before taking a gulp.

“Wait for the pres,” Trip said and gave me a plate.

Aghast, I stared at the four huge sandwiches and blinked.

“Trip, I can’t eat all this,” I muttered while glancing at the door. There was only one way into the kitchen area, but a large window looked out onto their grounds. Trip hit a button, and a cover slid into place over it. Unwanted Bastards was on lockdown? Why? Inglorious raised his voice several times, and pipes sounded overwhelming as further bikes roared up. Uneasily, I took a bite of the sandwich, but fear made it hard to swallow.

“Eat, Alice, you’re going to need your strength,” Bomber urged.

I forced two down my throat and shoved the others at Trip. To my amazement, Trip grabbed one and gave it to Bomber, who ate it in two bites. Trip gulped the other one down and continued watching the door by my side with his weapon out.

“Inglorious, Magic, and Onyx,” Bomber muttered and stepped aside. The men walked into the kitchen, and while Onyx remained impassive, Inglorious’s expression was a myriad of emotions. Magic rushed over and folded me into his arms. His tense body relaxed as soon as he looked around me.

“What happened?” I demanded.

“Hellfire’s been hit hard. A series of bombs have taken out their compound, garage, and shop. We think it’s the cult but aren’t certain. Hellfire got injured over there, and Clio went into early labour,” Magic said.

“Diesel?” the shriek left my mouth as my gut roiled in anguish, worry, and horror.

“Diesel’s alive and fine. He followed the wounded to the hospital. They have got some severe injuries; everybody’s waiting for updates. Alice, Trip, and Bomber are your personal bodyguards. Go nowhere without them, not even the toilet, Alice. Magic’s your shadow too. They tell you to do something, do it, girl. Even if you disagree. Alice, honey, this

shit is much larger than you can imagine. The cult fucked with an ally. Now we fuck back,” Inglorious said firmly.

“Do we know who was injured?” I whispered, trying not to let horror overwhelm me. If I started crying, it would be ugly.

“Pyro, Celt, Fanatic, Wraith, Slaughter, Rooster, and Clio are all in surgery, that I am aware of,” Magic replied, his arms gripping me.

“This is my fault,” I cried, my control slipping a little.

“No. The motherfuckin’ cult has fucked-up ideas. And greed drives them, honey. Not your fault at all,” Inglorious said gently.

“We need to get moving. I’m coordinating who goes where. Devil’s Scythe is coming here with Satan’s Warriors. My men are still riding in, which puts four MCs around Alice and this compound. Sending Fallen Warriors, Rage, and Devil’s Damned Disciples to the hospital as guards. I’ve contacted the Juno Group, and Akemi has informed me he’s already activating his team to protect Reading Hall. I think that may be a fallback, but no one commented.

“Jacob from Delta Force has phoned, and they are sixty men strong and ready to move when we say where. Hawthorne has recalled all men, and they are waiting for directions. Dylan is heading to the hospital, and Davies is in charge there. Willoughby keeps contacting me, demanding we hand over Alice for her protection. Claims he’s got fifty guys with him and is calling in more. I’ve informed Willoughby he approaches this compound, we will fire, and he’s waiting for instructions,” Onyx stated.

“Alice, stay strong, and please do as you’re told. If we don’t have to worry about you, we can concentrate on defence,” Inglorious asked, and I nodded. I was going to be a mouse.

We sat in the kitchen, watching the minutes tick by. An hour passed before Psych entered. His face was grim, and I braced.

“They’re all alive, but some are in critical condition. Clio has given birth to a boy. He’s ten weeks early and in NICU. Clio

haemorrhaged and had to have a complete hysterectomy. Pyro was speared by a pole going straight through his shoulder. He's in surgery, having muscle and nerve repairs. Celt has a broken arm in four places. He's having surgery for pins to be inserted. Wraith is fine, with few cuts. Slaughter has a deep laceration across his back, needs stitches, and has cuts and bruises, but will be okay.

“Rooster is having a leg amputated. It was crushed because he ran to rescue Fanatic, who'd not heard the alarms. Fanatic was locked in their painting shed. The boy needs a liver transplant. Klutz has volunteered, as he's a match. Reading Hall is being reinforced by Delta Force. Tati and Big Al are there with Louisa Mae, Rooster's three boys and their twins,” Psych said and left.

“Fuck!” Magic groaned.

“Who's leading Hellfire?” Trip called out.

“Bear, Sunny, and Tiny remained on scene. Diesel and Shee are at the hospital. Diesel's running Hellfire. He's the one making the medical decisions. Even had to choose Clio's operation because Chance was in the chapel, and no one could find him. The man's going to be suffering with his choices,” Psych said.

Psych stared at me. “Whatever bullshit made you run last night, put it to one side if you love him. Diesel feels shit, and the choices he's been forced to make today will cut him deep.”

“I know,” I whispered.

Diesel would take those decisions hard. And for Rooster to lose his leg. Oh God, what a mess, and it was my fault.

“Alice, that cult has no evidence you were there at Hellfire. This is them being insane fuckers. Onyx and Inglorious have our techs working with Leila and Nigel. This ain't the first mysterious explosion around people who crossed the cult. But there was never any proof. They took a disliking to Magic and Hellfire and flexed their muscles. But they picked the wrong victims this time,” Psych said and grinned. Crazy danced across his face.

I nodded wordlessly. The cult was pure evil. If they were finding other bombs, how many innocents had they killed? Why were they still walking the earth?

Magic reached out and squeezed my hand.



Two hours later, Inglorious walked in. He looked tired, and my heart wept for him. I'd pulled Inglorious into this mess. Fuck, I'd dragged all of them into my whacked-out shit.

"Everyone's moving to Reading Hall. It's flooded with men, Delta Force, security teams Liz has called in, and Juno Group. Hawthorne's teams are on their way and bringing extra cameras and stuff. Fallen Warriors will help them. We're sending Devil's Scythe and Satan Warriors ahead of us. You're gonna ride in the middle with me, Alice. We're going to be surrounded by Unwanted Bastards and Riders of Vengeance.

"Magic, we considered a cage, but a motorbike can move more freely and easily should we need to escape. Alice is safer with me than in a cage that can't go places a bike can. Should we be attacked, I aim to ride free with her. Your goal is to help hinder whoever is chasing. Got it?" Inglorious asked.

"Alice is my daughter," Magic said, and my heart wept. I loved Magic so damn much.

"And I will give my life to protect Alice. Trust me," Inglorious stated.

"Anything happens to me, man. Alice gets everything. Understand me?" Magic demanded.

I opened my mouth to talk and couldn't as tears clogged my throat. I hugged Magic tightly, trying to convey what I wanted. Magic understood as he knocked the breath out of my body as he reciprocated.

"We leave in half an hour," Inglorious spoke, and we nodded.



The ride to Reading Hall was anticlimactic. As Inglorious said, I was surrounded by bikers, and we must have made

quite a sight. We rode up towards the Hall, and I felt a flicker of excitement. I'd not seen the legendary home of Phoe and was happy to be visiting finally. However, I sincerely wished the circumstances were different. The convoy approached a set of gates, and we found them covered by ten guys, all heavily armed. One by one, they checked each rider coming through and told them to park in a field.

Men surrounded me as we walked the short distance to the Hall, and I was awed by my first sight of it. What was not awe-inspiring were the metal sheets covering every window. The building itself was magnificent but prepared for war. Men and women milled everywhere, all heavily armed and clearly on guard. As we approached, a woman in black trousers and a white shirt stood at the entrance.

"Magic, Inglorious, Onyx, welcome to the Hall. Please proceed inside and head to the grand drawing room. The other guests are there. The Hall's guards will briefly search you, so declare any weapons. You may keep them, but we need to know who has what," she said.

"Thanks, Liz," Magic rumbled and allowed himself to be patted down.

Five minutes later, we were in a room that took my breath away. It was stunning, like something from Downtown Abbey. I'd only ever seen the likes of this grandeur in movies, and Drake lived here! Bikers were milling around, and a table had been arranged at the far end laden with food.

"Inglorious and Onyx, how wonderful to see you again, despite the circumstances. Lance from the Fallen Warriors has asked you to join him in the billiards room, where he has set up extra surveillance. Now, miss, you must be Alice. I'm Mrs Ames, the housekeeper here. Let's get something to eat and drink into you, and I've already called down to let Tati know you're here," a friendly woman said, approaching.

"Magic, Dylan wishes to see you in the security office, if you don't mind," Mrs Ames continued. "Do not worry about Alice; there are men almost everywhere. Tati and some other old ladies are present, so Alice will be in great company. Now

scoot, all of you,” Mrs Ames spoke, took me by the elbow, and led me away.

Inglorious, Onyx, and Magic exchanged amused glances before disappearing. I guessed they’d been here before because none of them asked for directions.

Mrs Ames kept up a friendly conversation until Tati and Big Al arrived. Tati was carrying their twin boys, born on the 4th of June, at thirty-six weeks pregnant. From what I heard, Big Al had lost the plot completely and had ended up sedated when Tati went into premature labour. Both boys were healthy, Ajax the eldest and Brock the youngest. By all accounts, Big Al now thought Tati walked on water and worshipped her even more. The love between them made me smile, but not today.

Around them ran their two little girls and a boy they’d adopted. Kersey was three, Tinsley four, and Campbell was two. They’d renamed them upon adopting them because the mother had called them terrible names. The children adored their adoptive parents, which was evident in how they watched them.

My relief at seeing a Hellfire cut made me sob and fly across to Big Al for a hug. Big Al and Tati both obliged, offering soothing words. Big Al rubbed my back as I blubbered. I was sorry he wasn’t with his brothers. Big Al shrugged that away by saying he had the most crucial role. He had to protect the only princess Chance had. And nothing would drag him away from his sacred duty. I allowed them to soothe my fraught nerves as more people appeared.

Diesel

“Asshole, I want my granddaughter right now,” Willoughby demanded as soon as he answered the phone.

“Look, I don’t know what you think is happening here, but shit hit the fan. Hellfire was targeted because of Alice. Hellfire shed blood for her. What have you done except fly in and act like your dick is bigger than everyone else’s? Don’t give a flying fuck. You’re some big-deal billionaire. Hellfire has her safe and surrounded by MCs and security. So, back off now!”

Diesel let his temper loose. This was one asshole he could unload on.

“I get that, boy. But you hear me? I’ve looked for twenty-four years, hoping my grandbaby is alive. And Alexis is being hunted by the fuckers who killed her parents. Got one hundred guys with me. I could add to your security. Let me help,” Willoughby retorted.

