



Twisted Road of Secrets &

REGRETS

MAYHEM  MAKERS

VERA QUINN
PENNY ANGLENE

TWISTED ROAD OF SECRETS AND REGRETS

MAYHEM MAKERS - MMM

PENNY ANGLENE
VERA QUINN

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Note to Readers:

Mayhem Makers

Also by Penny Anglene

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DISCLAIMER

The Motorcycles, Mobsters, and Mayhem signing event is mentioned in this book, but the book is fiction and none of the things happening in *Twisted Road of Secret and Regrets* happen at the event itself.

BLURB

Life is complicated when you're climbing the ladder of life.

The road can be twisted, and you're bound to have regrets.

Now that I'm older, Honey is one of my biggest regrets.

She is the one who haunts my dreams.

Regrets have an annoying way of coming full circle, and nothing stays a secret forever.

Now I'm on a *Twisted Road of Secrets and Regrets*

CHARACTER LIST

Rival Sons MC

Tyson “Rager” Sullivan – President

Axel “Ax” Lawton – VP

Patrick “Drum” Drummond – Secretary

Thomas “Skeeter” Skeet on – Enforcer

Taggart “Tag” Williams – SAA

Byron “Law” Powers – Tech Guy

Landan “Tank” Tanker – Treasurer

Road Captain – Left open for Reaper.

Members

Wasp, Speckle, Tino, Pin, & Buster

Nomads:

Tyrel “Reaper” Sullivan – twin brother to Rager

Newton “Fire” Tate

Brent “File” Asher

Nathan “Goon” Brewer

Prospects

Reilly, Chilton, Weston, & Silas

Club girls

Chickie – house mom and keeps the girls in line.

Daisy, Candy, Lil, & Dixie

PROLOGUE ONE

*R*ager

I know that Honey will be my biggest regret. Hell, she's my only regret. I'm a hard man who goes along with being the president of an outlaw motorcycle club. I can show no weaknesses, ever. Honey wasn't my weakness; she was my heart and soul and that made her my strength. She's the only woman for whom I would change. She was my person, so I could breathe easily.

When I was a child, along with my twin brother, Tyrel, I was shown how real love should be. How a family should be. If I were ever lucky enough to find a woman that I could love and would love me, this was the only kind of love I wanted—true love with devotion from both of us. It's the only kind of love that has staying power and that will last through the good times and the bad. Anyone is okay for one night of fucking but there's only one woman that is worth even thinking of changing yourself for.

My ma and dad never ended a day mad at each other and they always shared the same bed. We lost our parents when I was in the military, but I was just glad they went out together. That's the way they would have wanted it. They were caught inside our home by a fast-burning fire. When their bodies were found, they were holding hands. Both were taken by smoke inhalation.

After I was discharged from the Navy SEALs, I joined Tyrel in the Rival Sons Motorcycle club. It was a good fit for Tyrel's lifestyle, and it was the same for me. Five years later,

Tyrel was the road captain, and I was and still am the president.

I lost again when Tyrel, my twin brother, lost his old lady, Jasmin, and a daughter still in her mother's womb, in a car crash right after Christmas. His old lady was eight months pregnant with their first child. He lost a big part of his soul that day, and I lost my brother. He couldn't stay here and look at the home they had made. He went nomad for the club, but his spot as road captain will always be open for him. I do his job now, along with mine. I won't fill his position; it belongs to him. I still see him every three or four months, but he isn't as open as he once was. One day, he'll outrun his pain.

I think our bloodline will end with us.

PROLOGUE TWO

*H*oney

I am one fierce woman, one who only loved once in her lifetime. I have a tough time with trust. It was all I saw growing up—the arguing between my parents, drinking, and cheating. There was no respect in our home at all. My daddy, then stepdaddies, all three of them—all the men in Momma’s life stepped out on her. It made her a bitter old lady who never quite got over all the cheating. She instead turned to drugs and alcohol. She died when I was sixteen. I always said that cheating was a hard limit for me. I told Tyson from the beginning I wouldn’t put up with it. I don’t know why he didn’t listen. It was my hard limit. I have my momma’s luck with men. What hurt the most is he never once came to ask why I left. Not once. He has no idea he has a child. He has no idea that he lost a child. I almost lost both boys that night when I was hit head-on in a car accident. I was laid up for some time. I was so bitter and mad. Months after the loss of Kagen Tyson, I mourned all that I lost. Every time I see it in my head, Tyson with his pants down, getting a blow job, I knew it was over that day, but I still feel the pain with every memory.

I still to this day keep track of him. I still love him. I guess I always will. Even with the scene I remember and the loss of Keegan, I still feel that strong love for him, even if I do want to chop his dick off.

I have told our son what happened in a short narrative. I have never lied to Raider about any part of our relationship.

When he turned sixteen, he asked. I told him *everything* but his dad's name. That piece of information I will take to my grave. I don't want Rager to have the chance to poison our son's life.

Was I wrong to not say anything to him about our sons? You bet I wasn't. When the accident happened, the hospital called the clubhouse and was told not to call back again. I knew then that our time together meant nothing to him. I was seventeen when I met him. By the time I turned eighteen, I was alone and pregnant.

I have a twenty-five-year-old son, that I did my best by. He is my world. He loves me for all that I have done for him. He missed having a dad in his life growing up, but that stopped when he turned sixteen and we had our conversation about his dad.

I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't turn out to be my mother, and I didn't.

I'm not a washed-up old, bitter hag like my momma. I do date, to scratch that particular itch, but only for a few dates. When they try to start making promises, I show them the door. I am pretty, a little bit round around the ass and with C-cup tits. I wear a size twelve/fourteen now. I'm five-five, with reddish/brown curly hair. I have green eyes and a smile that has sailed a thousand ships, or so I've been told.

I slung coffee and food for the longest time, barely making ends meet. I finally finished my degree in language arts. I went on to write some romance books and the next thing I knew; I was a USA bestselling author. I have a book coming out soon. It will be number forty and will be published just before my next signing in Conroe, Texas—MMM, or better known as Motorcycles, Mobsters and Mayhem. I will get to see several of my besties there. I'm worried because it's so close to him, but he would never attend something like that. I'm not going to worry about it too much.

*R*ager

I sit in my office with the lights out, hoping that none of my brothers have seen me duck in here. It's been a long day, ending a grueling week. The older I get, the harder every day gets, or it could just be me. Some days, I feel thirty with all the energy in the world, but every once in a while, a day like today sneaks up on me.

I'm a fifty-five-year-old man, living the life of a twenty-five-year-old man. I work hard, fight hard, fuck hard, and party hard. The only time I have ever tried to settle down with a woman, she kicked rocks on me from a misunderstanding. Don't women like to scream and yell at men when she thinks he's screwed up? Not mine. She just left and didn't look back.

Honey will always be my one regret. I should have chased that woman down, brought her back to the clubhouse, and chained her to my bed until I could explain, but a man's pride can only take so much. If I had just known then what I know now.

Since she's been gone, I have fucked my way through the women at my clubhouse and every clubhouse I have visited. I even tried a few civilian women, but that was just a big disaster. At least the women in my club and other clubs know what the score is. Sure, they want to rope them up an officer in one of the clubs, but once we put them in their place, there is never all the tears and carrying on like I promised them the moon and stars. I never make any promises except that I will

give them an orgasm they won't forget. I always make good on that a time or two. I leave no woman wanting more.

I wipe my hand down my face and empty the beer in front of me. I get up and walk to the door and lock it. I'm going to sleep on the couch in here, so no one knocks on my door tonight. I know the girls are just doing their jobs, but tonight, I need sleep more than I need female attention. I'll just sleep a few hours and then I can try to handle the shit we walked up into today.

I try to get comfortable on the couch, flopping around and trying to find that sweet spot where all my muscles relax. This damn couch may be old, but damn if it's not comfortable. She's like your favorite pair of jeans—once they're on your hips and legs, you feel better the entire day.

I finally find that spot on my back, with my arm hung over my eyes, and I feel myself drifting off until there is no noise and no one there but me and my snoring.

I feel my side getting warm, but I don't want to open my eyes. I feel the arousing sensation of a woman's lips on my neck, and I grab for the woman beside me. I turn on my side to get closer to her, then I catch a breeze of the slight fragrance of honeysuckle. Only one woman has had this aroma around her and has felt this amazing in my arms. I open my eyes and look into the lush green eyes of the only woman who I have ever loved. I crush my lips to hers and she opens for me. Her taste is as sweet and fresh as her scent.

Our tongues duel for control, but she relinquishes control as she always has. She knows I need that control. We're both out of breath and gasping for air, like a couple of teenagers playing grab ass and getting carried away by our emotions. But I'm no teenager and neither is she. She squirms away from my kiss and tries to put a tiny bit of distance between us.

My hands explore her hot body. She looks and feels just like she did all those years ago. "Honey, is it really you? I have dreamed about you so many times, just this way. Please, Honey, let me have you one more time."

"It's me, handsome."

I take her lips in another breathtaking kiss. One hand goes to her tits and the other grabs her fine ass, and I bring her to me. A groan escapes me as I grind against her. No woman has ever moved me the way Honey does. Honey pushes me away with a strength I didn't know she possessed. The closer I try to get her to me, the further away she gets.

"I need you now more than my next breath." Honey keeps backing away from me and the laugh I hear coming from her is almost cruel and very unlike her.

"You can't have me, Tyson. You've already thrown me away," Honey says in a hateful way. No, I need to make her understand.

"It was a misunderstanding. I love you. I am so sorry I didn't come after you. I should have, but my damn pride got in my way." I try to make her understand. I have never made myself so vulnerable in front of anyone. Honey throws back her head and laughs a full laugh at me.

"Do you remember what you used to call men who apologized to their women or even tried to explain anything to them? You called them pussies with no balls to stand up to their women. How I used to worship at your altar. You had me hook, line, and sinker. I believed everything you told me, but I was so naïve." She sits up and looks down at me. "You said I was yours and you were mine. You said you would never let me run from you because you would drag me back. You built a house for us, and we were going to fill it with children, who we would raise together. You fed me line after line that I was your queen, and you were my king. It was all lies. You couldn't even keep it in your pants after you swore to me there would never be anyone else. You broke me. You took all my faith I had for you and destroyed it. It's my turn to destroy you and the only way I can do that is by leaving and having the best life possible for me, without you. Goodbye, Tyson."

I try to grab Honey's arm, but she moves too fast for me. As I feel my knees hit the floor, she fades into the wall. I rub my eyes and she is no longer there. I feel someone pushing on my shoulder and I see no one. Then I open my eyes.

Skeeter stands over me with a smirk on his face. “What the fuck, Skeeter? Can you not let a person sleep?” I ask him. I try to wipe the dream from my face by wiping my hand down it. I hate these dreams increasingly more.

“I heard you coming up the hall. You know normal people would sleep on the couch and not on the floor.” He laughs at me.

“I was having a damn dream and rolled off on the floor, idiot!” I shake my head at the man. He’s the jokester of the clubhouse and my enforcer. “What time is it?”

“It’s a little after nine. I thought you might want a shower and breakfast before church at ten thirty. Why are you sleeping in your office and not in your room or at your house?”

“None of your damn business,” I tell him. I know I’m being an ass, but the dream has left me on edge. I get up off the floor. “Why do you have a key to my office?”

“You had me run by the clubhouse to pick up papers to drop at the bank and you gave me your spare. Are you losing it, old man?” Skeeter asks, trying to fuck with me.

“I’m not losing shit, kid. I’m not awake yet, asshole. Sneaking in on me is a way to get yourself shot.” I put my hand out for the key he used to get in and he hands it over. There are only fifteen years between us but he always calls me old man since I sponsored him when he was a prospect. He’s a good brother, but sometimes he gets on a man’s nerves.

“I’m not too worried about it. I’ve been up for an hour and had two cups of coffee and my shower. You would have been easy pickings.” He gives it right back to me.

“Whatever, kid. I’m hitting the shower and I’ll meet in the kitchen for some coffee before church.” I need something to wash that dream away. It’s still fucking with my head. I motion for Skeeter to go before me, and I lock my office up and head for my room.

Honey

I went to bed late, got up early, and am in a smash-your-face kind of mood. I had rather beat someone as to have to look at anyone today.