“Don’t need it,” Diesel growled.

“Maybe, maybe not. Telling me an extra hundred men won’t make a difference? I know you’ve moved Alexis. That fuckin’ convoy was a dead giveaway. Boy, there’re no walls surrounding that Hall. Alexis is in more danger,” Willoughby shot back.

“Try attacking. See what happens. Because Reading Hall has a few surprises you will not be expecting. Ain’t got time to argue with you. I have a nephew in surgery. A brother recovering from an amputation and another with a severely broken arm. Fuckin’ send in your men, but don’t blame me for their deaths. Because every guard is under the order to shoot first and ask second,” Diesel taunted and cut the line.

Diesel looked towards the double doors. Nine hours, it had been. Two hours ago, they’d received news Klutz was recovering fine. Calamity and Aurora were both with him. Micah was under the knife right now, and with every minute that ticked past, Diesel tried to convince himself that no news was good news.

Drake had forbidden his children from coming to wait for their brother. He thought the situation was too dangerous. Tye and Carmine had blatantly ignored his orders and were flying in. The same with Jodie and Serenity. But the others were at the Hall, unaware their brother was injured. Only Harley was currently at the hospital, being a Rage prospect. Harley sat with his mother, locked in silence, and his eyes fixed on the doors. There’d be no moving Harley until they knew Micah’s position.

Rooster had been visited by every member of Hellfire. Shee and Sunny were with him now. Pyro had Levi and

Shotgun at his bedside, and both had guards on their rooms. Antony had arrived and caused a furore. After getting a dressing down from Lio, the hospital manager then had a distraught conversation with Andrew before being reamed in front of witnesses by Antony. The senator was on a tear from Hell by the time he appeared, and the manager got the full brunt of his anger. Threats of investigations were mentioned alongside multiple sackings.

Once Antony had made his position very clear, he took a stance by Phoe and observed everyone coming and going. It was plain where Antony's loyalties lay. Pyro, Celt, Rooster, and Klutz now had four guards on their doors and four guards at the entrance to the wards. And nobody dared speak against it. Diesel watched as the Hawthorne women moved around, dispensing coffee and hot tea. They'd arrived hours ago, and every hour they left and brought food and drinks back from a shop around the corner. The business must be making a killing, Diesel thought idly. He'd given Marissa a Hellfire card to pay on, although she'd refused at first, but took it after she saw how tired he was.

Diesel's eyes closed for a second and an image of Alice gave him the flicker of hope he needed to continue.

Willow

I left my boss's office with his blessings and prayers. He knew what we were about to tackle and wished us luck. In my hand, I held the needed paperwork signed off by Judge David, whom I'd called. The Judge was friendly with Rage and agreed to a meeting with me. Once I had her agreement and the deal signed, I walked to my boss and laid the plan out for him.

Grey had backed me up, outlining the finer detail. Our boss changed a few things before giving the nod. My strategy was a go. I was to collect our SWAT team and alert the one in North Carolina. Grey walked at my side as we headed to SWAT's floor.

"Willow, it's a good plan," he said.

I briefly allowed my hand to touch his.

“Bloody hope so. If this goes tits up, our careers are in the shitter,” I replied.

“Well, we’ll be there together, and Hawthorne or Artemis will hire us,” Grey retorted, amused.

“There is that,” I added and opened the door leading to SWAT.

They were on a Trust plane heading to Rapid City three hours later.

Willoughby.

Willoughby was frantic to reach Alexis. His grandbaby had been discovered, and Alexis was alive and well. Willoughby blamed himself for his son- and daughter-in-law’s deaths. He’d not recognised the level of evil Charles would sink to. It was little known that Willoughby knew Charles had committed the crimes. His DNA had been discovered on both bodies. But there wasn’t a trace of Charles afterwards. Willoughby, while hoping, had long resigned himself to the fact Alexis, too, had died. Natasha had been one long shot in a life of darkness, and she’d brought him the light.

Natasha was by his side now, muttering to his head of security. Willoughby admired the woman and her achievements. He had no idea what drove her to be so dedicated. His team had researched Natasha thoroughly, and nothing had been found that could have led to this career choice. But her success rate was ninety-five per cent, and he’d taken one last chance. And it had been well worth the risk.

How Natasha had found Alexis was a miracle he couldn’t deny. Now a group of MCs stood between him and his precious grandbaby. Willoughby’s fingers itched to throttle the man keeping her away from him.

“Let it go. Diesel loves Alice, and she him. Instead of bullying and blustering, try talking,” Natasha said.

“We’ll send a team in,” Willoughby decided, and as he spoke the words, Natasha shook her head.

“Alice is a part of their world. In the highly remote chance your team did penetrate the security around Reading Hall, if

one got injured, she'll never forgive you. And you're hounding Diesel when his nephew is in surgery. Try looking at it from his side. Wait for news Fanatic has come out of it okay, and then approach Diesel. Calmly and rationally. Don't forget, your imminent arrival made Alice run once already. Alice is probably blaming herself for what's happened.

"Your forceful personality is not a balm to a guilty girl. And no matter what you think, she will not fall into your arms and leave with you. Alice loves and adores Diesel, and he reciprocates. Willoughby, you may have been cheated of Alice's life, but don't risk alienating her before you even begin to make bonds. Keep calm and listen to the clues around you. Give something for Diesel to trust you with, or you won't see Alice any time soon. Alice will side with Diesel. Now, we have a lead. The FBI is flying in. Willow Ware is in charge of the operation. Willow is Axel's daughter, who is a founder of Rage MC. Let me open a line to her," Natasha asked.

Willoughby nodded curtly before returning to glare out of the windows. He just wanted to hold his grandbaby again. Did no one understand that?

Diesel

He parked his bike and tiredly began the walk to the Hall. Diesel's brothers walked alongside him, although some were missing. Micah had made it through surgery, and Phoe, Drake, and Harley were with him now, with guards on Micah's door.

Shee and Levi remained with Pyro in his room. Tiny and Shotgun stayed with Celt, and Rage had completely taken over from Hellfire concerning Micah. Diesel had let them have that one. Micah was as much their family as Hellfires. Bear and Smokey were guarding baby Michaelson while Bone and Lowrider had Chance's back. His phone rang, and he answered it and sighed. Fuckin' Willoughby again.

"Don't hang up, boy. I've spoken to Agent Ware and offered her my men for free. She's accepted," Willoughby spoke.

"And this depends on you seeing Alice, I guess," Diesel said as he walked around the corner and almost paused at the

amount of firepower on the lawn. He blinked before continuing to the Hall.

“No. I’ve acted like an old bull in a china shop. When Alexis wants to see me, that’s fine. I’ll wait. The priority is removing the threat against her,” Willoughby replied.

Diesel stopped walking, removed his phone from his ear, and looked down at it incredulously before putting it back.

“What’s the catch?” Diesel asked warily.

“There isn’t. Want my grandbaby safe, and this I can give her,” Willoughby answered.

“We’ll see,” Diesel replied. “Thanks for your offer.” Diesel disconnected and stared at his mobile again before heading into the Hall. He was barely through the door before Alice hit him in a hard slam, and his arms wrapped around her.

Diesel breathed in the scent of her hair and held her as close as he could get her. Alice snuggled into his body and hugged him without saying a word. Today’s angst and pain fled before her calmness, and he realised she soothed his ravaged soul.

“Come, we’ve got a room here, and you need to wash and sleep,” she finally murmured. Diesel followed her through the Hall to the green bedroom, where she promptly ran a shower and then called down to the kitchen for hot food. Diesel looked at her gratefully before heading in. He was surprised when she entered the bathroom and left a bathrobe. Diesel let the remaining tension be pummelled out of him by the water before pulling on the robe.

When he walked back into the bedroom, Alice had set food dishes up on the small coffee table and, to his surprise, there was clean clothing for him.

“Cowboy dropped it off,” Alice announced as Diesel drew some boxers on.

Alice watched unashamedly as he dressed, and Diesel found he liked it. Especially when she licked her lips.

“I wouldn’t bother dressing further. Everyone’s under orders to sleep for six hours. An FBI agent is coming in. She wants to see everyone then,” Alice said.

Diesel nodded and began attacking the food. He’d not eaten since the bomb blast, unable to force food past the emotional blockage in his throat.

It had been a tedious day, and his eyelids were drooping before he even climbed into bed. He lay on his side, and Alice hit the bed just after him and burrowed into his chest. Whatever the fuck Willow wanted could wait. For now, he had heaven in his arms.

Alice

I woke before Diesel and watched him as he slept. Diesel was usually an average sleeper, neither heavy nor light, but he slumbered heavily. I slipped out of his grip and headed into the shower. Thankfully, Magic had bought me some new clothing too, or I’d be stuck with what I had. Magic said he’d sent Marissa Hawthorne to get me some shit, and I was eternally grateful.

I dressed in the bathroom, so I didn’t wake Diesel, and quietly ordered coffee and sandwiches to be brought to our room. Mrs Ames had needed help in the kitchen, and the old ladies were helping her out from Rage. I spoke to Carly, who said they’d be with us soon, and woke Diesel up.

Diesel looked better than he had when he arrived earlier. His skin had more colour, but the worry lines remained. I supposed they would until his brothers got home. Diesel yawned and stretched, as Carly knocked on the door. I told Carly to enter, and Carly shot Diesel a mischievous look as the sheets piled around his waist.

Diesel sent her a cheeky wink, which made Carly laugh as she disappeared again.

“You ready, baby? Whatever bombshell Willow is about to drop on us will be a surprise,” Diesel asked as he tackled the food. He was starving, something Carly seemed to have considered. There were enough for four to eat, and clearly,

Diesel felt like he was eating for two. I nibbled at a sandwich as I considered his words.

“Whatever’s about to happen is fate, and I can’t change it, Diesel. The cult went after Hellfire and Magic with no proof of my existence. They came after Hellfire because you said no. How many others have they harmed? They’re vile, disgusting creatures who don’t deserve mercy or forgiveness. So I’m completely on Willow’s side. I just hope she plans to get the women and children safe,” I replied.

“We will face shit together, baby,” Diesel expressed and paused. “Willoughby is sending men to help. Will you be okay with that?”

I sighed. I might as well get this over with.

“Tell Willoughby to come to the meeting. But we’ll meet beforehand. Warn him not to be pushy,” I murmured.

Diesel sent me a sharp look before nodding.

“Willoughby won’t be far. I’ll call him,” Diesel replied.

“And tell Liz. One of her men may blow him away.” I laughed.

“That would be tragic, baby!”

“I know, but he’s an old man who lost his sons, his daughter-in-law, and his grandchild. Willoughby has gotta be hurting. So, let’s make it easier and meet with him now,” I said.

“My soft-hearted angel,” Diesel drawled as he sent Willoughby a text. It was replied to straight away. “He can be here in twenty minutes.”

“Fine.”

Holy crap, I was about to meet the last living member of my family. Shit!

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

Alice

I heard Diesel approaching and the rumble of his voice. There was no guessing that Diesel was warning Willoughby to behave himself. Another deep tone snapped a reply, and Diesel made a retort. Then the door opened, and Diesel entered. We were in Phoe's study, and I sat nervously in Phoe's chair. The man that followed Diesel took my breath away.

"Holy hell, I dreamt of you as a child!" I exclaimed, and the guy stopped.

Willoughby wasn't as old as I thought he'd be. Maybe about sixty-five, and he stood tall. His shoulders retained some broadness, and his frame was healthy. Willoughby was about six feet in total with the same colour eyes as mine and white groomed hair. He wore a costly suit, but his focus was on me.

"You did?"

"Yes, I called you White Knight."

"Yes, you did, Alexis. Because even as a child, I had pure white hair. Prematurely, so I might add. But you loved being a princess and making your granddaddy a knight," Willoughby answered.

His eyes watered, and he wiped tears away angrily. "Alexis, you look just like your mother. But you've got Edward's eyes."

"I wondered where they came from as neither of my parents... kidnappers... whatever, had the same colour."

"God, it's like looking at Hilary as a young woman. The similarity is uncanny. Here, I brought you this. It's yours, copies of pictures of you as a baby and with your parents. You don't need to look now, but it's there for when you get curious," Willoughby said, holding out a photo album.

Gingerly, I reached out and took it.

“Thank you. Please understand, I can’t look now. It would be too overwhelming just before this meeting. And thanks again for volunteering your men. I’m sure they will be helpful.”

“If it keeps you safe, then I’ll do anything. Whatever this operation needs to take those down responsible for your parents’ death and your kidnapping, they’ll have it,” Willoughby swore.

Strangely, I believed him. The anguish on Willoughby’s face couldn’t be faked, nor could his determination. Willoughby was ready to help in any way possible.

“For over ten years now, I’ve been Alice. Out of respect for my mom and dad, I wouldn’t change my name legally, but Alexis died metaphorically when she was kidnapped and raised in a brainwashing cult. In time, the news of my reappearance will lead to many calling me Alexis again. But my family always calls me Alice. Willoughby, I’m inviting you to do the same. Accept me as Alice,” I said cautiously.

Willoughby’s throat worked as he digested my words. I saw the inclination to deny them straight out of hand, but he wasn’t the fifth richest man in the world for nothing.

“So very honoured, dear, to call you the name you chose,” he finally replied.

Willoughby accepted the offer to be part of my family.

“Be warned. I have a mind of my own, and you won’t bully me. Nor make me give up Diesel.”

Willoughby scowled as he glared at Diesel. Diesel scowled straight back, and I hid a smile. There was no heat in either glare.

“Now, may I have a hug, grandfather?” I asked.

This time, Willoughby couldn’t control his tears as he tore across the room to fold me into his arms.

Willow

I’d taken over Aunt Phoe’s dining room, and there were stands with satellite images of the cult’s compound. The cult was heavily defended. There were also pictures of the twelve

Ministers. Intel claimed there were over two hundred and fifty men and an estimated similar number of women and children. We had blown-up photographs of buildings labelled with what they were used for and ten photos of ladies who seemed to oversee the others.

I knew damn well Uncle Chance's team had tortured a guy they'd held captive, and most of this information came from him. We'd been investigating the cultists ever since Uncle Chance called me in. This was gonna be a media frenzy when it broke. Women and children enslaved and abused, and the kidnapped granddaughter of the fifth richest man in the world.

This would make or break Grey's and my careers. We couldn't afford to have it go wrong. The SWAT leader and I already had shared words. Captain Myers wanted to go in quietly and not bring any buddies. I told him I'd tell his wife how brave but stupid he was. But Myers was swinging his cock, trying to overrule me. Well, I had a little test for Myers planned. We'd see who had the biggest dick.

Grey and I talked as the MC's Inner Circles arrived. Master Hoshi, Akemi, Simone, and Butch from the Juno Group joined us. Hawthorne walked in with Leila, Nigel, and Davies. Jacob, Casey's dad, was next with three men I didn't recognise by his side representing the Delta Force aspect. Hellfire officers who were fit were present, Diesel and Alice, Banshee, Tiny, Bear, and Big Al. Not seeing Uncle Chance leading them was strange, but I understood why. Finally, Willoughby Adams stepped in with his head of security and two other guys. They sat quietly, which caused me to raise an eyebrow at Grey, who shrugged.

"Let's start. Everyone knows who Alice really is and what happened to her," I said, and Alice blushed. "For those unsure, a quick recap. Alice was born to Edward and Hilary Adams. Edward was the eldest son of Willoughby, who is with us today. Willoughby had another boy who was disowned, Charles. Charles tortured and killed Alice's parents and kidnapped Alice, raising her as his own.

"Alice escaped the cult eleven years ago and helped bring down a smaller circle, but the Ministers who led it fled. We've

since discovered that the First Minister is Willoughby's brother Randolph. It is surmised, and we've not had confirmation, that Randolph pushed Charles to kill Edward and Hilary. And has arranged to wed Alice to control her grandfather's billions. His nephew, by marriage, also planned to marry her and is a viscous piece of work. We suspect Second, as he is known, of murdering several women. Questions?" I asked, peering around.

"Is Charles still alive?" Inglorious inquired.

Grey replied, "As far as we're aware."

"Carry on, Willow," Axel boomed, looking proud.

"We now know where the main cult is holed up with pictures and satellite imaging. Lidar flew over their camp and discovered hidden channels under the ground. We suspect they are escape tunnels, and we've identified all buildings in the compound, including those they use as torture chambers."

"Tell me the feds are going in, Willow, because if you guys are about to pussy out, we'll deal with it ourselves," Onyx called and sent Willow a direct stare.

"Yes, we're going in alongside two FBI SWAT teams and everyone who volunteers. I met with Judge David this week. Some of you know her. The Judge authorised a mass deputisation of any volunteers from this session."

"Sign me up!" Axel boomed, followed by cries from the others present.

With effort, I hid the smile at my dad being the first.

"Except I do not agree with taking civilians into a combat zone," Captain Myers spoke up, and snorts met the comment.

"None of you are law enforcement. Nobody has the training or skills to deal with a potential hostage situation," Captain Myers continued.

"Speak for your fuckin' self, sonny boy!" Jacob erupted. I sat back because this was precisely what I predicted would happen. "I'll put one of my Delta Force team against all of yours any day." Jacob's friends jeered the SWAT captain.

“Like to see you take down an Unwanted Bastard,” Inglorious chirped up. “How many of you are here?”

“Thirty,” Captain Myers replied.

“Fine, Psych, my VP against fifteen of yours. You capture Psych, Unwanted Bastards will follow your lead. Jacob, who are you nominating?” Inglorious sought.

Jacob looked at his men, and a slow smile crossed his face.

“Myself. I’m the eldest here. Try catching an old man,” Jacob taunted.

“Are you serious?” Captain Myers asked in disbelief.

“I’ll get the paintball guns from the shed. The entire estate is part of the game. FBI can wear blue vests, Jacob and Psych, green. Alert all security; a hunt is happening, and to ignore the men in vests,” Bear said.

I nodded. Now we’d show Captain smarmy face who he was up against. Psych winked as he strolled out.

“One minute head start, and then we come for you,” Captain Myers announced when everyone was kitted out.

I hung back and watched on the security monitors as the two FBI teams walked out cockily. Within an hour, they returned and were covered in paint and not so cocky. Captain Myers stood there with his mouth open as his guys were taken down one by one. When Psych and Jacob returned, they didn’t crow and just merely asked if their point had been proven.

The meeting moved forward speedily until it came to how we’d take the men out. I had planned to flood their water system with a sleeping agent, but Alice shook her head.

“That’s not feasible,” Alice said.

I waited patiently.

“The only time everyone eats and drinks together is at morning and evening mass. If you have people drinking at different times of the day and dropping off to sleep randomly, it will be a bloodbath.”

“Okay, anybody got any suggestions? I don’t want to storm the compound. The loss of life will be shocking and unimaginable,” I replied.

“Drones,” Lance said, and I looked across at him.

“Elaborate.”

“If we spike the drinking water for first mass, they should all fall to sleep, but anyone who doesn’t, we’ll use drones to send in a payload by air. Mine can carry the sleeping agent, and we’ll catch anybody still awake,” Lance suggested.

“They’ll see drones coming a mile away.”

Captain Myers shook his head.

“Captain, you’ve been staring at a drone the whole time and not even realised,” Lance said and pointed to the crow on the window ledge.

“That’s a drone?” Captain Myers asked, startled.

“Sure is, dude, and if I send a flock over the compound, the wind will finish the job. We just ensure the drones fly in the correct position, so they’re not against the wind,” Lance replied.

“I think we’ve got the makings of a plan. Let’s hash it out,” I said, and we got to work.

Alice

My head was spinning with all the information dumped on me during the meeting. After being so overwhelmed, I’d taken shelter in the vast library the Hall boasted. That was where Natasha found me.

“How are you feeling?” Natasha asked, sitting opposite.

“Shocked, stunned, adrift. It’s unbelievable that this is all down to two men’s jealousy of their brothers and greed. But what does it matter to you? Natasha, you did your job and discovered the missing heir of the world’s fifth-richest man. That’s quite a feather in your cap,” I said tiredly.

“Alice, you were my friend,” Natasha denied.

“I was your mark, Natasha. You stole my DNA,” I retorted.

“What would you rather I have done? Told you about Willoughby, got your hopes up, and the DNA didn’t match. Or it turned out that you were really Charles’s daughter? I couldn’t do that to you, so I thought it best you remain in ignorance.”

“So, you filched my DNA and hid everything for my own good? Natasha, you’re a great PI but a lousy liar. You can claim the fifty million reward,” I whispered. Money, it always came down to it.

Natasha let out a laugh.

“Oh honey, I don’t get that. Magic does, as he is the one who found you and then kept you safe. I have my fee from Willoughby, which isn’t small, and I’ve reunited a family,” Natasha replied.

“Magic gets the reward?” I asked, sitting up.

“Yes, Magic’s the one who discovered you. Magic gets it all. He’ll be able to rebuild the bar,” Natasha said with a smile.