Jumping in the shower after I start a pot of coffee will hopefully put me in a better mood. I had one of those dreams again, starring, you guessed it, the man who broke my heart. Tyson.

I can only pray one of these days that they stop. I have compared every man that I have dated to him. They all come up short. Shit, for that matter, I never even give them a chance. As soon as they start with the, "*I love you*" *shit*, I kick them to the curb. I am so tired of being on my own, though. I don't want to grow old on my own. I want someone to call my man.

I had such dreams, but the only happily ever after seems to be in my books. I refuse to put in any type of cheating in my writings.

After my shower, I fix my hair by putting it up on top of my head, slap on some face-firming cream and head out to the kitchen. I hear motorcycles pulling up outside and know instantly that it's my son and someone from his club. Grabbing my coffee, I lean up against the counter as he walks through the backdoor.

"Hey, Mom, you okay?" he asks me.

"Raider, I'm fine. Just a bad night," I tell him.

“I knew something was wrong. I wanted to see you with my own eyes,” he tells me as he takes me in his arms. Raider’s and my relationship has always been that way. I think it was from us being by ourselves for so long. I know when he needs me, and he knows when I need him. After the dream last night, I need to feel him close to me, even if it’s for only a little while.

“I’ll be fine. I need to get this caffeine in me. I leave in two weeks for my signing in Conroe. I have a lot I need to get done,” I tell him.

“Yeah, about that. I’m not happy you’re going to be that close to the Rival Sons MC, or to that clubhouse.”

“That’s too bad. I need to do my job. I also have some readers that I’ll get to meet for the very first time.”

“I don’t like it.”

“Oh well, kid. You’ll just have to suck it up.”

I turn and see Cole, my son’s best friend, standing there. Raider calls him Buzz now since that’s his road name, but he will always be just Cole to me. I have known that boy since he was first born. At one time, his mom and I were good friends. “Hey, Cole, how are you doing?” I ask him.

“Good, Mom.”

“How are your mom and dad doing?” I ask.

“They’re good,” he replies with a smile.

“Hey, Buzz, you want some coffee?” Raider asks him.

“Sounds good.”

I shake my head and sit at the table, sucking back the coffee. I wanted to clear my head. It doesn’t look like that’s going to happen this morning. Raider is worried. I can see it in his eyes. It’s like he can read my mind at times.

“How’s Pete doing, Mom?” my son asks me, smiling.

“No idea. He’s history. Has been for about a month,” I tell him with a small, tilted smile on my face.

“Why do you do that, Mom? He was a good man,” he states, aggravation in his voice.

“Because he wanted more than I wanted to give. I don’t do love or any part of it,” I tell him.

“I told you the sperm donor was ruining her life. She’s going to grow old and all on her own if she doesn’t let him go,” Raider tells Cole.

“I’m sitting right here. I can hear everything you say. It’s none of your business. You want me to butt into your love life?” I ask him, with a hint of sarcasm in my voice.

“Mom, I worry about you. You don’t even know if he’s still alive or if he even thinks of us. You can’t hang yourself up on a man who showed you no respect at all.”

“He’s alive,” I state. *Fuck*, I think to myself.

“How would you know that, Mom?” he asks me while glaring at me.

“I just do. It’s none of your business,” I tell him.

“Do you still keep in contact with him?”

“No,” I tell him.

“How would you know then?” he asks.

“I just do. He’s single, not married, not dating,” I finally tell him.

“You would only know that if someone is telling you.” He pauses. “I wish you would tell me where he is. If he’s even around anymore.” I take a breath and try to calm myself down. Then I remember the reason I came here besides checking in on my mom. “By the way, you need to stay away from that club in the Conroe area. I’ve checked into them. They aren’t the cleanest club. They are dangerous and they call themselves an outlaw club but they are one percenters. They also have a common enemy as our club, the Brotherhood, and the gang have been making a move there. That’s the word on the street.”

“You need to worry about you and yours. Not me. Why would I go looking for that club or a damn gang? I am going to work. I’ll be meeting all kinds of readers. Female ones.”

“I just worry about all that’s going on. Some things are heating up and that’s all I am telling you. It’s club business. I need you to watch your surroundings. Be safe while you’re there. The Brotherhood gang have been moving south and I don’t want you to get caught in a crossfire between the gang and a motorcycle club.”

“I’m a grown-ass woman. I can take care of myself. You need to let me be. Don’t get mixed up in my work life. You wouldn’t like me to mess with your club shit,” I tell him. I know he’s worried about my well-being, but I just can’t have him mixed up in my work. “I don’t have any friends around that area associated with any motorcycle club. Your club is the only one I have visited in the last few years.”

“You’re my mom. You’re my responsibility to take care of, whether you’re home or on the road for your job,” he replies.

“That’s where you’re wrong. I’m the parent. It’s me who takes care of you,” I say with a smirk on my face.

“Mom, just don’t. We got to go. Don’t do anything stupid.”

“Don’t take that tone with me. It *is* time for you to go. I don’t want to hear this. I’m an adult and I’ll be fine. Got it?” I ask.

“Fine. You know where I am when you come to your senses and need me.”

“Out. I love you, kid, but don’t speak to me that way. I will spank your ass.”

That gets both Raider and Cole laughing.

“Out, the both of you. I have shit to do today,” I tell them with a slight grin on my face.

They both come over and give me a hug.

Raider looks at me. “Please, Mom, be safe and if you see any clubs, stay away from them.”

“I won’t go looking for any clubs. I can’t help if they run into me, but I will watch out for myself.”

“I love you, Mom. Call me when you get to the resort.” Hugging the boys as they leave, I smile.

“I love you, boys. Be good or good at it.” As they leave, I continue to watch but also return to my thoughts from earlier this morning. If only things would have ended differently.

“He doesn’t know about you. I never told him after I saw him that time.” I say. *“I refuse to be with a man who would cheat after the promises he made to me.”* I know things are going to come out one of these days, but I’m not ready for that conversation at all. Raider has asked me so many times about his dad. I just can’t. He wouldn’t understand why I never told him about his dad or his brother. Thoughts keep swirling through my mind and I just can’t stop them. The pain is too close to the surface after that dream last night.

I watched them walk out, and watching from the window, I see them pull away. A tear streams down the side of my face. I have a lot to do today. I don’t have time to have a pity party for what I don’t have. Damn him for doing what he did. He doesn’t deserve any of my tears. I loved him so much. What the hell am I thinking... I still love him. I just won’t be second fiddle to any fucking whore who drops to her knees at a snap of a finger.

He’s the one who lost out. He doesn’t have me and he doesn’t get his kids either. At first, I felt a lot of guilt and even went back to tell him. I was told to kick rocks. Sure, it wasn’t him who told me, but one of his closest brothers told me that. So, I know it came from him. His brothers wouldn’t put words in his mouth if he didn’t say it.

I stop my memories and start to make a list of shit I need to get done—alcohol-infused gummies, pudding shots and little peens to order. I also need to go to my post office and get my mail. I wonder if my books will be in today. I need to look that up.

*R*ager

I walk into church, and I see my brother standing off to the side. I motion for him to take his seat. I know he's not the road captain anymore, but he will always have a seat at our table. I won't fill the road captain position, so he has that seat. I pull the double duty myself. This will always be Tyrel's home even though he has gone nomad. I pound my hammer on the table to call the meeting to order. I stand and wait for everyone to settle down.

"Alright, brothers, let's get this meeting done so we can get to the work at hand." Everyone quiets down. I look around at my brothers, Ax, my VP, who has a sling on his arm from being shot in his left shoulder last night. Tank limped in from being hit with a bike one of the Three Striped Brotherhood members was trying to get away on. That was the extent of wounds to us last night. "We took down the Three Striped Brotherhood gang last night. They don't have the numbers to come against us again, but be vigilant, brothers. They could still try to ambush someone alone. We will ride in pairs from now on until further notice. The nomads have been called in to help around here until every one of those sons of a bitches are six feet under. Watch your women and children if you have them. We're under a soft lockdown at your homes. Children need to stay at home after dark and if you're wise, so will your women. If we are called out, then the women and children need to be in one place so we can cover them better. The clubhouse is the safest place." I take a breath and take a drink of my coffee in front of me and let the brothers talk for a few

minutes among themselves. “Your families get no say in this. Safety always comes first. The club girls will be cleared out of the clubhouse for the next two weeks so we can finish this up. If you need to get your dick wet, then set up a buddy system so someone is watching your back.” I get a laugh at this. Half the married men here have a club girl they always go to. I don’t condone it, but if the brothers protect the club, I mind my own business. That’s what freedom is all about—being free to make your own screwups. “No drama in the clubhouse.” That’s easier said than done. “Now all that has been said, Ax, how’s your shoulder?”

“Good, just sore. The bullet went clean through me and didn’t hit anything important. I’m in the sling for a couple of weeks. I’m ready when I’m needed, anytime.” I look at him closely. I know he’ll do what he must, but I want him a hundred percent. No need to do more damage to his shoulder.

“You’ll be on clubhouse duty for the next two weeks.” I see he’s about to argue with me. “President orders until further notice. I know if we need you, then all I need to do is call, but our children and women are just as valuable to each of us as you are being there and messing that shoulder up worse than it is now. My mind will be at ease knowing you’re here heading up the security.” I look at Tank and he’s looking like he wants to be anywhere else but here. “Tank, you’re Ax’s backup. How’s the leg and hip?”

“It’s just bruised. I can get around.” Tank’s trying to get around my order.

“President’s order. Heal and get back to a hundred percent. That’s the same leg you broke when you were prospecting. You and Ax can keep our families safe. You’ll have two prospects and two members to back the two of you up.” I look at Ax. “Set up a schedule in case we need it. You’ll have a jump start on the situation and use the dogs. Three in-house, six outside and put Fang in the guardhouse for the member you pick for the gate. I want everyone heavily armed with legal weapons. Anyone who has any recreational drugs in the clubhouse, get rid of them now. I couldn’t give a shit less if you use recreational marijuana, but until this is over, it needs

to be gone. Everyone should know that anything that isn't prescribed to you by a doctor isn't allowed in the clubhouse. Enough said. If the cops come knocking on our door, I want this club clean of everything. I wouldn't put it past those assholes to call in a tip to the cops. Search the club from top to bottom and make sure it's clean. No illegal weapons either."

"Are you thinking this will happen?" Reaper asks me.

"It's their go-to plan. They've done it repeatedly dealing with other motorcycle clubs. We can only go from that. They usually plant this stuff or have someone else plant it and then call in an anonymous tip. Whoever they're informing on is caught with their pants down. While everyone is trying to make bail, they move in and burn the clubhouse or safe house down. Then they take over the territory of whoever the poor chumps are dealing with. We aren't stupid, so clean the clubhouse tonight as soon as we're finished here. I'll take care of my office, room, and church room. Sweep for any bugs that might be here, Law." I look at our computer tech and security officer. "I know we did these things before we left here, but we can never be cautious enough with our family. Reaper, how long can you and the other nomads stay? Anything else pressing down on you?" Reaper looks apprehensive.

"We'll be sticking around for at least two to three weeks. I have some personal stuff to take care of," Reaper says but doesn't look me in the eye. He's up to something. He'll tell me when he's ready.

"It's settled then. After we make sure the club is clean, we roll out and we get to cleaning up the rest of this gang. That's our one and only goal until it's finished. Any other business that can't wait, speak up now or wait until the next church which will be in the morning at nine sharp." I look at my brothers for someone to speak their mind, but no one says a word. They're as eager to finish this as I am. I bring the hammer down and dismiss the brothers. Everyone gets up and walks toward the door but Tyrel. He hangs back as I knew my brother would.

"I need a word," Reaper says.

“I’m going to the bar to refill my cup and then I’ll meet you in my office.” I stare at my brother and wait for him to say something. I’m trying to get in his head to see what’s bothering him. He’s closed down to me and I’m getting nothing.

“I’m right behind you,” Tyrel tells me.

*R*eaper

I don't know how this conversation is going to go with Tyson. He's going to think I've lost my ever-loving mind, but damn this is going to be fun. Now I just need him to cooperate with my idea without me having to give too much away.

I follow Tyson into his office after he refills his coffee and I grab a cup of my own. I sit in the chair across from Tyson. I've thought about this conversation a million times, but I'm still not sure if I can pull it off. He can read me on a normal day better than I can read myself. He is my twin after all. I just hope I can close myself off from him a little longer and then I'll avoid him until it's time to get this show on the road.