“Magic has the money to rebuild anyway,” I murmured.

“Alice, I was a PI working for a lonely man. But I am and continue to be your friend. I know how hard it is to reconcile what you think of as betrayal, but I acted in your best interests. Honey, I researched every report on the cult you fled from, and I knew you’d suffered. I just honestly didn’t want to give you false hope. Maybe I should have shot straight from the hip. But it’s too late now. But I would love to remain friends,” Natasha spoke with sincerity in her voice.

I stared for a few moments as she sat there calmly. Natasha probably meant what she said, but I had been betrayed, and it was just another in a damn long line of them. I was considering what to reply when Diesel ran in.

“You’re needed. The cult has made contact,” Diesel exclaimed.

Natasha and I both rose and followed Diesel to the dining room.

“Listen,” Willow spoke as we entered.

Willow pressed play on a machine, and I recognised the Fifth Minister’s voice. The worm had crawled back out of his hole.

“I know you have Alexis, and we want her. Alexis must fulfil her destiny, which isn’t with a dirty biker. If Alexis doesn’t walk to the end of the road alone within the next hour, what happened to the Hellfire President and wife will be permanent alongside their child. You won’t see us coming. We could be nurses, doctors, cleaner, dinner ladies, or anyone. One hour Alexis, or can you handle the death of a baby?”

Diesel whipped his mobile out and dialled, putting his phone on loudspeaker.

“Bear, check Chance and Clio now!”

“They are fine, brother. Nobody’s been near except nurses or doctors,” Bear replied.

“Don’t care. Check them, Bear. I’ll wait,” Diesel yelled. We waited as tension built up.

A startled yell came from Bear and then a bellow of ‘Doctor’.

“Talk!” Diesel demanded.

“They’re both unconscious. A doc is coming,” Bear growled. “What is going on?”

“The cult got to them. They’re threatening Alice with leaving with them, or they will kill Chance, Clio, and Dax. Up the security on Dax. No one goes near the baby. Not even a doc or nurse. Gonna get Doc Gibbons and Paul over to the hospital. They are the only ones allowed to touch Dax and Clio. Understand me?”

Diesel disconnected the phone and slammed it onto the table.

I held a hand over my mouth. That poor baby being threatened by such evil. And Clio, who’d suffered so much, was now drugged against her will. And Chance would feel he failed them.

“I’ll do it,” I whispered. There was no other choice.

“No!” Diesel hissed, spinning so violently I stepped back.

“Are you gonna risk their lives? A baby’s innocent life for mine?” I demanded.

“Alice, you can’t do this,” Magic said as my grandfather stared at me. His colour had drained, and Willoughby looked old.

“Yes, Alice can do this. And we’re going to let her,” Willoughby finally spoke.

Everyone’s heads snapped to him.

“Are you fuckin’ serious? You’re gonna let the cult get their hands on her?” Diesel yelled, looking maddened.

“Can Magic, Alice, Diesel, Willow, and I please move somewhere else, private?”

Willoughby inquired, peering at the bodies in the room.

Willow moved us into a side room, and Willoughby took a deep breath.

“This must remain between us. Any hint of this information and the government will penalise everybody here. I can put a tracker on Alice. No, not an FBI one that they’ll remove. The tracker is virtually unreadable by any equipment and doesn’t cause a problem. We use nanotechnology with them to render them invisible. We’ll insert one straight into Alice’s body. Luckily, I have several with me. We can put one into her arm, and it will attach to her muscle, and they are easy to extract,” Willoughby said as everyone looked shocked.

“Oh, big brother is tracking us,” Magic quipped with a frown.

“No, they are used for the military. To track our soldiers so we can go in and rescue them. The trackers are experimental, but this is an emergency. My company will regulate the use of them. We’ll issue numbers for each one, and the details of the soldiers will be entered into a database. If they get captured, it means the rescue team will find them immediately. They are undergoing trials, and they have been highly successful. We

can let Alice go and track her straight to the cult. Agent Ware, could you be ready to deploy tonight?”

“Yes, everyone is in place. Just need to travel there. The planes are on standby,” Willow responded.

“Then we have an answer. I’ll meet them. Let them take me, and you track me. Then spring your operation,” I replied slowly.

Diesel shook his head in denial.

“Alice won’t be alone. I’ll be with her,” Natasha said from the doorway.

“No!” Willoughby snapped. “This isn’t what I hired you for.”

“And you have a child,” I added.

“And I’ll still have a kid when the rescue party arrives. But think. The cult needs leverage against Alice to force her into shit. Yeah, holding Chance, Clio, and Dax over her head is great. But a physical presence they could use? Alice won’t allow anyone to suffer, and they’ll bank on that. If they have a friend hostage, then they’ll leave Chance and his family alone. The cult will use me to make Alice obey,” Natasha rationalised.

Willoughby scowled.

“That is going beyond the duties you were hired for,” he stated.

“But not past the boundaries of friendship,” Natasha retorted.

“Natasha, these men, they’re not right. The Ministers can and will hurt you and maybe even rape you. You can’t do this,” I said firmly.

“That’s a risk we’ll have to take. My guess is as soon as they get you to camp, they’ll want to marry you off. So, they will whisk you away to prepare you for the ceremony. The concern is where the Fifth Minister takes Alice. Will they keep her at the compound where they are safe or take her across state lines to Georgia, where they can legally marry?” Natasha mentioned, and a chill hit my stomach.

“That’s where my trackers come in handy. If they take Alice elsewhere, they can’t all travel, and we could nab them on the road. If they keep Alice in the compound, the plan works,” Willoughby suggested.

“You aren’t giving Alice to them!” Diesel exploded.

“I’m not. Alice has already decided,” Willoughby spoke, looking me in the eye. “Haven’t you?”

“Diesel, we can’t risk the baby being harmed. I’ll be safe with the tracker, and you will come for me. You always do. I have to do this,” I whispered as a tear tracked down my cheek.

I hoped Diesel would understand, but by the looks on his face, he didn’t.

“Could you and I live together happily, knowing it cost Chance his son? Or Clio? Could you live with that guilt? I can’t. We have to play this out, but we’ll stab them in the back, Diesel. They won’t be expecting us; if they are, they’ll expect a frontal assault. Not a sneaky water and airborne attack. It’s one night we’ll be apart, and we can take down some of the evillest people who lived,” I explained. “I have to finish what I started all those years ago, it’s time to stop running.”

Diesel shook his head. “You better be safe, baby.”

“I will. The Ministers won’t hurt me too much before the wedding because it must look real. Natasha coming too gives them a hold for me to behave. The cult won’t know we expect this. Please trust me and let me go,” I whispered.

“Alice, you’re my life and my soul. I love you, and I can’t stop you. But God help them should one hair on your head be harmed!” Diesel threatened.

“I know,” I said, smiling.



Thirty minutes later, Natasha and I walked toward the awaiting black sedan. A man was waiting outside and sneered as we approached.

“She’s not alone,” he spoke to someone in the car.

“Bring them both. Alexis will behave for her friend. How kind of you to bring another wife,” Fifth Minister drawled.

“Into the car,” the guy demanded, waving a gun.

Natasha and I swapped glances. In the trees were men waiting for our emergency signal. We’d agreed upon it before leaving. Fifth Minister and his minion could be captured right now. But it would leave Chance and his family open to danger.

Without a word, I climbed in with Natasha beside me. We’d both had trackers inserted and knew they were working because Willoughby had logged us in and made us walk around for ten minutes while he checked their signals.

“Well, Alexis, how nice to see you again,” the Fifth Minister sneered.

I glared coldly and saw doubt flicker in his eyes. Deliberately, I turned my attention off him and stared out the window.

“Do not turn away from your master!” the Fifth Minister growled.

I continued to ignore him, as did Natasha. From experience, I understood this asshole had delusions of grandeur. By ignoring him, I showed complete disrespect, and my lack of fear would irritate him.

“Keep up that attitude, bitch. When my cock is between your legs, you’ll be mewing a different story,” Fifth Minister snapped.

When Natasha and I refused to answer, he turned away, frustrated. We exchanged glances from the corner of our eyes. Score one for us.

CHAPTER TWELVE.

Alice

As we had hoped, we were shipped to North Carolina. Fifth Minister put us on a private plane, and we flew back immediately. It was dark when we landed, but it didn't matter. Everyone else was right behind us. Fifth Minister kept up his threats until I yawned and closed my eyes. I could see Fifth Minister was frustrated and dumbfounded by my behaviour. He'd known me since I was four, and I was a completely different person now. Fifth Minister wasn't sure how to handle this version of me.

As soon as the plane landed, an escort of ten men surrounded Natasha and me, and we were whisked away. They all wore the uniform of Disciples, so there was no pleading with them. Natasha was holding her own, too. Every time one sneered at her, Natasha stared coldly down her nose until they looked away. Despite the desperate situation, with how small she made them feel, it was fun.

We swept through the heavily guarded gates, and Natasha and I were forced to exit the car. Standing at the top of the steps of the building, which they used as a church, were First Minister, Second, and my uncle, the Eighth.

"Alexis, we've been so worried about you," my uncle said, walking towards me.

"Bullshit," I snapped and spat at his feet.

Charles stopped as shock crossed his face. Fifth Minister joined the others. First appeared paler and older than ever. While Second was as mean and big. If not bigger.

"What did you say?" Charles gasped in horror.

"Bull... shit."

"How dare you!" First exclaimed. "Eleven years in the wild has ruined you."

“Yup, because now I know what women’s rights are. What paedophiles are, and I’m looking directly at four examples. I came to inform you to fuck off. Because I know who and what you are. Marry a raping pig? Not happening,” I said, going with the plan Natasha and I had discussed.

“Shut your mouth!” Second bellowed.

“Why? Frightened someone will hear? That would be a shame, wouldn’t it, if everyone learned the truth?” I sneered.

“I’ll go to hell before marrying you. And if I don’t check in within forty-eight hours, safe and sound, with my friends, I will be reported as kidnapped. So, see ya.”

Angry now, I turned on my heels and walked away. Two hands shot out and grabbed me, and I gazed calmly at the Disciples.

“Take your fucking hands off me, assholes. Or assault and abuse will be added to the charges of kidnapping. I came to tell you one thing. Fuck you. I will not marry you. If you don’t release me, you’re responsible for what happens next,” I said peacefully.

“Alexis, you’ll go nowhere. I am your father, and you will do as you are told. This has always been your destiny to wed First and Second Ministers. Whatever the time out there taught you, you were born into this church and will obey your leaders. Should you not, your friend here will be given to several guys who need a wife. Many men here need a concubine. I am sure your companion would serve pleasantly as one. She is not important to me, only to you,” Charles stated.