"Alright, brother, what are you up to? Don't tell me you put a profile on the Silver Fox's dating app for me again. I had women in their eighties trying to hook up with me for months. I had nudies sent to me for months, not that I'm complaining about that part but most of those women were cougars on a mission. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but I think dating apps are ridiculous. Not funny." I can't help but laugh a boisterous laugh straight from my gut.

"I thought you got rid of that right after I put the profile up. You know that's where you are headed in your golden years if you don't find you a woman." I say the words but the look on Tyson's face shows me he's in no mood for this shit.

“I didn’t know I had to go in there and delete the profile, you asshole.” I laugh again and I see the smirk on Tyrel’s face. He thinks it’s funny too, but he’s too stubborn to admit it. “What’s up your sleeve this time?”

“You’re too serious to not be seventy yet. I’m going to a book signing in Conroe in a couple of weeks.” Tyson gives me a puzzled look.

“What the hell, Tyrel? You don’t even read the comic pages in the newspaper anymore. Why would you, or even more to the point, why would I go with you to a book signing? We have serious shit going on in club right now,” Tyson asks me. I try to school my face.

“Do you know anything about Indie romance authors, or more importantly, the photos they put on the cover of these motorcycle romance books they write? The covers are supposed to represent bikers.” Tyrel is looking at me like I’m crazy.

“No, brother, I don’t, and I don’t want to. I have business at the club I need to worry about. Have you bumped your head? I mean hit it hard. Are you going through another midlife crisis?”

I laugh again. This man doesn’t know what is fixing to hit him. He has no idea that Honey is writing romance novels under a pen name. I have been digging into Honey Miller and it even shocked me about his long-lost love writing about motorcycle clubs. I know what I did all those years ago fucked with both Honey’s and Tyson’s heads. I know I should have set the record straight when it happened, but I didn’t. I had been a nomad for a few years when Tyson met Honey. I didn’t know if Honey was good for my brother, and I didn’t know if Honey meant that much to Tyson. I knew after Honey kicked rocks exactly what she meant to him. That woman still haunts my brother. I’m the only one he talks to about her. It’s time those two roads collided, and I’m going to make that happen. I just hope the collision doesn’t kill all the bystanders involved.

“No. Tyson, I’m here to make sure you put some fun in your life. The signing is called Motorcycles, Mobsters, and

Mayhem. The number of ladies that go to these things are endless. They're into the Indie writers. The models they put on these books are one of the things that draw these women in. Say we go down there and show these ladies what real bikers look like. We can meet and greet our own little fan club." Tyson laughs again, and it's good to hear. He's been burly for many years.

"Work, brother, work."

"Alright. I agree, we need to clean this gang up but if we get it done in the next week, then you're going with me to the signing. There's this one author that I think you would like to talk to. Her name is Penny." Tyson looks at me closer and I school my face to show no signs of deception.

"I don't know what has gotten into you, brother, but if we clean this gang up in the next week, I'll go with you to this signing. Don't think I don't know you're up to something." I smile at my brother.

"The only thing I'm doing is looking out for my brother. There are endless chicks we can meet. Remember women, right? Now, let's get this gang gone so we can have some fun." I let him see the laughter in my eyes.

"I know I'm going to regret this but what the hell? We deserve a little fun, too." Tyson just doesn't know his life is about to change again.

*H*oney

I have all my shit loaded into my SUV and I'm about ready to head out to the signing. I decided a while back to go down early and visit with some close friends who live near the event. Memaw as well as Brea and Penny are going to the event but I want to go play with the baby French bulldogs that they have. They also own the business that creates my merchandise.

I'm also going to hit the pool and spa while I'm there. I haven't treated myself to a massage in I don't know how long.

Traveling along the roadway, I see the flowers have all bloomed along the roadway. The sun is shining inside the car. I feel like my life is changing for some reason. It's a gut feeling. One I will heed. Usually, these feelings are spot on with me—a sixth sense so to speak.

I arrive four hours later—hot, sweaty, and tired. It's time for a shower, food, and nap. After unloading all my shit from my car, I do exactly that.

Three hours later, I wake up to my phone ringing. I see it's my private investigator and pick it up. I want this information. I need it. Although I haven't seen Rager in a few months from afar, I have missed him. I also need to decide soon on what I'm going to do. I know I need to give this up, give Rager up. Pining after a man who doesn't want me is stupid. It's just trying to convince my heart of that. The last time I saw him

was on the anniversary of our son's death. I just needed to feel close to him.

“Hello, Mark, what do you have for me?” I answer.

“Well, I don't know what's going on, but things have tightened up at the clubhouse. The guys are acting all kinds spooked. Not really spooked but antsy. I keep seeing Tyson, in like several sets of clothes daily, in and out of the clubhouse. It's like there are two of them. I haven't seen anything like it before. Well, I did, but it was a few years ago when I was checking up on him for you. I saw him walk out with a club girl, then later he was pushing her away when she went up to him. It's crazy. He wasn't nice about it.”

“Okay. Can you keep me updated in a couple of days? I'm here in Conroe for the MMM signing and don't really want to accidentally bump into him until I decide what I'm going to do. I plan to take care of this after the signing. I just don't want any damned surprises.”

“I sure can. I'll contact you on Friday, if that is okay?” Mark asks.

“Perfect. Thanks for everything,” I say.

Hanging up, I look around, lost in my thoughts. I've never been giddier with excitement than when I first laid eyes on Tyson. I knew at the exact moment our eyes met that he was it for me. One thing that always stuck in my head though was he told me that I was it for him too. Then I saw what I saw, and I just don't understand why he did that to me after everything that he told me. I can only ask *why*. I just need the closure, one way or another.

My son is right. I need to find someone who is going to put me first, without me pushing them away. I know that I can't do that without confronting my past with him.

I also need to sit down and talk with Raider about his twin that he knows nothing about. I just couldn't talk about my loss, as he was a baby himself. As he got older, I was lost in my own grief and didn't know how to tell him. I know my son.

He'll be mad because I hadn't said anything to him about any of it. He's more like me than anyone.

I've decided to get words into one of my books for Mayhem Makers for my second book in the series. I still haven't come up with a title for it. I have the picture but need to get Clarise to work her magic. She is phenomenal as a cover artist.

This is about the identical twin brother of the first book. He's the one who caused the ruckus from the first H and h from that book.

I am so excited to get this one written and published. I know I have others before this one, but he speaks to me in my head. He has no idea what's coming his way. I see a little spitfire that is going to tilt him on his axis.

I haven't made the International bestselling author list yet, but it will happen one of these days. That is one of my goals. I don't do too bad, considering all the wonderful authors out there, but I am going to make it on that list.

I write until my eyes start to blur. I got in eight thousand words. It's the most I've ever done in one sitting. I take my meds so I can sleep peacefully and crawl under the covers.

Honey

Waking up, I stretch and think of all that I want to do today. If I don't get it done today, that means I'll be racing to get it done later. I need to find a sex shop and pick up some basket fillers for the raffle and booze for my table. I wanna find something unique for my table basket, maybe a big blowup penis. I have my mini peens, but you can never have too many. I plan on making pudding shots for my table too. I need to go to the grocery store to make this happen.

I take my time this morning. I order breakfast in and drink a pot of coffee before heading out. I see DM Earl as I'm leaving and ask her if she wants to go with me. She at first told me no but when she found out I was going to the sex shop, she was on board with the extracurricular shopping spree. Who wouldn't be?

We take the town on like the two queens we are and find a store that has fun shit. I found a donkey shirt for a friend of mine. It read from *One Ass to Another*. I hope she gets a laugh out of it like I did.

We hit the sex shop up last. We're slinging shit back and forth to one another, laughing and having a fun time. I showed her the big salami and put it on the counter with the rest of the items I had picked out. I found a couple of sex games, edible underwear for him, tatas for her. DM picked out a lot of items too. I saw a big ole dildo, ten inch long and three inches in circumference. I have no idea how that shit works but it's

gonna be funny for whomever wins it this weekend. That's right, we both bought one.

We're checking out and I hear a small commotion behind me. I see a couple of men from the Rival Sons MC. One I don't know, the other I do. I met him many years ago. His road name is Skeeter. The other one is younger and looks like he's a prospect.

He glances up and over at me. Our eyes meet and at first, I can see interest there. Then I notice the moment recognition sets in. He looks to make a movement toward me when I see Ty come out of the back as well. I stand frozen, right where I'm standing. I feel nothing, the blood frozen in my veins. I feel heat start to sizzle through my bloodstream; the longing in my body to go to him, to demand an explanation. He stares back, a smirk on his face. When I see the smirk, I feel a burn inside my body, full of anger at what he cost us. Tyson says something to Skeeter, and he says something to him. Skeeter looks pissed off. He's saying something to Ty and Ty just shrugs and shakes his head no.

They turn and head out, with Ty turning and winking at me. How dare that motherfucker do that to me. I feel someone tapping my shoulder and I turn. It takes a moment or two for me to hear what DM is saying.

I reach into my purse and pay the lady. She has bagged it all and returned my card. I give a small smile that I don't mean and walk outside with my bag in my hand, DM following right behind me.

"What the fuck was that woman?" she asks me.

"That was the man who knocked me up and when I went to tell him, I walked into the clubhouse to him getting a blowjob from some skanky whore, twinkie, or whatever the fuck you want to call her. I turned and walked out. He never called to see where I was or anything," I tell her. My eyes are rimmed red from the tears in them. I am a self-assured mean-ass bitch unless it comes to him. Then, I turn to fucking mush. I hate myself and how he makes me feel.

“We’re going to talk later, chick. But for now, I need to get back. My ole man is waiting on me at the hotel,” she tells me.

“Understand. I’m meeting up with my partner in crime in a couple of hours and have a basket to put together,” I tell her.

*R*ager

I'm sitting down at the bar, trying to swallow down some barbeque sandwiches and washing them down with a cold beer. It's the first time today that I've sat down. The club girls have enough food for all the brothers as we rotate through.

Everyone has been chasing leads, trying to find the Three Stripes Brotherhood's hide out. We all know that their base is in Kings City, but they must have somewhere to hide in St. Angel City. We're too far away from their headquarters for them to keep making these strikes. They're in and out too fast. They know if we intercept them, they're done for. We have word in the streets to contact the clubhouse if anyone knows anything. No one in this area has any words at all. That doesn't sit right for me.

The front door opens and Tank and Tag come in like their asses are on fire. They make a straight line toward me, and I know my meal is over. Tank hasn't followed my orders, but I let it slide for later. Then he'll pay a fine for it. I nod at Candy to bring my brothers a plate of food and drinks. I nod for Tank and Tag to meet me at a booth we conduct business in at times. I wait for the plates of food and Candy doesn't keep me waiting long.

I walk over to the booth and set their food before them. Candy is right behind me with beers for them. I look at the woman who I've shared more than a few long nights with. "Thanks, Candy." She nods at me. I can see the want in her

eyes, but I have no time for that now. She has had her eyes on my patch since I fucked her all weekend a few years ago. It's not happening. She knows the score in the club. I sit with my brothers and wait for them to tell me what has them in here.

“We found their hideout. It's at the edge of town. That new sheriff has been helping them stay hidden. It's time we teach Boggs a lesson about what happens to people who betray us. He's been a pain in our ass for a while. That gang must be paying him off better than we are.”

I consider what Tag has said. I don't believe it. Boggs has been a pain in our ass for the last year or two. Boggs came to our town when Sheriff Baxter died of a heart attack. Boggs isn't a young man by any means, and he just wanted a small town to ride out his years until he retired. It's just him and his wife here in St. Angel City. The rest of his family is in Royce City. Boggs has been on our asses, so now we clean up our own messes instead of leaving it to Boggs and his one deputy. He and I are on good terms. He's just too lazy to work for the thick envelope we give him at the end of every month. The only thing he is good at is turning his back on anything illegal that our club has anything to do with. He has a comfortable job and the money we pay him alone is enough for him and his wife to live the lifestyle of their choosing. No, I know it's something besides money that is motivating Boggs. Working for the Three Stripes Brotherhood will bring too much heat to him. Every law enforcement agency in Texas has heard of the Brotherhood.