I twisted free and turned to face him.

“So, this is what pure evil looks like. Threatening to rape someone because I know the truth about you. Fine, go ahead; you still won’t force me to marry you,” I said with defiance.

My uncle stepped back, stunned. But Second wasn’t and issued the threat I expected.

“Take the concubine to my quarters. We’ll have some fun tonight. And in the morning, we’ll see how she’s doing.”

“Stop!” I cried, hoping my acting would fool them.

The men hustling Natasha away paused as First Minister held a hand.

“Yes, Alexis, my dear,” he said, licking his lips. First Minister believed he had me over a barrel.

“I’ll do it. Don’t hurt Natasha,” I begged.

My uncle grinned as my defiance fled, and I became what he thought. A weak woman. Little did he know.

“Tomorrow, we’ll marry. In the meantime, Second will watch your friend,” First declared. No, that wasn’t the plan. I had to think quickly.

“Natasha stays with me, or I shall kill myself. One way or another, I’ll succeed. Harm Natasha, and I will die,” I replied desperately.

Second growled but First held up a clawed hand.

“After we marry, you can play with the concubine. But we need to wed Alexis,” he said. “Keep your friend. Escort them both to the isolation room and prepare Alexis for marriage.”

Natasha and I exchanged glances as we were led away. Well, our plan was working so far.



As sunrise approached, I was waiting to be collected with Natasha. All night I’d been picked and preened over by women who overlooked me as much as I ignored them. There was confusion on their faces about who I was and why I was suddenly marrying the First and Second Ministers, but none asked. Several sent me pitying stares, to which I responded with my own cold look.

The door opened, and I was escorted out with Natasha and a guard full of Disciples. We were taken to the small lobby in church, where I was supposed to walk down the aisle. They left us there with guards outside.

“Shit, I ain’t wearing this,” Natasha growled, ripping the sleeves off her shapeless gown. Laughing, I did the same, and

then we tore it to knee length. Now our arms and legs were free.

“Don’t freeze,” Natasha said.

I’d confided in Natasha that I did Ju-Jitsu and held a black belt. I knew how to kill a guy and defend myself. The third gong called for the last few congregation members, and then the song rose as they sang a hymn. This was it. They’d drink from the hallowed well, which hopefully was drugged.

“What have you done?” a man growled as he opened the door and saw our clothing.

“Fuck you, asshole,” I snapped, and he raised an eyebrow.

“You’ll learn when your legs are splayed over that altar and Second is fucking you,” he snarled and yanked me out.

I ripped my arm and strode down the aisle. Natasha was dragged to one side by two guards. She sent me a nod as I reached the altar and stopped.

“How dare you disrespect me!” First Minister shouted.

“Fuck you!” I yelled, and he stepped back in horror.

Gasps arose from the congregation, and I turned to them.

“I am here against my will. Kidnapped by Fifth Minister, so I would be forced to wed those two raging assholes. This marriage, as farcical as it is, is against my will and plus, you can’t legally marry your own Great-Uncle. I escaped the other compound eleven years ago...”

“Shut your mouth, woman!” Charles yelled and stepped forward to strike me. I caught his arm and shoved it up his back before forcing him forward with a shove.

Horrorified gasps hit me again.

First looked frightened at what I’d announced. He clearly weighed up what I’d learned.

“I escaped eleven years ago and discovered everything these assholes taught us is a lie. Girl children do not get married outside until they are sixteen, at the very least. If anyone copulates with a child under sixteen, they are predators and

rapists. They are arrested and locked away for the safety of the population.

“Women are not forced to marry multiple men. Women have the right to vote, drive, work in a job they choose, and have an education. The assholes couldn’t get a woman in the real world and kept you as slaves. No, they have to use captured and ignorant women as sex slaves because they have no other option. And I’ll prove it.

“Everyone here thinks First Minister is protected by God and talks with God’s voice. That God speaks through him, and we do as God orders.”

Quietly, I moved behind First Minister as he watched me warily. Casually, I stepped forward and, in a smooth twist, snapped his neck and let his body fall. Screams echoed from the congregation as men froze around the church.

“If that asshole were appointed by God, I couldn’t have killed him. Instead, he was ordained by the devil. You have all been fooled and stripped of your rights.”

I noticed some women were falling asleep. Second was staring at his uncle in shock.

“That man’s name was Randolph Adams. Not First Minister of God. His brother is Willoughby Adams, the fifth-richest man in the world. Fifty years ago, Randolph fled from an accusation of rape, hid here, and started this cult. Randolph and his followers kidnapped women from the real world, brainwashing and subjugating their rights. For those women born in the cult, none of you were told any different. Second Minister is his nephew,” I explained as the ladies seemed horrified.

Half the congregation was asleep, but the guards were looking suspicious. Their attention needed to be on me.

“And you are not my father. You raped and abused my mother before killing her and tortured and killed my birth father. Yeah, I know who you are, Charles Adams,” I yelled, and my uncle stared in horror. Second flew towards me, and I held up a hand.

“And uncle dearest, I made a new legal will. The money that Willoughby had for me in a trust fund, anything else I own, goes to Aston Summers. You can’t get a fuckin’ cent!” I screeched.

Second came toward me with sheer fury on his face, but he was slow. I took his knee out as Natasha moved on her two guards. Second hit the ground, and I stamped on his neck. I didn’t care if I crushed his throat. As long as he stayed down.

“You bitch, Alexis! You’ll die mewling like your parents!” Charles yelled.

“Doubt it? Look around, Charlie boy. Most of your men are asleep,” I cried. “Did you believe I wouldn’t discover the truth and take steps? That my friends and family would hand me over so easily? Fool!”

“Hilary screamed when I fucked her, and I did her in every hole. Bitch knew what it was to have a real man take her!” Charles shrieked.

“No, Mama learned what it was like to be raped by somebody who couldn’t get his own girlfriend!” I retorted.

“Shut your mouth!” Charles yelled.

“Fucking make me! Come on, think you’re the big, bold guy because you can terrorise women and rape them. Try someone who knows her rights. Oh, right, you ain’t got your army behind you!” I shrieked.

Charles looked around. Only a few men remained standing, and he himself was yawning.

“What did you do?” he asked as he hit his knees.

“Made sure the FBI could take you fuckers alive. You’ll never see the outside of a jail cell again!” I sneered.

“Edward begged me to live. He was a coward... begged me on my knees as Second fucked his ass... he denied me everything. Second tore his ass apart. Edward told me... that no matter what I did to him... Hilary’s pain was ended, and soon so would his. Second made him scream... for that defiance.” Charles hit the floor and shut his vile mouth.

A small man entered. Master Hoshi. I raised an eyebrow, somehow unsurprised to see him here. Beside Master Hoshi appeared four people. All wore breathing masks.

“I heard and witnessed Alice. The question is, what now?”

“I want him to suffer, to bleed and howl like my parents. Charles needs to be fucked by the biggest dildo you can find and make him tear and cry. I need him to be in agony for weeks, not mere hours. Charles needs to suffer in every which way possible,” I snarled.

With each word, the hate building up drained.

“That can and will be arranged,” Master Hoshi replied.

“I only wish to know when he is dead, Master Hoshi, please. Not what happens to him,” I whispered, suddenly appalled at my actions.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Natasha hit the floor as the airborne sleeping agent hit her system. I was fighting off sleep, too. Master Hoshi helped lay me down as my eyes closed.

“That can be done, child,” Master Hoshi replied softly.



I sat on the steps of the church, wrapped in Diesel’s arms, and watched the commotion. Willow had stormed the place and found everyone asleep. Including Natasha and me. The FBI immediately began cuffing men and women to ensure no fight. Over one hundred agents were now on the scene. FBI vans were carting off the groggy adults while child services organised a wing in the local hospital for the youngsters to be held. Over two hundred children and one hundred and forty women had been rescued. Two hundred and sixty men, including the Ministers, had been arrested.

The story had taken over the national and international news. Willow had released one statement and refused others. Her boss was on site and praising the hell out of her for a bloodless infiltration. Those who’d come with her, the MCs, Juno Group, Delta Force, and Hawthornes, were deputised as

per Willow's plan and now sweeping the compound, searching each building in pairs.

Natasha sat with me, yawning as we tilted our heads together and leaned on one another. Despite the surrounding noise, we were enjoying the peace of the moment. Just the three of us, and we enjoyed the feeling of bringing down an evil cult. And an asshole family who were genuinely sick at heart.

"Willow!" Grey yelled. We looked up as Grey ran in her direction. "We found it. The room!"

I got slowly to my feet.

"Willow, I have to see," I murmured.

Willow glanced across and shook her head.

"Alice, you've done enough."

"No, I need to see this. To know," I insisted.

Willow and her boss exchanged glances before he gave a sharp nod.

"Twice, Miss Adams helped us bring down a cult. She's earned the right."

Willow didn't look happy but allowed Diesel, Natasha, and me to follow her. We entered the Minister compound and discovered Dylan Hawthorne standing guard with his second in command, Davies.

"Don't go down there, Alice," Dylan warned, and I shook my head.

I had to.

I had to understand how deep their evil ran. The steps had been hidden under a trapdoor so cleverly cut that it looked like part of the actual floor. A slow cold crept into my bones as I walked down the stairs, with Diesel supporting me. I was about to face the true evil of the cult, and I wondered if I was ready.

We stepped into a small corridor, and Grey pushed open two double doors. I took a few breaths before I squared my

shoulders and entered. Nothing could have prepared me for what I was about to witness. It was worse than Hellfire had been informed.

The walls had years painted at the top. Starting from 1970, vertically under them were photos of women and under that their names. A shelf was next to each name and picture. I was sickened as I realised it carried microfilm, a locket of hair, a piece of jewellery, or a different keepsake. As I moved around the first, second and third walls, and came to the 1980s, videotapes appeared and DVDs, before turning to flash drives. The assholes had filmed the women's pain.

There were more than hundreds of women here, but I also spotted young men. I saw an opening, headed through it, and discovered another full display. I didn't look at the pictures but continued walking into a third and fourth room. There were thousands of victims. The FBI and police could give thousands of families peace. Fifty years, the pieces of filth that came here had kidnapped ladies and raped and tortured them for their pleasure. And with the films, it would be easy to prosecute them now. I drew in a deep breath and walked out, stopping as an image caught my eye.

It was an older version of me. No doubt my mother. Like the rest, her name and a video of her rape were there. Diesel saw me stop and came barrelling over. His eyes widened at the picture, and he pulled me close.