Tank brings me out of my thoughts.

“That fat bastard has been moving them from one abandoned house to another all this time. It's why we haven't been able to pin them down. They're using generators for electricity so there are no new accounts with the power company. Many of the abandoned dwellings we found have well water so no need for water.” I think about what has been discussed.

“You set eyes on them?” I ask.

“Yes,” Tank answers.

“They set up generators today or were they already set up?” Things are falling into place for me, and a plan is forming in my head.

“Yes, just setting up,” Tag says while trying to eat his food.

“That means they are just moving in. We have a little time.” Tank is nodding his head affirmatively as he takes another bite of his food. “Candy, get the rest of the girls and get enough food ready for all the brothers.”

“Already done,” Chickie yells from the kitchen. Good.

“Chilton!” He’s beside the booth in seconds like any good prospect. “I want enough weapons and ammo ready within the next two hours for ten brothers. I want smoke bombs, air masks, protective vests, earpieces, and night goggles. The entire arsenal for a war. The Brotherhood will be having a little surprise by supper time.

“I’m sending out a group text to get all the brothers back. I’m sending Silas to keep an eye out at the house so we can get him up to date where this place is located. A text will do. He’s about ready for his next step in the club and Chilton isn’t far behind him.” I am typing out a group text while I’m talking. “I don’t think Boggs has been bought off. He has it too easy working for us and all he wants to do is retire and move back home. I think he’s being blackmailed. I’m going to meet him and then I’ll be back. Make sure everyone eats as soon as they get here. I want to be in place before dark.” I send Silas a text so he’ll get with Tank or Tag by text for directions and then I send my brother a text so he can meet me to talk with Boggs. It’s time to get to the bottom of this.

*R*ager

I ride up to the abandoned warehouse where I set up the meet with Boggs. It isn't long before Reaper joins me. My brother has a big smile on his face, but I can see the need for revenge against these fuckers in his eyes. I'm the only one that can read Reaper this way. Just because my brother has a smile on his face doesn't mean he won't cut your throat in a blink of his eye. He likes this type of work. I had that edge about me years back, but I've seen one too many good people pay with their lives because of their greed. I do the job, but I don't enjoy it. Reaper enjoys it.

"Did you get you something to eat?" I ask Reaper.

"Why yes, Mom, I did? You do realize I am as old as you are, and I know how to take care of myself." That makes me laugh.

"Excuse me for caring," I say flippantly.

"Why are we here?"

I start to answer when Boggs drives up and parks the only patrol car the sheriff's department has. Reaper makes a huffing noise. He knows something with the sheriff is off. Boggs parks the car, and he gets out, but I can tell he's nervous. Tyrel gets off his bike while I do the same. We both get a little closer to the sheriff.

"What do you want tonight at this hour? Couldn't it wait until morning? I'm missing my dinner and the missus doesn't

like it when I keep her waiting,” Boggs says, but he won’t look either of us in the eyes.

“Tell me, Boggs, what are the Three Stripes Brotherhood holding over your head and don’t try lying to me.” Boggs looks from me to Reaper and then back. Boggs looks like he may collapse, and tears run down his face.

“My son has two daughters. The gang has eyes on them. Maggie is only eight and Layla is fourteen. They showed me pictures of them, and they were right outside the girls’ rooms at their home. Some other ones were of them at school and with friends. I can’t let that gang hurt them. They said they would kidnap them, rape them and eventually sell them on the black market. I am hell bound to protect my family. I have them in hiding right now but it’s only a matter of time before they find Tim’s family.”

I consider what Boggs has told us. I look at Reaper and he gives me a shoulder shrug.

“You should have come to us. We would have protected your family. We could have brought them here and put all of you on lockdown until our club cleans this damn town up. They’re selling drugs to our kids in the community. They shot one of my brothers and they’re trying to take over our territory. You knew I would never let any of that stand. I don’t know if I can ever trust you again and that’s a problem not only for me but for you too.” I look Boggs in the eyes to make sure he knows how serious this is.

“I would never betray you or your club if my family’s lives weren’t in danger. I’ve cleaned up your messes before and I know how you deal with them. I just can’t let my grandbabies pay for me trying to take the easy way out in this godforsaken town. I should have just packed up and left.” Boggs is a crying mess.

Damn, the man needs to man up. I thought he was tougher than this, but I have never had a family to protect except for Tyrel and my club brothers. Then I think about Honey, and I remember when we were together, I would have done anything to keep her safe.

“But you did betray us, and our brother’s blood flowed out in our streets. That is not an action that can be taken back. That’s because you’re a weak man, and you don’t know how to face your own problems. You knew that the Brotherhood was our enemy, and you knew the consequences of betraying us, but you did it anyway.” I’m trying to think this through. I can’t come off that we’re weak. The one thing in the biker world you never do is look weak to anyone, along with backing down or giving in to blackmail. Boggs and his wife don’t live in our world. They’re civilians. I’ll do as I always do. I’ll go with my gut. I take my phone out and send Law a text. He’ll hang back with the prospects and Ax to protect the clubhouse. He’ll also take care of Boggs tonight.

“Boggs, you are going to go get your wife and pack a couple of bags to last about a week. If either of you have medicine, you need to be sure to bring it and your important papers. I want you to go to the clubhouse. Both you and your wife are going to give Law your cell phones. I also want you to give Law all the information you gave me tonight, including the information on your son’s family location. Law will have the nearest chapter of the Rival Sons MC get them and bring them here to the clubhouse. Law will encrypt the message so only that chapter and no one else can decipher what’s in it.” I look at Reaper and he has a bored look on his face. “I can’t promise that your house won’t be destroyed so keep that in mind when you’re packing. But only two bags each. Text your deputy that the sheriff’s office is closed for the week.”

“Someone will report the sheriff’s office being closed for so long. We’re the only law in this county,” Boggs says while Reaper laughs at that.

“Twit, we don’t give a fuck if you get in trouble. Just think of a good lie to tell when they question you. It’s not like when we took this war to the Brotherhood that you and your deputy wouldn’t disappear anyway. What was the last excuse? Oh yeah, gone fishing. The sign was on the outside of the sheriff’s office for three days. When everything was safe again, you both came out of hiding.” Reaper is right. That was the first time we went after the Brotherhood.

“We both have vacation time coming. I’ll say we messed up, and we each thought the other one was on duty.” That made Reaper laugh hard.

“You had an excuse in less than five minutes, you asshole. I don’t even know how you keep your peace officer’s license.” The damn bickering between Boggs and Reaper is giving me a damn headache.

“Both of you shut up and listen to what I’m saying. Boggs, get your wife and get to the clubhouse. You will be on lockdown until this is over and then we’ll deal with you about your betrayal. Law will make sure both you and your wife are comfortable and well fed. Your family will be taken care of. Go, now.” Boggs looks at me like he wants to say something, but he turns back to his car, and he leaves us standing there.

“That asshole needs to take a long fishing trip and never come back,” Reaper says.

I shake my head at my brother. When had he become so blood thirsty? *He worked up to it after he lost Jasmin*, I think to myself.

“We’ll take care of him after this is over,” I tell my brother.

“You’re putting your ass on the line for him and his family. Since when are you such a bleeding heart? We take care of ours and not the entire world.”

I start toward my bike, and then turn to look at Reaper.

“Just think about it, Tyrel. If that had been your wife and child in danger, would you not have done everything you could to protect them?” Tyrel gets that pissed-off look he gets when someone mentions his wife.

“I would have never put my family in the danger he has put his family in. No one can play both sides of the fence and not get burned somehow. This should have been a Boggs’s problem and not our problem,” Reaper tells me.

“If it had been Honey, I would have done anything to make sure she was safe. Even if that meant doing a deal with the Devil himself.” He knew I was serious. Reaper just shook his head.

“It always comes back to Honey. She was never yours. I could have explained things to her after what happened, and she would have forgiven you. You made me swear I wouldn’t, and I will never break my word to you. All these years and you are still in love with her.”

I turn and finish the walk to my bike and get on.

“She never would have stayed. She wasn’t the staying kind. I will always love that woman, but it’s a dead subject. All I can say is I know what was going through Boggs’s mind. His fate will be determined just like everyone else that betrays our club, through a club vote. I’m not giving him a break. I just don’t have time for a vote right now. But mark my word, no civilians will be harmed because of our club’s business. Not now and not ever.” I’m ready to get tonight over with.

“I agree. Now let’s get tonight over with. We have a book signing to go to this weekend.” Damn, I had forgotten about that. I smile at my brother.

“If I go, then all the brothers go. We’ll make a day of it.” If he’s dragging me to this thing, then I’m dragging everyone else in the clubhouse. Reaper mounts his bike and looks at me with a smirk on his face.

“Sounds like a plan. This is going to be priceless.” Reaper does have a warped sense of humor. We drive off to ready ourselves for the fight ahead.

TWO HOURS LATER

*R*ager

The brothers and have ironed out the plans for tonight and Reaper is here with us. The rest of the nomads are back at the clubhouse with Ax, Law, and the prospects. We don't want the Brotherhood to split up and hit the clubhouse while the rest of us are busy taking their asses out.

We have the shack they are staying in surrounded. The noise from the loud generators have covered any noise we may have made coming in. They have a couple of guys come out and walk around the shack every fifteen minutes. Each time, it has been different young men. The ages of these men range between late teens to early twenties. They are too young to be giving their lives up for bullshit. They've made their beds, and it's time for them to lie in them. It will be a permanent resting place. Unless they give themselves up, we won't stop until they are all dead. We have given them all kinds of alternative outcomes, but we can't negotiate with people who won't listen. I won't lose any sleep over it.

Tank has a batting ram to move in on the front door, with Reaper and me backing him up. Tag is on the back door with Drum and Fire, a nomad, backing him up. The other brothers are divided on each side of the house. There are no windows or doors without eyes on them. Tank hits the front door, and the first shot is fired. David, one of the higher- ranking soldiers for the gang, is the first Brotherhood casualty. It only lasts five or ten minutes. All the brothers are safe and not one of them is injured. The Brotherhood gang members are either dead or wounded. Our timing was spot on, and the rest was pure luck. Thankfully, lady luck smiled on us tonight.

“Search and make sure all the weapons are gone. We'll destroy the trash and keep the good stuff if there is any here.” I see one of the members trying to make it to the back door and I shoot him. “That's Antonio, the little brother of the founder for the gang.” I thought about the shit this gang has caused us

and I know that their fate is sealed. “Let’s finish up and then burn the house to the ground.” I killed their leader, or at least the leader here. I leave the rest for my brothers. I have no fucks to give for any of these motherfuckers. They can keep their business in King City. Whoever oversees that town can have our headaches back.

“Looks like it’s a clean sweep,” Reaper tells me. “Good riddance. Time to party.” Damn, my brother can switch gears in a second.

“Time to get on with our business without these pains in the asses around to slow us down.” I need some downtime for a little bit. We all do.

“I’m not letting you off the hook about that signing event this weekend.” Damn, Reaper is like a dog with a bone.

“I said the entire club will go or the ones who don’t have plans anyway. I let everyone know at church in the morning.” Reaper laughs. “I’ll be at the clubhouse.” I walk away without giving him another chance to say anything. I need the wind in my face, with my bike beneath me. It’s the only peace I get these days. We’ll deal with Boggs later this week with a vote to decide his fate. I want to make sure that this is settled for good and there are no stragglers left behind.

*H*oney

I wrote all day yesterday after the fiasco at the sex shop. I was so fucking mad. The longer I thought on it, the more pissed off I got. How dare he wink at me with that fucking smirk on his face. I am so done with that prick.

I got more words in than I had in a while. It's going to be one of the very best pissed-off reads I have ever written.

Memaw is meeting up with me today for lunch. I sure have missed her. I wanted to see the others, but they're all working today. It's only two days until the signing. Sunday, I plan on hunting down the asshole and letting him know about our son.

Me and my other half, my writing partner, my bestest friend, are going to plan and plot the next three or four books out today after lunch. She knows me better than most. I only have a few close friends who I trust with my innermost self. I have trust issues, even within my family other than my kid.

I hear my phone ringing and pick up. I know it's the kid. "Hey, Raider, what's up?" I ask him. I know he's just checking in. I expected it yesterday, but that didn't happen.

"I've met someone. She's it for me," he blurts out.

"Really?" I state, shocked. I had no idea he was even seeing anyone.

"I haven't been with her long, but when you know you know."

"Since when?" I ask him. I'm at a loss for words.

“Okay, Mom. I know what I’ve said in the past. You were and are right about it all.”

“Finally. What’s her name? Tell me about her,” I ask.

“Her name is Billie. She’s beautiful.”

“So, she’s beautiful. That’s it?”

“It’s more than that. I can’t explain it, other than when she isn’t with me, I feel empty.”

“So, like how I felt about...” I pause not wanting to finish. I’ve never told him about his dad, who he is or where he even lives.

“Why won’t you tell me about my father,” he snarls at me. “I have always asked but you don’t say a thing.”

“Watch the tone. If I thought it would help, I would tell you everything.” Waiting for a moment to collect my thoughts, I say, “I am happy for you. I can’t wait to meet her,” I tell him.

“Are you doing okay?” he asks me.

“I’m doing fine. Met up with some friends. Going to lunch with Memaw, then meeting up with Hope. I saw both DM and Vera. I took DM with me to the sex shop for my basket goodies. That was hilarious,” I tell him with a laugh.

“Mom, I’ve told you before and I will say it again, I don’t want to hear this shit,” he barks at me.

“Look, kid. You know me. Deal with it,” I tell him. “I can’t wait to meet her. I love you, kid. I am heading out to meet Memaw. I’ll talk to you either later tonight or tomorrow night. We have a prom-like get-together tonight, so I may not get to call.”

“Got it, Mom. Love you,” he says. “Now remember to stay away from that club I told you about. They’re bad news, Mom.”

“Got it. Bye,” I tell him. If he only knew the whole truth about that club. I was a part of it for a while, and I have already run into them.

The afternoon drags on but I have a long visit with Memaw.

Arriving back at the hotel, I see one of my best friends. Hope has my back no matter what. She's never made me feel like I'm not doing my part, even when I don't think I am. She one hundred percent has my back. I wish we lived closer together. It would make things so much easier, but writing together and occasionally talking on the phone while we do that is the bomb.

I meet her halfway, both of us with a smile on our faces.

"Hey, lady. Want to get our bags filled for whomever buys one of our books?" I ask her.

"Yeah, that would be fun. Hubby is fishing again, and I needed out of the bungalow."

"I probably should have gotten one, but this is a nice hotel too," I tell her.

"It is. So, what do we have for the bags?" she asks me.

"Well, a little of this, a little of that. You know, just some shit," I tell her. I got the response I wanted when I hear her laugh.

"I saw this video the other night. This lady was telling this other person, 'I think the ghost fucked my husband.' When I heard that, I thought that was the funniest shit ever," I tell her.

"Man, you flip from one thing to the next without a beat," she replies.

"I told you that a long time ago. I can't seem to help myself. If I don't say it when I'm thinking it, I forget that shit," I tell her. "That was worth saying at the moment."

"Only you," she replies, while shaking her head at me.

Smiling, I turn, grab her arm, locking them together and off we go.

Later that evening, after dressing for prom, I head toward the meetup place. I had gotten everything ready to set up in the morning. The special swag and preorders are done.

The evening is an immense success. I meet a few new readers and get to see and visit others who I have known for a while. I love to talk with readers about everything. I do this kind of stuff for them. Without them, I wouldn't be the author I am.

"I'm heading out. See you all in the morning. I'm a little tired and want to be fresh for the festivities tomorrow," I tell everyone that I see as I'm leaving.

Crawling under the covers of my bed, I feel as if something big is going to happen. It's just a sixth sense. I get them sometimes. Some I like, some I don't.

I had one the other day just before walking into the sex shop. I should have taken the warning to better prepare myself for seeing him again after all these years.



SATURDAY MORNING

Rolling over, I look at the clock. The alarm hasn't gone off yet. I see that it's just now six thirty. I pick up the phone and order a pot of coffee and decide to order some eggs and bacon while I'm at it. They tell me it will be about thirty minutes, so I jump in the shower.

I'm dressed, my hair dried and styled by the time room service arrives. I open the door and they bring in my tray of goodies.

I'm sitting and have just finished breakfast when I feel the chills going up and down my spine. This is not what I'm looking forward to either. Something is going to happen. I pray it's a good thing. I don't think I could do another like the other day.

Walking downstairs and heading toward the conference center, I'm pulling my belongings with me. I have pulled myself together. I must believe that it's all a good sign.

It takes about an hour to set my table up the way I want it done. Vera is right next to me. Jordan Marie is here. I love her writing. Dragon is my all-time favorite book. I walk over, giving her a big hug. I haven't seen her in about five years or so.

The morning crawls on but at a faster pace. It's almost time to open the doors. I peek outside the doors and my mind is fuddled. I shake my head. Am I seeing what I think I'm seeing? Nah, it can't be. It just can't. About that time, shivers race up and down my body, from the top of my head to the tips of my toes.

*R*ager

I don't know how I got talked into coming to Conroe for this damn book signing. This is a chick thing, and I am no damn chick. I've caught sight of all the ladies waiting in that long damn line to be the first to get in the door. Reaper, Skeeter, and Drum have all scattered. I went looking for a restroom after that ride and I know Reaper has gone to find us beer. If I was a betting man, Skeeter and Drum are hiding in the casino.

To hell with this, I'm going to find something to eat. I don't care if I'm the last person who goes through that line at the door.

I meet Reaper halfway to the restaurant inside the hotel and he doesn't have any beers in his hands. "I thought you went to get us something to drink."

"I was distracted by all the lovely ladies hanging out in the casino, restaurant, lobby, and the bar. So many choices and only today to play. I'm on a mission this morning, but when I am through with it, I have a backup plan for the rest of the day." Reaper wiggles his eyebrows and gives me a smirk.

The damn man has a one-track mind. "I can hook us up with some twins later. They're all about the older biker and younger woman thing. I thought I would take them both on, but I could share for a little while to give you a break, bro." I shake my head at Reaper. I can only imagine what the babes would look like. Babes is the operative word. They're barely

voting age from my brother's track record with women lately. I have had too much of that and it gets old. At my age, I go for ones who are at least twenty-five. At least they're old enough to know the score going in. Today is going to be a shitshow, but it's a day of no work so that's good. I need the break for twenty-four hours.

Something keeps the hair on the back of my neck standing on edge. Something is going to happen. I always trust my gut and it's screaming at me now.

*B*illie

I'm so excited to meet Penny Anglene today. She's my favorite author. It's twice as thrilling since she is Raider's mom.

Things have been going so well between the two of us and I think I am falling in love with Raider. I've never been in love before, so I don't know how to make sure it's love and not lust.. I know I lust him but is it truly love? Only time will tell.

Raider and I are so compatible. We can talk all night long while he holds me on his chest so I can hear his heart. We talked about our hopes and dreams for the future. Our hopes for the future are almost identical. His includes his club, but mine includes my family as well.

Last week when Mom took my siblings to the fair, Raider and I made love for the first time. I gave him the virginity that I had been waiting to give to my husband on our wedding night. Raider said we were forever, and I would be his wife very soon. I trust Raider with my heart.

I got here a little late, so I'm at the back of the line to get inside to the authors. I had to make sure all the animals were fed before I could leave. It was only a five-hour drive, but I still found myself behind this morning. I think it was because I was so excited.

I'm people watching. This is something I can do for hours. I'm never in crowded places so this is a treat for me. I love observing how other people behave in every situation.

I see four guys in cuts. I think that's what Raider told me to call them, but the cuts aren't like Raider's cut. They have a different club's name on them. One I have never seen around my hometown.

There's something about the two tallest men. They're twins but I can tell them apart. There's something about the two that look familiar. When they move closer as the line moves up, I see it. It's their eyes. They look just like Raiders, a deep brown.

Both men have salt-and-pepper hair and some smile wrinkles, but they are still very virile. They're both muscled up and are noticeably big. These men could be related to Raider. They may be coming to see Raider's mom like me.

I asked Raider not to tell his mom that I was coming. I don't want her to feel obligated to talk to me. We haven't formally been introduced.

I step back in line. Now I'm in line right in front of the men. I take another quick glance at the two men, and the closer I get, the resemblances keep getting stronger. I can't help myself. I turn and face the men.

"Excuse me," I say and all four of the men's faces are on me. "Are you related to Raider Miller? I mean, you two?" They look at me and then the two bigger guys look at each other.

"Are you talking to us?" one of them asks. I look at the man's name on his cut. It reads *Rager*, and he's the president of the Rival Sons MC. I'm glad Raider taught me how to read a biker cut.

"Yes, sir. My boyfriend's name is Raider Miller, and he's the president of the Righteous Arms MC. Your facial features and eyes look just like his. I thought you might be coming to see Penny Anglene, his mom. She's one of the authors signing here today."

Rager gives me a warm smile.

"No, darling, I don't have a woman or any children. I'll check this Penny Anglene out when I get inside. She may be a

long-lost relative of ours.” He looks at the man standing beside him. “I’m Rager and this is my identical twin brother, Reaper. The other two are Skeeter and Drum. We’re part of the Rival Sons MC.”

“Raider taught me to read a cut. It’s just the resemblance is uncanny. I’m sorry for disturbing you gentlemen. You must think I’m crazy, just talking to strangers,” I say to the men, and I can feel my face turning red. They all four smile at me.

“Sweetheart, it’s not a problem. Did your boyfriend also tell you it’s not a great idea to talk to brothers from another club? If we had been a club who had a disagreement with your old man’s club, this might not have turned out so well. You need to be on guard around other clubs. We have no beef with the Righteous Arms MC. Did you say that Raider, your boyfriend, is Penny Anglene’s son? How old is he?” I look at the man named Rager. His cut says he is the president. He doesn’t seem to have an agenda or even know Raider. It’s probably just curiosity.

“He’s twenty-five,” I answer. Rager has a strange look on his face. “Well, thank you, anyway. I guess it’s one of those things that everyone has someone that looks like them somewhere on earth. Have a great day,” I say and then start to turn around. I see the one named Drum catch Rager’s attention and the two of them walk away.

I almost step back and talk to the two men left standing there again just to pass the time, when I see Penny Anglene coming up on the far side of the men, walking toward me and everything else seems to stop. I am breathless and nervous. She sees the two men standing behind me and her step falters, but she recovers well. If no one was watching as close as I have been, they would have never noticed but it didn’t go unseen by Reaper. He gives Penny a panty-melting smile. I’m a taken woman, but I need to give Reaper his props. He is mighty fine for an older man. Not that I am into older men. He starts to cut her off, but it doesn’t look like Penny likes the idea, so I do what I can to help Raider’s mom.

I step in between Reaper and Penny. “Hello, Ms. Anglene. I’m Billie Nesbit and your son is my boyfriend. I am so happy

to meet you. You are my all-time favorite author and I follow you on Facebook. I'm in your group. It is such an honor to meet you." Reaper looks at me, and then to Penny.

"You're Penny and you have a son that is twenty-five years old?" Reaper looks at Penny accusingly.

"Rager that is none of your business and you have no right to ask anything of me." I don't know what is going on.

"That's not Rager. That's Reaper." We both turn to look at Reaper and he's gone. "I'm sorry I was so pushy when I approached you. I just noticed you weren't happy about seeing Reaper and I was trying to give you time to regroup."

Penny's face is plastered with a smile, but it doesn't reach her face. It's fake. She's faking it until she can make it. My mom has made these faces many times, especially after Dad's death.

"My son found himself not only a beautiful woman but also a smart one. Thank you. I'll see you inside. Come to my table first, so you can sit with me. We can get better acquainted." Penny still isn't calm, she's agitated and seems to be in a hurry and Reaper made her feel uncomfortable.

"Thank you, ma'am, I'll do that after lunch." I try to comfort her by hugging her and she hugs me back, but I can feel her shaking.

"I'll see you inside," Penny tells me. I don't feel comfortable with this situation, and it isn't my business. I know someone that it is their business and I know he'll know what to do. I take my phone out and text Raider. By the time I have let him in on everything that's happened, it's my turn to enter the signing.

*R*ager

Drum asked me to wire him some money because he has a hot streak going at the blackjack table and he left his bank card at home so he wouldn't spend too much money. I did go with him but just withdrew money from the ATM. No need to spend extra money by wiring the money to one of those cash apps. I gave him the cash and made sure he knew that would be all he got from me today. If he has such a hot streak going, why does he need my money? He left his bank card at home for a reason.