"Do you want me to remove it? Willow won't say a word or Grey," Diesel asked.

I thought about it and then shook my head.

"No, my family paid the price. When they start to rake us over the coals, we can prove Willoughby and my father knew nothing."

There was another picture below my mother's. Edward's. Charles, the sick fuck, had filmed both their attacks.

"The world will soon realise that Randolph and Charles were Adams. They'll also know that Hilary, Edward, and Alexis

Adams were their victims, and that Alexis Adams brought them down,” I said, squaring my shoulders.

I did not envy law enforcement for the tracking down and notification of the victims. Cadaver dogs had already discovered a mass grave. Rumours were they’d found a second. I guessed they buried them when they didn’t have the pythons and hyenas. At last, those with bones would finally receive a decent burial. Those who the animals had eaten never would.

Slowly, I stroked my parents’ faces and swore their deaths hadn’t been in vain. I’d lived and gained their vengeance. Their stories would be heard amongst the many victims. I walked back upstairs and out into the open air. Willoughby was sitting on the steps, trying to brace himself to go down.

“Don’t, Grandad. We brought evilness to an end because who knows how long the cult would have continued,” I said.

Willoughby glanced up at me and offered a small smile.

“We got justice for them. My parents will rest easy,” I added, and he nodded.

Diesel hauled him off his feet, and together the three of us, with Natasha trotting behind, headed for his limo.

Diesel

The fallout from the arrests and the cult being brought down was truly horrendous. At first, the media was full of how the cult had been bloodlessly brought to its knees. Alice’s name as, Alexis Adams, had been mentioned, and the story about her parent’s murder was dragged up once again. Willoughby and Alice sat through the reports and mourned. Then Charles and Randolph’s names were leaked, and all hell broke loose.

As soon as they were released, Willow gave a statement declaring Willoughby and Alexis were not part of the investigation. Instead, Willow reported that Willoughby had helped bring his brother and son down. And Alexis had been highly important in ending both branches of the cult. But it didn’t stop them from being hounded. Finally, Diesel,

Willoughby, and Alice boarded a plane for a small private island owned by a friend of Willoughby's.

Diesel had been uncomfortable leaving Hellfire and had only done so because Chance ordered it. Celt was out of the hospital alongside Pyro, and while they had a lot of healing to do, they were free. Clio had been discharged to home care, and Chance was spoiling the hell out of her. Dax was not strong enough, but from his birth weight of three pounds and eight ounces, the tyke now weighed five pounds. Chance was amused at how much his son ate, and while not one hundred per cent, Dax was off the critical list.

Rooster had been shunted to a private therapy centre by Phoe, and she wasn't arguing with him. His boys were staying with her; they adored their Auntie Phoe and how she spoiled them. Diesel snorted at the thought. Rooster was struggling, which was why Diesel hadn't wanted to leave. However, Rooster told him to go, so he did.

Some reporters had discovered them but were chased off by security boats manned by Willoughby's team. So they could relax on the beach and come to terms with what they'd experienced and suffered.

Diesel was watching Alice as she played in the ocean in a modest bikini. She was becoming more relaxed as the days passed. Natasha had given her goodbyes but promised to stay in touch and visit. She'd another cold case to chase, and we knew she'd find her target. Natasha always did.

Alice had asked how Natasha found her, and Natasha had blushed. Basically, she'd been in town when the church had been making discreet inquiries if anyone had seen Alice. Natasha had snapped a picture of the leaflet they were holding but not giving out and had left it there in her phone and memory for years. Until she saw Alice on the TV and recalled the picture. It had been mere luck Natasha had the image. Willoughby had roared at Natasha's sheepish expression as she admitted her sins and doubled her reward.

Willoughby had given Magic the fifty million, and he'd automatically donated all of it to the Trusts. Willoughby had

been affronted until Diesel spoke quietly to him. Diesel then sent him toward a guy who could use fifty million and coached Willoughby on how to talk to him. Willoughby wasn't bothered by the loss of one hundred million; that was mere cents for him. Diesel sighed as he thought about the billionaire asshole who would be his in-law.

Willoughby loved his trappings, whereas Diesel and Alice liked a simpler life. Alice was already struggling with reining Willoughby in as he bought her expensive gifts she'd never use. But Diesel planned to let them battle it out. His mind was focused on how to repair his club. They had money in the accounts and in the pot, but they had nowhere to live and work. It was a puzzle he needed to solve.

Diesel blinked as water splashed his chest, and he peered at a pert bottom running towards the sea. With a growl, Diesel took off after Alice, who shrieked and tackled him as he hit the waves. They both went down together.

“Love you!” Alice gasped, shoving her hair from her face.

“Love you back, baby,” Diesel proclaimed and claimed her lips in a bruising kiss.

Willoughby

From his perch high on the cliff, he put out his cigar and sipped his brandy. His gaze was fixed on Alice and Diesel playing in the sea.

Oh, what plans Willoughby had for that pair of lovers. If only they had realised! Willoughby's eyes twinkled as he relished the battles with Diesel ahead. He was a decent man, Willoughby decided. Well worth being his joint-heir. Diesel just wasn't aware yet!

EPILOGUE.

Chance

One month later.

He stood looking out at the land through the trees, a ten-minute walk away was his home. Clio was resting with Dax, both safe and sound at last. Dax had reached six pounds and had been released from the hospital earlier than anyone thought. His tiny baby son was a guzzler and wouldn't stop eating. For his poor start in life, Dax was making up for it.

Bikes roared, and he heard Hellfire park behind him. Chance didn't turn around. Not even when Bear stood by him and placed a hand on his shoulder. One by one, Chance sensed Hellfire spread out in a semi-circle as they all looked at their president.

"I see it like this. By the road, an eight-foot high, two-foot-thick wall. Strong steel gates. Right there," Chance pointed, "the new clubhouse. Behind that field, there, our homes. The clubhouse at the front and houses at the rear, protected. All enclosed by this wall. See those trees? They lead to my home and make an easy path to connect us.

"That brown field, in the far distance. Put a wet room in there, deep underground. Build a separate road, so perps don't come near our families. Behind that, we'll have the incinerator. Follow that fence. This would be our land, for our women and family. Over there, guest accommodations for visiting clubs. And there in the centre, a massive swimming pool for the youngsters, and a huge playground and an inside play centre for the children in the winter. There are one hundred acres here, boys. More than enough for each of us to have a home here.

"On the old Hellfire land, a five-bay maintenance repair shop. Next to it, another garage for design work. New bigger parts store. Want a car wash, those earn good cash, and we'll section the old forecourt off as a paid parking lot. Parking is

tight in Spearfish now. It's a money earner," Chance announced and finally looked at his brothers.

"We own this land?" Bear asked.

"Hellfire owns it, and we can build. Permits already gone through thanks to bringing that fuckin' cult down and what it cost us," Chance said.

"Peaceful," Pyro commented, cocking his head.

"Could you live here, brother?" Chance urged.

"Yeah, Bunny will love this. Building a community and giving her a family again," Pyro answered shortly.

"No skanks, I'm done with them," Rooster spoke, and the others nodded.

"This is our future," Celt said, nodding.

"We can look forward," Tiny agreed.

Shee stepped toward Chance and reached into his cut. He pulled out a package and handed it to Chance. Chance frowned but opened it, his fingers pausing at what was inside.

Silently, he held it tightly to his chest and then let the original Hellfire MC flag flutter open in the wind. One edge was slightly charred, and Chance saw where two rips had been mended carefully.

It was his father's flag; somehow, it had survived the explosion and belonged with them. All was right in Chance's world. Like the flag, Hellfire would continue to flourish, thanks to a fifty-million-dollar bonus he'd not expected. Paid into his personal bank, Chance intended to use it to rebuild and give his brothers the community they all needed. Rooster's house would be the first to be built.

Chance squeezed the flag one more time.

His dad would approve.

CHARACTERS.

Hellfire MC.

Chance Michaelson. DOB 1973. Chance is the Hellfire President. His father started Hellfire. Chance looks like Tim McGraw with long hair. He is Drake's older cousin. They were brought up together and are as close as brothers. They both fought to get their clubs clean from the filth that infected them.

Chance is six foot four and projects a deceptive leanness. In fact, he has a broad chest and shoulders that are muscled, not heavy like a wrestler, but with a clear muscle definition. He's lean-hipped and long-legged. Chance's hair is shaved at the sides, and he's left the top long and tied back in a ponytail. He has sharp, bright green eyes with laughter lines. Chance has a neat goatee the same colour as his hair, a dark brown that sometimes looks black. He has a pin-up girl on his right arm. He's married to Clio and is the father to Louisa Mae.

Bear. Bear is the Hellfire VP. Chance lets it slip to Drake that Bear has a dead sister. Phoenix calls him Bearbear. Bear loves his food and drink and doesn't care who knows it. His real name is Sky Blue. Bear can be hotheaded and hot-tempered, but he's loyal and caring. Bear's hair is light brown, cut short at the sides and long on top. He has a floppy lock that keeps falling over his eyes.

His eyes are light hazel, which look amber when the light catches him just right. Bear has a strong face, not classically handsome but eye-catching and attractive. His jaw is square, and a goatee hides firm but plump lips. Bear is six foot seven with shoulders as wide as a wrestler and his chest just as broad. He has long legs and thick muscles. He's married to Thalia.

Sunny. Sunny is Hellfire's Lieutenant. He is a legacy like Chance. His father was also a founder. Zeus put four bullets in Sunny and then tried to kill him in the hospital. Doc Gibbons forged a death certificate, and Sunny joined the army. Sunny's Mom and daughter Olivia moved to Florida for their safety.

He's now left the military and could have demanded VP back but settled for Lieutenant. Sunny thinks there is still dirt left in Hellfire and is there to clean it up.

Diesel. Diesel is Hellfire's Sergeant at Arms. He buys and flips houses, putting half the profit into the Hellfire coffers. Diesel is a quiet man who speaks when he has something to say. He'd once had an old lady who'd split from him during the fight to get the club clean. Diesel is Pyro's close friend. Pyro beat him badly when Pyro learned his father had been arrested. He is attracted to Alice, who works at Magic's bar. Diesel's old lady is Alice.

Big Al. Al is Hellfire's Chaplin. He has an old lady called Tatianna and owns a pawnbroker. Al is the only First Gen left and is over twenty years older than Tati. He and Tati want to adopt three children whose mother murdered their seven-year-old sibling, and Tati gave birth to twin boys.

Rooster. Rooster is Hellfire's Secretary and handles their money. He has three kids, all boys but isn't with their mother, and he has custody of them. Rooster loses his left leg below the knee in an explosion on Hellfire.