When I returned to the line to get into the signing, both Skeeter and Reaper were nowhere to be found. I showed my ticket at the door and went in to see what the fuss is about with women and their books. I see the back of Billie when I enter the room and decide to see if she needs a browsing partner. Maybe then I wouldn't feel so conspicuous. I do notice a few men walking around but none of my brothers are anywhere to be seen.

I walk up behind Billie, and she turns and smiles at me. I return the easy smile on her face. This is a nice woman, and she doesn't try to be a bitch who is looking for the thrill of bedding a biker. She also doesn't act liked a spoiled bitch who is trying to get back at her parents. Billie is just nice, too nice for her own good. I could think of worse ways to spend my afternoon.

"Hey, Billie, it looks like my brothers have left me here on my own. Would you mind some company while we look

around? I thought you had your favorite author here to talk to. You just seem to be looking around.” Billie looks at me and she seems to be picking her words carefully. She’s not at ease like she was earlier.

“I would love some company and I can tell you about some of the authors.” I know she has more to say. “It’s just that earlier when you walked away from Reaper, he met my boyfriend’s mom. He seemed to agitate her. I want Penny to like me. Today’s the first day we met...” Billie trails off with her voice getting lower with each word.

I don’t know why Reaper would upset some strange woman. “Did Reaper know her?”

“Like I said, I don’t know. She just acted uncomfortable around him before he ever spoke. Maybe she did know him, but she called him Rager. He seemed surprised that she had a twenty-five-year-old son and then he was gone.”

I’m as confused as Billie is.

“When we get close, show her to me. Maybe it’s someone we know. Why aren’t you at her table now?” I asked Billie.

“There’s a line backed up around her table and down the aisle. I’ll go back when it thins out. I have other books to pick up that I preordered. Come on, we can make our way around the room. Raider should be here soon. His answer to my text was short and I could tell he was happy. Everything was in capital letters. He wasn’t happy that his mom was upset. He’s always concerned about his mom. She brought him up right. He loves his mom and worries,” Billie informs me.

I hope there’s no trouble between our clubs when he shows up. I like Billie. She’s growing on me.

“What about your boyfriend’s dad? You only ever mention his mom.” Billie looks at me and I see when she decides she can trust me. “Raider doesn’t know who his father is. His mom would never tell him. Raider only knows that his mom raised him on his own and his dad wanted nothing to do with him. I don’t think that there’s a dad out there who would never want

to meet his son at least once. But Raider swears his dad did his mom wrong, and the man is no good.”

I agree with Billie. A man that is worth anything would want to at least meet his child.

“Does Raider know anything about his dad?” I ask without thinking.

“I’m not sure Raider would like me discussing his business with someone he doesn’t know.”

If Raider is anything like most presidents of a motorcycle club, he wouldn’t like it, but there’s something about this story that has me pressing for more information.

“It’s not my business and I agree with Raider not wanting his private affairs being discussed with strangers. I only want to try and help you figure this out.” Billie stops in the line again and bites her lips as she’s thinking this over. “If my brother, Reaper, upset this woman and Raider is on his way here, then I would like to head this argument off before he arrives. I can get Reaper to apologize to this Penny woman.”

“You may be right about that. Raider is kind of hot tempered at times when it comes to his club, his mom, and sometimes me.”

I don’t believe it comes in that order to save my life. His woman will come first.

“All Raider has told me is that his father is a president of another motorcycle club. Raider’s club will have nothing to do with that club because they’re an outlaw club with tendencies that come closer to a one-percenter club. His mom was the president’s old lady, and he cheated on her right in front of her.” Billie takes a breath and then looks at me again. “Honey didn’t tell Raider that though. She was drinking with her friends one night and he was supposed to be in bed. He overheard his mom talking about it with her friend. He’s never said anything to his mom about it and she’s never told him herself.”

“I thought you said her name was Penny. You just said Honey,” I say, hoping that she doesn’t shut down on me. Not

without answering me. The name Honey is not a common one.

“Penny Anglene is her pen name. The name she writes under. Her real name is Honey Miller.”

That name makes my knees weak. She had a child with another man. My heart feels wounded beyond repair.

“How old is your boyfriend?” I ask the only thing left for me to know. I’m sure Billie already mentioned it but for the life of me, I can’t remember, right this second. I hold my breath waiting for her answer.

“Raider is twenty-five,” Billie answers me.

She couldn’t have, could she? I know I’m sticking like glue to Billie until I have my answer. Could this be my Honey? The one who left me without a word? I know I need to change the subject before I badger this poor young woman. I can’t keep the last question that is on my mind.

“Did you really think that your boyfriend and I look similar in appearance?” I try to be casual about the question.

“So much in the eyes that I talked to four complete strangers. If you knew me, you’d know just how much that is out of character for me.”

I can’t even let myself have a little bit of hope.

“I think I’ll stay with you until we make it to Penny. This woman sounds incredible, and I need to meet her.” Billie gives me the biggest smile. “Who are we waiting to meet right now?”

“This is Darlene Tallman, and she not only writes romance books, but she has the best children’s books. Her motorcycle club books put the fire in sizzle.”

I give her a big belly laugh. “What do you know about the fire in sizzle? I could tell you stories about some things that happened in our clubhouse that would make your ears blow smoke out of them. You are too young for romance books.” I feel protective over Billie.

“I experience it through the freedom of my reading. It helps me block out the world, relax, and get lost in the book

boyfriends. I hope to one day be good enough to publish a romance novel myself.” Billie spills her secrets to me. Her eyes light up when she talks about her love for reading and her hopes to follow her dreams. It’s been years since I felt that excited about anything.

“Who is the beautiful woman going to each of the tables, talking to the authors?” Billie sees where my eyes are at.

“That’s Sapphire Knight, and she is an author. She organized this signing. Her books are amazing, and she still has time to put on such fun signings.” She looks across the floor. “She’s also a married woman so don’t be getting all flirty with her.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, darling. I only have eyes for you this afternoon since you’re my guide for this event. I’d be lost without you. Which reminds me, my brother has been missing for a while now. He’s the one that talked me into coming today.”

Billie laughs. “I can’t imagine why Reaper would want to come to a signing event. He doesn’t seem the type to be into romance books. Does he read a lot?” Billie sounds interested.

“No, darling, he doesn’t. He thinks I’m getting old and stuck in my way of doing things, so he’s trying to get me to open my horizons. I’m beginning to think that he has a whole different agenda.”

“It’s my turn next.” I see we have made our way up to the front of the line.

“I’m going to stand over there until we go to the next line.” The woman in front of us steps out of the line and Billie starts moving forward. I moved to where I told Billie I would be and waited for her. Billie is with the author for a little more than five minutes and then walks back toward me.

“That Darlene is so funny. She’s like talking to a friend.” I don’t get Billie’s enthusiasm, but if this is what is making her happy, she wears it well.

“Who are you seeing next?” I ask her.

“One of my other favorite authors, MariaLisa DeMora and then Morgan Jane Mitchell. They’re sitting next to each other, and I have preorders from both.” This tiny woman is going to be carrying a lot of weight on her arm all day.

“Did you take a loan out for all these books? You’re spending a lot of money and we haven’t moved very far around this big room. How are you going to carry all this stuff around all day?” Billie looks at me like I’ve lost my mind.

“I have preordered books and paid for them over the last year. When I take a break for lunch, I’ll take these to my truck. I have a wagon and I’ll bring it in with me to put the books I have preordered on the other side of the room. I have more books on that side so I knew I could carry this side easily. I hate having to pull the wagon behind me but there’s no way I could carry the amount of books I have for that side. They place a seating chart in the same group, so everyone knows where all the authors are seated a week before the signing. That way all the readers can plan out their day for who to see first. This is my first signing, so I’m just going to one side with the fewest orders before lunch and then the side with the most orders the second half of the day.”

Billie knows what she’s doing. I guess if books were my thing it may seem more interesting. None of my brothers back at the clubhouse would even believe me if I told them what I’m doing today.

“So have you read these books already and just want a paperback copy for later when you want to read them again, or are they all new books to you, so you’ll have plenty to read for the next few years?”

Billie laughs, and she sounds so carefree.

“I never read the paperbacks I have signed. I have a few books I ordered directly from different authors signed at home. That is a big no-no. I could break the spine and crease the pages. I have read all the books but I either buy a copy at the bookstore or I use my e-reader. Once I put my signed books on the shelf, they stay there. No one touches them.” Billie is serious about her books.

“So, your boyfriend, do you think he will show up for his mom?” I ask as innocently as I can.

“Yes, Raider will be here. We live a few hours from here so it will take a little while before he’ll arrive. He wasn’t crazy about his mom coming by herself, but that woman is very independent.” Billie hesitates a moment. “He was none too happy about me coming either. He wanted to send a couple of prospects with me to shadow me and his mom. I told him no and the subject was closed. Raider needs to understand that I’ve been taking care of myself for a while now and I won’t let no man strong-arm me. I may give into things that don’t matter but the things that I won’t tolerate is a man trying to tell me what I need. I know what I need. I can take care of myself.”

This Raider guy is going to have his hands full with Billie. How I ever could have thought she was a weak woman is beyond me. Sweet, she is, with a little naïve thrown in there too, but she isn’t weak. We make our way up the line. Billie talks to one author and then we make our way up the other line. I leave her while she talks to the authors, and they take pictures on their phones. I’m standing by myself, waiting on Billie when a lady stops beside me and looks at me up and down.

“Who’s book cover are you on? I need to get a copy of the paperback,” the lady tells me.

For once in my life, I am speechless. The woman puts her hand on my arm, and I smile down at the woman.

“Sorry, sweetheart, he belongs to me for the day.” Billie comes up on my other side. She steps in between me and the woman before I can say a word. “The models here with the photographer are on the other side.” The woman is still staring up at me, but she takes her hand off my arm. Then she winks at me.

“It’s a pity. You would make a killing being a cover model. I would buy any book you’re on.”

I laugh.

“Don’t encourage her or I won’t be responsible for the consequences.” Billie grins at me.

“So, I’m yours for the day. Nice.” I wink at Billie, and she blushes. I didn’t know women still blushed now, at least not as much as Billie does.

“Don’t let it go to your head, old man. I was worried about your virtue.”

I laugh so hard I am bent over.

“Darling, my virtue went out the window when I was fourteen years old. It would have been gone a hell of a lot faster if the woman’s husband would have left us alone in a house with a bed or a wall or whatever.” Billie blushes deeply but she laughs with me. “Who’s next on your list?”

“Shelly Morgan and GM Scherbert,” Billie tells me.

“I have another question,” I tell Billie.

“If it isn’t about Raider and Penny, then I’ll answer it.” She’s cutting that line of questions down quick. I understand but I have a real question for her anyway. “Ask away.”

“Where did you get your love of reading from and how many books have you read or a rough estimate?” I ask, genuinely interested. We’re waiting in yet another line.

“Reading is a family tradition passed from each generation of women in my family. My grandmother passed it to my mom who then passed it on to me.” Billie only hesitates a minute before she goes on. “My nonna and pops were both illiterate growing up. They didn’t learn how to read and write until they had children. When they were old enough to go into the fields to harvest the crops, their education would stop. Nonna hired one of the teachers at the local school to teach them how to read and to teach them some math after my mom was born. Then she read everything she could get her hands on, even the set of encyclopedias they bought for their children. My mom made a promise to my nonna, that we would all know how to read. My nonna and pops had a challenging time because they weren’t able to read. She wanted to make sure that no one else in the family would go through that.” Billie has tears in her

eyes. I'm not good with women and tears, so, I do the only thing I know to do.

“So, who's next?”

“That would be Manda Mellett. She's from the UK, and I love all her stuff. I don't think she has any books less than five hundred pages out. It takes me all day to read one,” Billie says smiling. We get in line, and it's a long one. I look at my phone to check the time. I thought it would be much later, but we still have an hour before the lunch break.

“You were close to your grandparents? I don't mean to bring up bad emotions, but you just acted like you missed them,” I ask cautiously.

“I still love and miss my grandparents to this day. They had been together for sixty years and never spent a night apart. If one of them was in the hospital, the other one never left the other's side. They were the only grandparents that I remember. My dad's parents died years before I was born in a boating accident.” Billie is smiling so I take that as a good sign. “My grandparents started our family farm. They built the house that I grew up in and there are still parts of them there. My mom and dad got married and the next month, my pops and dad built my grandparents a smaller house close to the big house. They lived there until they died. When I marry, I'll get the big house and my mom will move into the smaller house with my fifteen-year-old brother and eight-year-old sister. It's a three-bedroomed, so it's just big enough. It's a family tradition. The oldest child always gets the big house that has been in our family for three generations now.” Billie looks at me. “You must be bored listening to my dribble about my family.”

“There's nothing boring about you talking when you're passionate about something. Your eyes light up, young lady.”

“Thank you. I do love my family and my books.” Billie looks at her watch. “I only have J.L. Leslie and Melissa Filla left before lunch. Are you sure that you shouldn't find Reaper and the other guys you're here with to get you some lunch? The lines outside will get long when they let everyone out of here so the authors can go and eat.”

“Are you sure you don’t need help with all those books?” Billie looks at me and laughs.

“I haul around fifty-pound bags of potatoes all the time. This is a cakewalk to me.”

I still can’t get over the way Billie talks. I guess it’s how she was brought up.

“Alright then, I’ll go round up Reaper, Drum, and Skeeter so we can grab a bite to eat. I’ll catch you when we come back after lunch.”

“Raider should be here by then so don’t take it bad if he barks orders at you. He’s going to be grumpy,” Billie says, as if it doesn’t bother her at all.

“Why did you call him if you knew he’s going to be grumpy as you put it?” Billie smiles and then looks at her feet rather than looking me in the face.

“Because he would be madder than hell if I didn’t. Better grumpy than pissed off.” Smart. Very smart.

“I’ll catch you later then. If Raider gives you too much trouble, come and find me, and we’ll put him in check together. I’d like to think that we became friends today and I wouldn’t want to see you upset.” Billie is smiling as I turn and walk away to find out what my brother is up to.

As I walk away, I see a lady come up to her and Billie greets her. “Hey, Heather, how are you? You got to finally make a signing like I did.” I don’t hear the rest of the conversation as I walk away.

*H*oney

I sit here and know that shit is going to hit the fan. I have only told Hope the basics of what is going on. I'm distracted, and I know that I have missed some of what has been said to me by my readers. I am so nervous. I have already hit the pudding shots. I never do that until after the signing.

It's almost lunchtime and I'm hoping to sit with Billie and get to know her. I need to ask her not to say anything to Raider until I get a chance to talk to him later tonight. I don't want to cause problems for them at all. I know he's going to be upset. I just hope he isn't flaming mad. He does have his daddy's temper.

He came by that honestly. I have the same type of temperament as both, but mine is slower to ignite. Once it does, all bets are off. I could run circles around them with my temper.

I see Billie on the other side of the room and am hoping that she gets over here before lunch. I see she has Rager with her, too. I am shocked that he has the gall to show up here. I'm so mad I could throw him across the room. But my body reacts to his. My nipples are pebbled.

I get another small line and my attention is once more centered on my readers. This is what I love the most about the signings—meeting the readers and spending one-on-one time with them.

Before long, they're letting the readers know the doors will be closing for the next hour for lunch. I see a bunch of readers heading toward the doorways but have lost sight of both Rager and Billie. I look again and see Rager closer to me, heading in my direction. He stops and looks over his shoulder, then heads the other way, catching up with Skeeter. I think to myself *when the fuck did Rager change his clothes. What the hell is going on?*

I have Hope looking at me with a strange look on her face. "You hungry?" she asks me.

"No. I'm fucking worried. *What the hell, Hope?* Why is this happening? Today of all days. Raider's girlfriend is hanging out with Rager and unless I get to talk to her, she may let the cat out of the bag. I don't want him here. Not now," I hiss.

"Take a deep breath and count to ten. If Billie let the cat out of the bag already, there's nothing that can be done about it. The girl didn't know any better. If not, then there's still time for you to talk to her. I know you can make her understand the importance of keeping her mouth shut. You need to eat a little something, so you don't pass out over the stress or go to the bar and get you a strong shot of something to calm your nerves. There's nothing you can't handle. If you need a helper later to bury the bodies, you know I have your back."

"You're right. I know you're right. I need a shooter or two. You want one? I think that may do me some good today. As for the bodies, I may have to take you up on that. Dinner tonight? You have plans with Charles, or do you want to meet up with me later?" I ask her.

"Don't forget to pick up some breath mints so no one thinks you're drunk. Charles and I will take you out to dinner tonight and he can take care of both of us while we get shitfaced. That'll be your stress-free area. Our fun time will be our reward." She halfway laughs but I know she's serious.

"Yeah, I need to be placed in a stress-free zone for a week. I just don't know why he's here. Books are not his thing. I need to find out what the hell is going on. I have told you all

about what he did. What it cost me. Hell, you know more about that time than anyone. Not even Raider knows it all. He has no idea about Kagen. You're the only one who knows about that. I feel my life spiraling out of control right now. I have only felt this way one other time." I shake my head and look at the doorway. The last reader is out, and the authors are making their way to the room where the food is set up.

"Let's go get some food and drink. I'm only going to drink water for the rest of the day. I already sucked down about four pudding shots. I need a clear head. I'm not going to be that person who is so drunk they can't even sign their books. That would give ol Lex Powell more juice to post in his one- or two-person group of his. He has so many profiles that he runs. He has many personalities. Sometimes I wonder if he has a split personality. You know that they call it dissociative identity disorder. But I don't know. Maybe a wanna-be one," I tell her while I belly laugh.

"I say he's off his damn rocker, and he has lost some of his marbles, not letting go of what he's done. That is serious, but he just isn't right. Look, if you need me to go ask Rager what he's up to today, I will, but you have been handling this just fine. Now let's eat so we can meet more of our readers." Hope is right. I do have this handled, but I won't quit worrying until this signing is finished.

I twine my arm with hers and we head toward the banquet hall for lunch. We're some of the last to get into line and we stand there chatting for some time. After lunch, we both go to the bathroom and again, it's a line. There are about thirty of the ladies in line, with all the stalls occupied at the moment.

"We could go to my room. It's close to here," I tell her.

"That's okay. The line is moving fast," she replies.

After about seven minutes, we both have used the restroom, washed our hands and headed back toward the signing room.

Getting to our tables, we ran into Nikki Landis and Amy Davies. I give both hugs. Covid is still a thing but at this point, it's an everyday illness. Hope does the same. We talk for a

couple of minutes. Nikki asks how my signing in Perrysburg is going. I tell her it's going well and we are ready for it in about eleven months.

They both walk away as the doors are being opened again. That hour sure went fast. Taking our seats, we are ready for the second half of the signing. *Or I think I am.*

I am steady for the next hour when it just dies off. It's the slowest it's been all day. It's good to take a breather. Suddenly, I see Skeeter and Rager walk in and head toward me. I have a lady stop and ask if she can get a picture with me. She had stopped earlier and forgot to get one with me then. I tell her of course. She walks over to my banner for the picture when both Skeeter and Rager make landfall at my table. Skeeter offers to take the picture. She hands him her phone.

"Smile," he says to us, and he takes it. I have all the feels going on in my heart and body at that moment, and I don't know what to say.

To say I'm pissed as well as aroused at this moment is an understatement. I want to jump him, but at the same time, I wanna beat the shit out of him. Especially after the wink the other day. I am still riled up about that.

"Hey, doll, how are you?" Rager asks me.

"Doll? Since when? I have never been your doll," I spit out.

"Darling, every woman is my doll. You really are slow on the uptake. I thought you would already have figured that out today." Rager is poking the bear.

"You're starting to really piss me off. After all this time, and to do it while I'm working takes a lot of fucking balls. Are they still pea-sized as always?" I snarl.

"Now Penny, you need to keep your voice down and smile when you growl at me. We're in public and your readers may hear. I need to tell you that there is nothing small about me and you haven't seen anything about me behind my clothes." He stops talking and looks around. "Haven't you seen another man today who has a different colored shirt on but close to

mine? I would like to formally introduce myself. At my clubhouses, I am known as Reaper, but my birth name is Tyrel Sullivan. I believe you know my twin brother, Tyson Sullivan. He'll be here soon since he's with Billie right now. I also want to clarify that I was the lucky brother getting the blow job the day you left the clubhouse. Tyson wasn't even there. Explain yourself, woman."

What did he just say?

"What the hell are you talking about? Why didn't you say something then? Where was he? He told me that he was going to be there all day long." I say this, not really comprehending what he has said, what I lost, and why didn't he come and explain then.

"I'm a nomad." He turns and shows me the back of his cut. "I had just arrived at the club that day. How did I know that you didn't get off watching other people have sex? It's a thing, you know? I won't try to explain my brother to you. That's his business to explain. Just so you know, I'm the one who orchestrated today. He has no idea you're here. He also has no idea that you have a son who is twenty-five years old. I think you have some explaining to do, Lucy." The man winks at me with a smirk on his face and I feel like my head is going to explode.

"How do I know it was you? Did you even know who I was that day? This is too fucking much. Why would you orchestrate for this to happen while I'm at work? Are you that much of an asshole? Skeeter, did you know what happened that day? Does Rager? Answer me now, you assholes," I say with my fists clenched at my sides.

"Why yes, I am just that type of an asshole. I will only say that my brother has unresolved issues with you, woman, and I love my brother. I want you two to figure your shit out. I knew the only way this would go easily today was if it was done in a public place. I think you both deserve your closure, The rest you will need to get from Rager when he gets here." He answers me but I don't like his answers. It seems too convenient.

“I did know what happened that day and so does Rager. The rest, you need to talk over with Rager.” Skeeter doesn’t add much.

I stop. I am so mad at this point. It’s like a game to them. They have no idea of what they started all those years ago. I was left to raise a baby on my own. I had no help and lost one of them a week after they were born. It’s too much. He knew and never tried to even check up with me. Why didn’t he just man up and break it off with me? Why would you do that to someone you profess to love? I look up and I know I have tears in my eyes. I am that mad. I see Billie walking my way. Trailing beside her is the real Rager. I wonder if he set this all in motion. If he did, I am going to hire a hitman. He doesn’t deserve my heart anymore. I know what is going to happen. I don’t want the closure. I am going to become a lesbian. That’s right, a lesbian. None of this testosterone bullshit. If I had a pair of scissors, I would be more than happy to cut both of their dicks off.

“Watch out motherfucker. The next whore is gonna bite your dick off while you get a blow job. I’m going to hire ‘*Bobette*’ to bobette your dick right off. You’re going to walk away with a little snub of a dick. You got me motherfucker?” I point a finger at Reaper.

“What the fuck you want? Whatever it is, It’s twenty-five years too late. Get your pea-sized balls away from me. Tell me why you let him do that to me. Knowing I would think it was you?” I snarl out, my voice raising. I swirl and now point my finger at the real Rager.

“What the fuck is going on here? What the hell are you doing to my mom to get her so fucking mad,” Raider snarls out.

“Who the hell are you?” Rager asks Raider. Before I can speak, Billie cuts me off.

“Rager, this is Raider my boyfriend and Penny’s son. The two guys with him are Gator and Buzz.” Billie looks at Rager. “Raider, this is Rager, and that is Reaper and Skeeter. I think everyone should lower their voices because people are starting

to stare. Sapphire or security is going to come over here. Please, keep it down.” Billie says calmly. She’s the only one that has her head on straight right now.

“Don’t talk to my son that way, Rager. If I get kicked out or never asked back, I will hunt all of you down. This is my job. I can’t believe you would do this,” I say, stomping my foot on the floor.

I see that Billie has made her way over to my son and I want to smile. This is all a bunch of bullshit. I don’t know Reaper’s end game but it’s about to be mine.

“Did you know that I came to the clubhouse?” I ask Rager.

“I know that you kicked rocks right after seeing Reaper get a blow job. You asked no questions or even gave me the benefit of being able to explain to you. I loved you. I changed for you. You didn’t care. You just left and never looked back. I never saw you come back to the clubhouse but if you did, I was a free man. You left me.” Rager has one excuse after another.