Tiny. Tiny is an enforcer for Hellfire. Tiny is sullen and quiet, but with reason, his mother was murdered by his father, and he hates women being abused. He owns a gym. Tiny likes a specific top-shelf whiskey that Bunny threatens to ban him from at the bar.

Banshee. Shee is an enforcer for Hellfire. Shee buys houses and rents them out; he also loves shopping for women. He had a woman who's done a bunk with his kid, and they'd never found them. Shee had been searching for four years. His son is called Troy, and his ex is called Tracey. Shee's one of those who can keep Louisa Mae happy.

Chatter. Chatter had witnessed his girl gunned down in front of him when Hellfire took their club back from the evil men who'd infested it. He works on car designs.

Pyro. Pyro is the clown, but he hides a secret pain; his brother and sister got into drugs and died. Pyro works on car designs. He's wrecked his bike three times. Pyro has dirty blond hair

hanging around his face and keen blue eyes. He is lean and finely muscled and works out at a gym. Pyro has a rich baritone voice. Pyro's name is Dakota Johnson. He grew up in an abusive household, and his father beat him and his mother.

Pyro was almost murdered by his father, who tried to burn him alive. He was nearly adopted by the Revers. He has a persona called Justice, who burns criminals after he gets their confessions. Justice operates separately from Pyro. Pyro saved Logan Carter in a wildfire. His woman is Janey Revers. His scars were tattooed over by Levi.

Levi. He likes to paint pictures of landscapes. He has darkness in his past and sometimes disappears for a few weeks. No one knows what he does during that time. Levi also does tattoos. He is one of the few who can keep Louisa Mae happy. Levi goes walkabout during Justice of Hell.

Shotgun. He makes leatherware items as a hobby. Shotgun came from 'the wrong side of the tracks' and looked after his grandmother, who most of the club were fond of. He learned leatherware from his grandfather.

Celt. Grew up glass-blowing. Celt had been betrayed not once but twice by a woman and saw women as a release and nothing else. The only women Celt treats with respect, and decency are Phoe and Tati. He'd been brought up by an uncle who taught Celt glass blowing and turned his back on him. Celt has blue eyes. Celt hit Chey when they were younger while high on drugs and booze. He had no memory of this. Celt is devastated when he discovers what he did. Celt thought Chey had chosen fame and fortune over him. His arms are burned when he pulls Chey from a burning car.

Phoenix. DOB 1979. Drake's old lady. She is English and left England to escape an abusive relationship. Phoe has five children she gave birth to and adopted eleven. She is exceedingly well off and runs three National Charities. The Phoenix Trust, the Rebirth Trust and the Eternal Trust. She has been married twice, her first husband died, and her second was a bigamist. Phoe has long, blond hair, is green-eyed and is five feet tall. She met Hellfire MC first and is loyal to them.

Smokey. Smokey has just become a prospect. He's called Smokey because he was always on the grill smoking ribs. He also does tattoos.

Bone. He's called Bone because he is like a dog with a bone when he's got a project in his head for a design; he's just become a prospect.

Fanatic. He's a prospect and called Fanatic because he's like Bone. He is apparently the worse out of the lot of them for picking on the finest detail in a design and making it perfect. Fanatic is Micah, Phoe and Drake's son, and he joined Hellfire because he thought he wouldn't get fair treatment from Rage. Micah believed Rage would try to protect him too much. He is shot in his shoulder when trying to save Janey from Tanner. His best friend is Calamity. Fanatic is also a Star Wars fan.

Slaughter. Has just become a prospect and is called Slaughter because he once worked as a butcher.

Wraith. He's called Wraith because as big as he was, the man moved like a ghost and has become a prospect. He does tattoos. Wraith was involved in the car chase to save Janey and didn't give up until he had her safe.

Hellfire Old Ladies

Tati. Tati is roughly five foot eight, with a vast Dolly Parton bust, a tiny waist, and flaring hips. She has blond hair that's teased out around her face; she has kind, steady clear blue eyes. There were a few lines around them and a smattering of freckles on her nose. Tatianna is aged mid to late thirties. She has a generous mouth and is attractive. Tati is friendly and excitable, and over the moon, the old ladies are growing. She loves shopping and spending money. She has two twin boys and a son she adopted, and two adopted daughters.

Clio. She has long, silky brown hair hanging to her waist in a straight sheet and a flawless peach and cream complexion. She has a rosebud mouth and large, wide, grey eyes framed with long lashes. Clio has a slender frame but a rounded ass and a bust that promises a handful. Clio had no one in the world and was an orphan. She's kind and generous and is five foot three inches tall. She spent her life in foster homes, and from seven

to thirteen, Staffey raised her. Clio calls Staffey her father. Clio discovers she is the second of the quintuplets and Thalia's identical twin.

Thalia Winchester. Her birth parents kept Thalia, who left her with her maternal grandparents. She was unaware of other siblings and was horrified when she discovered there were. She is the eldest of all the siblings, and she and Clio are identical twins. She suffers from idiopathic gastroparesis, which was found when she collapsed at seventeen in school.

Thalia discovered she had siblings by accident and was hurt her grandmother hadn't told her. Thalia was tortured and nearly killed, she lost her right hand's little finger, and her nipple was burned off. She is stabbed and sliced many times and has to have surgery.

Cheyenne Markham. Cheyenne was eighteen when she was with Celt. She was pregnant by him, and he hit her to cause her to miscarry. Chey was carrying twins and lost one baby. Chey is a famous singer in a group called The Wild Wind and has two crazy stalkers.

She was paralysed in a car accident and can take a few steps after a year of therapy. Chey is very close to her son, Jesse. She hadn't been back in Spearfish for fifteen years, frightened of Zeus's threat and worried about danger to herself and Jesse. Chey is now walking again after therapy.

Janet Revers, aka Bunny Jones. Janey witnessed a murder which she informed the police about, and was accused of wasting police time. Then she was stalked by the murderer and so disappeared. Before she did, Janey rediscovered Pyro, who'd been her best friend when they were children. Pyro didn't recognise her, and Janey fled but was shot on Hellfire. She recovered and disappeared before finding work at Magic's bar. There she is found by Pyro, who swears to protect her. Janey was a librarian but changed her appearance dramatically because of hiding her identity. Janey also plays softball and has played since she was three.

Alice Rain. Her real name is Alexis Adams. Alice is a barmaid at Magic's and has been for seven years. She escaped

from a cult at seventeen, and Magic found her. He hid her while she gained an online education for four years and then let her work at the bar. She edits and copywrites books for a side job. Alice has no idea about her true family and is distraught when she finds out.

Rage MC.

Drake Michaelson. DOB. 1975. Drake is third generation Rage; he was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. His father started Rage MC and died before Drake was old enough to become President. Drake became VP and, in a hostile takeover, became President. Phoenix thinks he looks like Tim McGraw with longer hair. Drake has a leanness to him but has well-defined muscles and broad shoulders. Drake sports dark brown eyes with laughter lines. He's six foot four. He adopted Phoe's 16 children, and they have two of their own.

Apache. DOB 1969. Apache is a second-gen Rage; he was in the second lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He is one of Drake's enforcers. Apache has bright green eyes and is six foot two. He is of Native American origin. Apache's described as absolutely stunning, with high cheekbones and raven black hair that hangs past his shoulders. Apache's real name is Tye (meaning Chief) Blackelk. He looks like Lou Diamond Philips. Apache is partnered with Rock in a construction company. He is married to Silvie and has two children with her.

Ace. DOB 1983. Ace is third generation Rage; he was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Ace is Drake's VP. He's described as looking like a young Lou Diamond Philips. Like his father, he is Native American. Ace has bright green eyes and is six foot two. He is described much the same as his father, absolutely stunning with high cheekbones and raven black hair that hangs past his shoulders. Ace is no stranger to violence and will do whatever it takes to protect his club. He was shot five times, protecting Phoe from her ex. He is now married to Artemis and has several children with her.

Texas. DOB 1965. Texas is a second-gen Rage; he was in the second lot of brothers recruited into Rage. His full name is

Blake Craven. Texas is an older man and is the MC's secretary and treasurer. He works on bike design and specialised paintwork. Texas has a robust moral code but is mindful of what the MC is capable of. He once alludes to cleaning up after their messes. Texas is tall and broad, with a goatee, dark salt and pepper hair slightly too long and piercing brown eyes. He can also play the keyboard. Texas stands at six foot four, and his old lady is Penny.

Axel. DOB 1951. Axel was one of the club's founders, making him a first-generation Rage. He is the Chaplin of the MC. The Chaplin's role is to look after Rage's needs spiritually. Axel ensures they have their heads on straight and performs their marriages and death ceremonies. He has blue eyes, a salt-and-pepper beard, and is very loud. He's built like a mountain. Axel has wild hair which hangs to his shoulders. He is six foot six. Axel claims an old lady, a schoolteacher called Ellen and dotes on her.

Calamity. DOB 1996. Calamity is a fifth-generation Rage; he was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. His name is Billy Tomkins. Calamity becomes a prospect after only being on Rage for a month. He's a talented mechanic, body designer and spray painter. He interferes, stops Frenzy from harming Silvie, and takes a bullet in the shoulder for Autumn. In the Rage of Angels, we discover Calamity is taking a night class for car design.

Klutz. DOB 1989. He is a fifth-generation Rage; he was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Klutz is a talented bartender and often pulls scenes much similar to those in the film Cocktail. He's African American. Klutz's roommate was dealing drugs in college, and Klutz got swept up in the sting. The cops beat him, and then his innocence was proven, and he was freed. He shares a house with Hunter, Slate, and Savage.

Prospects.

Savage. DOB 1983. He is a fifth-generation Rage; he was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Savage is thirty-two years old and is a mechanic. Savage is Mina's alt. He shares a house with Hunter, Slate and Klutz.

Gauntlet. DOB 1987. Gauntlet is a fifth-generation Rage; he was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He works in the garage.

Carmine. DOB 1996, half African American and half white; he plays for the Cubs. Carmine joined Rage in 2019. He's from Maine and was adopted in 2010. Carmine looked after Tye, Harley, and Serenity on the streets. Phoe alludes to Carmine sacrificing himself to protect Harley and Serenity.

Tyelar. DOB 1996, Tye is half Mexican and half Caucasian from Maine. Tye joined Rage in 2019. He was adopted in 2010. In the Hunter's Rage, Tyelar is playing for the Blackhawks. Tye, like Carmine, looked after Harley and Serenity. Phoe alludes to Tye sacrificing himself to protect Harley and Serenity.

Harley. DOB 1999. Harley's from Maine and was adopted in 2010. In November 2015, two seventeen-year-olds attacked Harley from behind, cracking his skull and putting him into a coma. Harley was protecting Christian. He has soft brown eyes and ash-blond hair. Harley woke up in Nov 2016 after the flooding of Rapid City. He joined Rage in 2019. Harley is now an apprentice Blacksmith after being told he'll never make a professional baseball player.

Cody. DOB 2000. Carmine found Cody living on the streets in Colorado; he was adopted in 2011. Cody speaks to Phoe about joining the Trusts while he is at college. He and Christian want to run them when Phoe retires. In the meantime, he wants to manage the Rebirth Trust. Cody joined Rage in 2019.

Rage Candidates.

Wild. DOB December 1999. He is known as Jonas Valden and approached rage to join the club when he was fifteen. His father is a well-known tattoo artist, Rio Valden. Wild takes his younger brother and runs away.

Cowboy. DOB 2002, Cowboy is hot-headed and apt to act before thinking. Wild is three years older than him and has taken care of him for several years. Cowboy is immensely loyal to his brother. He leaps from his bike to Wild's, trusting his brother will catch him. His name is Zac Valden.

Hellfire children.

Jesse Markham. (Celt and Chey.) Jesse was born in 2004. He had a twin who was lost due to a miscarriage. He knows how Celt treated his mother and is very protective of her. Jesse is suspicious of Celt and hates him at first. He comes around when Celt rescues Chey.

Louisa Mae Michaelson. (Chance and Clio.) Born on 7th December 2019. Louisa appears to have a mind of her own and runs everyone ragged.

Dax Aston Drake Michaelson. He was ten weeks premature and weighed three pounds and eight ounces at birth.

Kit. Rooster's eldest son. He was born in April 2011.

Finn. Rooster's middle son. He was born in June 2012.

Brax. Rooster's youngest son. He was born in November 2013.

Ajax. (Tati and Big Al) Born 4th June 2020.

Brock. (Tati and Big Al) Born 4th June 2020.

Tinsley. (Tati and Big Al) Born 2016. She was adopted in 2020.

Kersey. (Tati and Big Al) Born 2017. She was adopted in 2020.

Campbell. (Tati and Big Al) Born 2018. He was adopted in 2020.

SPD

Chief of Police. Wilson Holmes. He is in his mid-fifties with white hair in a military buzz.

Emilio Hawthorne. Lio is Dylan Hawthorne's cousin and is a detective in Spearfish PD. He hates women and children being abused and doesn't worry about calling on his cousin if he needs help. Emilio likes to be called Lio. His partner is Phil Gold.

Phil Gold. He isn't as fiery as Lio but still has a strong sense of wrong and right. He's a detective in SPD.

Officer Douglas. He comes to search Magic's bar.

Officer Hawes. He arrives to search Magic's bar.

Hawthorne's

Dylan Hawthorne. Owner of Hawthorne investigations. He is extremely intelligent and will bend and break the rules as he wants. Dylan thinks of Drake as a close friend and takes Rage's back during the Artemis war. He discovers information on Artemis, which leads to Rage discovering who she is. Dylan protects Matthieu in the Sweetness of Rage

Leila Gibson. She is Hawthorne's computer genius. Leila managed to get a trace on Artemis, which led Rage to Artemis's, Stacy Conway identity. She becomes part of Phoe's school board. Leila has helped the Hawthorne females cover up their revenge against those who scorned them.

Davies. Hawthorne investigator. He's Hawthorne's top security expert and also does undercover work. Davies is Hawthorne's second in command.

Other Characters.

Magic. He owns a bar out in the hills on an open stretch of road that is a biker-neutral zone. Magic doesn't allow violence in his bar nor truces to be broken in it. He's a big man, but no one knows his age. No one wants to upset Magic. He's rumoured to have buried the bodies of those who've upset him in the hills behind his bar. Magic got shot saving Clio from Slimy Sam. Magic knows Bunny is running and hiding and helps protect her. He guesses her identity before anyone else. And he also knows Pyro is Justice.

Brett. He is the day cook for the bar.

Doc Gibbons. Doc is an older man close to retirement. He has helped patch up Rage and Hellfire and helps look after their old ladies.

Logan Carter. Logan snuck on board his brother's truck and got lost in the Black Hills. He was caught in the wildfire and saved by Pyro.

Doc Paul. A doctor who is a friend of the club. He works at the hospital and helped save Lindsey's life. His father was a lone biker who was well-known in South Dakota.

Willoughby Adams. He is the fifth-richest man in the world. His sons were called Edward and Charles. He is a widower, and his wife was called Alexis. He is Alice's grandfather.

Edward Adams. He was Alice's father and was raped and tortured before being killed.

Hilary Adams. She was Alice's mother and was raped and tortured before being murdered by Charles.

Charles Adams. He is Willoughby's second son and disappeared after killing his brother- and sister-in-law. Charles kidnapped Alexis and raised her as his own child. He is Eighth Minister.

Randolph Adams. He is Willoughby's brother who disappeared after being wanted for rape. He is First Minister and Alice's great-uncle.

Euan Ender. He was a Disciple with the cult and tried to kidnap Alice. He was caught and tortured by Hellfire before giving up information. Sunny killed him.

Fifth Minister. He was a vile man who thought he was more important than he was. He was the one who attacked Magic's bar and Hellfire.

Jacob Reeves. He runs the Delta Force team and is retired. He is also Casey's father.

Maylene Dixon. Maylene is the quintuplets maternal Grandmother. She was devastated when her daughter gave up four of the quintuplets. Her husband died three years ago; she has blond hair and grey eyes with a trim figure. She is Clio's grandmother.

Polyhymnia Perry. Polly knew she was adopted and loved her parents very much. Her father was David Perry, a well-known figure in the world of martial arts. Polly was living in Springfield, Nebraska, where she was raised. Both her parents are dead. She's the youngest quintuplet. Polly and Callie both have auburn hair and blue eyes.

Calliope. Callie was living in Roanoke, Virginia. She'd not been adopted and was raised in orphanages and foster homes. Callie is Polly's identical twin and the 4th of the quintuplets.

Rain Wright. Rain's full name is Ourania. He lives in Miles City, Montana. He is the middle quintuplet.

Rose. She is Shotgun's grandmother.

The Juno Group.

Nigel. Nigel is a hacker; he has a wiry and slender build. He's often mistaken for being a geek but is as deadly as the others. Nigel's known to have hacked into government databases. Washington lets slip that Nigel's initials are NM. He has a license for carrying a concealed weapon.

Simone and Butch. They are two hunters at Artemis and will only work with each other. Butch has special force training; he moves like a ghost, and Simone is much like Artemis in character but not looks.

Master Hoshi. (Artemis's adopted father). Late fifties to early sixties, he is lean and trim. He's five foot four, his face is lightly lined, and he has a shaved head and brown eyes. Artemis thinks of him as a father. He is in charge of the organisation called Revenge. Master Hoshi is responsible for Artemis being who she is now. He cares for Artemis and calls her daughter.

FBI.

Willow Ware. Born 1991. Willow is Axel's daughter. She has her father's blue eyes. Willow is actually an FBI agent and has worked on several prominent cases.

Dan Grey. He is Willow's partner.

Dead Hellfire.

Zeus. He ran Hellfire poorly and was into illegal stuff. He was discovered to be drugging the brothers on Chance's side to make them do as he wished. He threatened to rape Cheyenne. Zeus also drugged and attacked Tati, and Big Al found her in time. Only Chance knew about this, and it was the catalyst for Chance's move against Zeus.

Other MCs.

Satans Warriors. Deadwood

Tiger. President.

Crunch. VP.

Skull.

The Riders of Vengeance. Silver City.

Onyx. President.

Venom. VP.

Madcap.

Viking.

Storm.

Whirlwind.

Steam. Prospect that Alice knocks out.

The Devil's Scythe. Piedmont.

Scythe. President.

Tinker. VP

Gutbuster, aka Buster.

Wanderlust.

Bishop.

Spawn.

Rachet.

Unwanted Bastards. Merritt.

Inglorious. He's the president of the MC and was involved in Clio's rescue. He got hit by Slimy Sam driving a car at him after Inglorious rescued Clio.

Psych. He's the Unwanted Bastards VP and was involved in Clio's rescue.

Bomber. Enforcer

Trip. Enforcer.

Mouse. He was wounded by another biker gang but overheard them saying they were responsible for Silvie being hurt.

Poison. Flirted with Janey at Magic's.

Razor.

Snake.

Satan.

Darkness.

Cutthroat.

Pink.

Devil's Damned Disciples. Summerset

Jailbait. President.

Wrench. VP

Data.

Zoom.

Zippy.

Judgement.

Grease.

Fallen Warriors. Box Elder. They are an MC entirely made up of military men.

Lance. President of the Fallen Warriors. Has an old lady.

Bat. VP of the Fallen Warriors.

Sniper. He's the enforcer for the Fallen Warriors.

Raddock. He's a member of the Fallen Warriors.

Owl. Security Systems Expert.

Worm. Internet security expert.

Hercules. His real name is Shane Jackson, Alison's cousin, and they are close. He is a soldier, and his leg was severely injured, and he was held captive. Shane loathes Ice Dawg for

what he's done. He and Skip are very close, and Shane thinks of Skip as his father. He takes over wages for Alison.

Equaliser. His real name is Dean, and he was a soldier that Shane saved from being held captive. He was tortured but doesn't talk about it. He has no family. Dean takes over the paperwork for the stud farm.

Rocket. His real name is Carter, and his leg was injured during captivity; he was a soldier. He gets shot by Ice Dawg but survives. Carter is estranged from his family. He takes over tracking the livestock and keeping their records updated.

Blast. His real name is Scott, and he was a soldier held captive; he came from the ghetto and didn't wish to return. Scott takes over the ranch's bookkeeping.

Thank you for reading The Wild Side of Hell. For more Rage, check out Rage MC, book one [The Rage of the Phoenix](#) is the beginning of the Rage MC world. Or take a peek at Washingtons, starting with [James](#). The Prospects series is also out now, the first book [Calamity](#) is available now!

Also, take a gander at the Love Beyond Death series, book one of which, [Oakwood Manor](#), is out now. And the new series of Love Beyond Death-The Inns begins with [The Jekyll and Hyde](#). If you enjoyed this book, please leave a review at, [Goodreads](#) and [Amazon](#)

Please remember your reviews are so important to me!

Thank you!

Elizabeth.