“I came to tell you that you were going to be a daddy. I was scared out of my mind. We had never even talked about kids. I walked into the clubhouse to what I thought was you getting your cake. I didn’t know you had a twin. I never knew your brother was your twin. That is on you. As for not coming back, I returned for the second time to your clubhouse, when I came to let you know that Kagen had died. I needed you the most at that time in my life. I was greeted at the door with your message. So, I do understand what you meant you were a free man. You never once checked up on me. Love and changed for me? Bullshit. You didn’t give me a thing other than my children that I grieved for and raised all on my own.” By now I have tears flowing down my face. I grab my phone and head toward the door.

I hear Hope telling them all to leave, to get out before everyone notices what’s happening. I send Hope a message that I will be back in five minutes and to give my hotel key to my son. For the moment, I need to get it together.

*R*ager

I'm not letting Honey get away with the last word. I am not the one who did wrong here. I don't chase women, including her. She left of her own free will. She could have come back anytime she wanted to. I didn't kick her to the curb. I never would have done that. I still have dreams about the damn woman. I make my way to the door that Honey walked through. Reaper and Skeeter are right behind me. I step out of the door and the woman is gone. I look to both ends of the corridor.

"Stop!" I hear behind me. I stop and look and there stands the man that Honey called Raider. Our son. I see the strong resemblance. Billie was right but Raider looks more like me and Reaper when we were younger. "This is where my mom does her job. We can't cause her to be kicked out. She needs to be the professional that she always is. Her work is a big part of who she is." My son is loyal to his mom. I should have that same loyalty from him, but Honey took that chance away from me.

"Do you know who I am, son? I sure as hell didn't know about you or your brother before today. I didn't even know why I was here today." I tell Raider the truth.

"I'm not your son. Just because your blood runs through my body doesn't make you a dad. A dad is there every step of the way when his son is growing up, for the good times and the bad. I had only my mom, and she became not only a great

mom but a great dad too.” Raider slices open my heart with his words.

“Maybe we need to think about what happened today and be glad everything is now out in the open and everyone can start to heal from this.” Billie speaks up in her soft voice. My son is a lucky man if he doesn’t fuck this shit up.

“How can you say that to me?” Raider raises his voice.

“Simmer that temper, boy!” Reaper speaks up before I have the chance. If looks could kill, Reaper would be spliced open in the middle of the floor. Raider might take a swing on Reaper.

“Mind your business, old man. Billie is my woman, and I will speak to her the way I want to.” Billie’s spine goes stiff.

“Billie, this is none of your business. Keep out of it. Why are these men taking your side in this? How do you even know these men? I knew I shouldn’t have let you come here today by yourself.” Billie takes a step away from Raider.

“Billie and I became friends today. She thought you, Reaper, and I resembled each other, and she asked us if we knew you.” Raider curls his nose at that. He looks at Billie.

“You talked to a man from another club without me here. I knew you were too naïve to come to a casino by yourself.” Billie is shocked, and it’s written all over her face. “Come on, we’re leaving. We can go to Mom’s room and wait on her there.” Raider grabs Billie’s hand and she looks around to make sure no one is in hearing distance or is watching them.

“No, Raider, I won’t go with you now and never again until you can find your damn mind. I am mature enough to run a farm and help with my brother and sister. I’m old enough to pay taxes. I had a father growing up and I’m not looking for a replacement. You all can stay out here and make spectacles of yourself. I’m going back in to enjoy the rest of the signing without all this testosterone around.” Billie turns to look at Reaper, Skeeter, and me. “It was very nice to meet you all today. I hope to see all of you again. For what it is worth, I’m glad Raider found his dad and family today. I lost my dad five

years ago and I would give anything just to see his face again and hear him tell me he loves me one more time. Some people just don't know how to count their blessings." Billie turns and pulls her wagon back into the event room without even looking at Raider.

"Whoever lands that woman is one lucky fucker," Reaper says with a laugh. "I wonder if she has an older sister or maybe Billie herself is into older men. You're older than her, aren't you, junior?" Reaper winks at Raider. I grab my brother while one of Raider's guys grabs him.

"Old man, Billie is mine, and you keep your filthy eyes off her," Raider seethes.

"Damn, I forgot what a hot temper I used to have. You are like looking in the mirror at myself twenty-five years ago." Both men calm down and step back. I was not lying, my temper has calmed with my years.

"What are you talking about, fucker? You tore the clubhouse up just last week. You still have that temper, the same way I do. That's why we always get our hands dirty." Reaper speaks again without any malice in his voice.

"I know about your club. I know you're one-percenters without the patch. Just because you call your club an outlaw club doesn't mean you're clean. It just means you don't get caught as much. Two totally different things." Raider thinks he's getting to me. The truth is the truth.

"I didn't know your mom was pregnant when she left, or I would have never let her leave. She said she came back. I don't know shit about either time. I never gave her a message and I don't let other people speak for me. I'm a damn man and I speak for myself. I loved Honey and I still have feelings for her, but she left me. I don't chase women. I haven't chased one woman in my life. If Honey wanted to leave and she did, she was free to. I don't hold women against their will." I sigh and then rub my hand down my face. It's been a long fucking day. "If I had known about you and your brother, I would have supported your mom the entire time she was pregnant and every day since then. I don't have other children. Honey was

correct. We never discussed having babies either. If she had told me, I would have been happy. I would have been one lucky bastard and I still am. I would have loved to have watched you grow up. I might have even changed a stinky diaper or two.” I stop when I feel my eyes burning from knowing all the things I’ve missed. Things I can never get back.

“If you had given a fuck about my mom, you would have gone after her. You would have moved heaven and earth for her. Like I would for Billie.” Raider stops and I swear I see tears in his eyes. But he’s a man and doesn’t let them fall. “I have a motorcycle club, but it’s nothing like yours. Yes, I have intel on your club. I have intel on all the clubs in Texas. When Mom told me how your club was, I swore one day I would found a club and it would be nothing like yours. I’ve kept that promise to myself.”

“You see, I know about your club too. You’re small and new compared to ours. For every one club like yours, there are ten clubs like mine in this state. When a job needs to be done, we handle it, and no one takes our territory. Your club has never been in our way and therefore we have never met as opponents. If we ever do meet that way, your club will be destroyed and our club will suffer minor injuries. We’re used to the risk. Can you say the same? We’ve been doing this for years and you’re still wet behind the ears. I matured as a man in the club. I was raised by parents who loved me. Through all my years, your mom is the only regret I’ve had but I can’t change that now. I was brought up in a different time than you. In my time, chasing after women was a sign of weakness. I am not a weak man. That is more than I have ever explained myself to anyone.” I have nothing else to say. I’m still stuck on the thought that I lost a son who I never met, who I was never allowed to grieve.

“That’s the biggest line of shit I have ever heard. If you loved my mom, then you would have gone after her. Women aren’t men’s weaknesses. They’re our strengths. If any man can’t see that, then they’re the weak ones. You need to stay away from my mom. If and when she wants to talk to you, she’ll reach out. You will find out, in case you forgot, Honey

Miller is going to come out swinging and her aim is going to be at you. If she tells you to stay away, then stay away from her and give her some peace. If not, you will find out exactly how strong our club is.”

I have had enough for the day.

“What happens between your mom and me is our business and that has nothing to do with you. Stay out of it, son. That’s the only warning you will get from me.” I look my son in the eyes and let him know I’m serious. He meets mine head-on.

“I’m not your son, and anything to do with my mom concerns me. She is my responsibility and has been for a while now. She’s under my protection.” Raider makes me proud.

“I don’t think you can control either of your women. Billie left fifteen minutes ago, pulling her little wagon without a word to you. I think you’re in the doghouse. Your mom left five minutes ago, heading toward her room.” Reaper speaks up. Raider and his two guys ran off toward the front desk. I turn to look at Reaper.

“Brother, you have some explaining to do but not here. Let’s go to the clubhouse so we have plenty of space.”

Reaper laughs. “Alright, brother. I think we’ll need plenty of space and plenty of liquor. I’m ready if you are.”

I don’t say anything else. I need the space to blow off steam but the liquor, Reaper can have, I have plans later tonight and a big plan to put into motion.

Reaper

I walk into the clubhouse, and it's the same thing as usual—loud music and everyone shooting the shit. Some brothers are shooting pool, and some are being entertained by the club girls. Speckle is sitting on his regular bar stool. Rager, Skeeter, and Drum are right behind me.

“Ring, Reaper,” Rager yells at me. Everyone in the clubhouse hears him and the music goes down. When anyone is called into the ring, then they know Rager is serious. I guess he may have a small reason to be pissed at me. Sometimes, Rager just doesn't know what's good for him. I know by the time we come out of the ring, everyone will know what it's about. This is Rager's form of punishment. He hits the brother for a while, and he yells out his grievances with the brother while he does the punching. Few brothers have the stamina and strength to keep up with Rager. There are only four exceptions to that rule—Tag the SAA, Skeeter the enforcer, Tank because that guy is huge and fast, and me. Rager forgets that he and I have had the same training and we're the same size. It's no skin off my back. If my brother wants an ass whipping, I'm the man to do it.

“So, that's the way you're going to play this. Call your brother to the ring so everyone can see us work out our personal business. This isn't club business. This is our family business.” I call Rager out on his bullshit.

“The club is family. I only want Tag and Skeeter in the ring room. Everyone else, the room is off-limits until further

notice. You have ten minutes, and brother, I am pulling no punches this time like you held no punches today.” Rager is butthurt. That’s fine, but while he thinks he’s going to give me a lecture, I have plenty to say too.

“I would expect nothing else.” I wink at my brother and turn away. I would turn around and see if he had smoke coming out of his ears but giving him my back will only piss him off more. He needs to be mad enough to get all this shit off his shoulders. I go to my room and change into more comfortable clothes.

I’m waiting for my brother in the ring in under five minutes. I see him walk in and with the other two brothers behind him. I know he had both the SAA and the enforcer to watch us in case we need to be separated. I brought Tank for me, and he’s sitting in a chair outside the ring.

“You ready to get what’s coming to you today, Tyrel?” my brother asks me. I stand up from the middle of the ring where I had been sitting. I watch Tyson carefully. He’s still pissed. He just keeps coming toward me and he doesn’t stop until he gives me an uppercut to the face. I step back. Tyson has a strong punch, and I’m big enough to admit the impact of the blow knocked me backward, but he didn’t knock me on my ass yet. I spit blood from my mouth and then look at Tyson.

“That was your one. I deserved it for the things I set up for today but that’s the only one I’ll take. The rest you’ll need to earn.” I take my fighter’s stance in front of my brother.

“Why would you do what you did today?” He tried to hit me again, but I dodged the punch.

“I want my brother to get his head out of his ass.” Rager comes at me with a right and left combination. I block the first one. I don’t take the brunt of the second blow, but it did have some force behind it that my body felt. I step into Rager and make purchase on his nose and follow it up with a hit to the back of his head when he tries to cover his face. Rager steps back and looks at me.

“What the hell are you talking about? I’ve been just fine and then you bring me face-to-face with the only woman I

have ever loved,” Rager yells back at me. He steps back in and goes for a hit to my gut. I laugh. My gut is rock solid. I make sure of it every day in the gym. He follows through when he slides to the left and lands a blow to my kidney on the left side. I make him pay for it by giving him two blows to his gut as I roll out and away from him and we’re back to circling each other.

“You have been playing cat and mouse with that woman’s memory for years. You think that all the brothers don’t know that you still love Honey. Even the brothers who weren’t here way back then know it and walk around your feelings for the woman.” Rager moves in again and tries to sweep my feet out from under me. I taught him that move. I counter it with a chin stomp, and he’s the one who finds himself on the mat. “I taught you that move and the counter move. Your rusty brother.” Rager’s face is full of fury. He jumps back onto his feet and comes into my body, giving me body shots that I’ll feel the rest of the week. I return with my own body shots. He clips my eye, and I hit him square on the jaw. Our hits have been close to even.

“Why would you embarrass Honey today at her workplace? You don’t know how hard she must have worked to get where she is today. I can’t even imagine how hard it was on her, taking care of our son and working toward her dream. Yes, her dream was always to become an author. She accomplished that without anyone’s help. That woman’s strength amazes me. I don’t want her life complicated by you playing games with her.” Rager steps into me and turns and then gives me an elbow to my gut. He tries to bring his elbow up to hit me in the face but I’m faster than that. I push his body away from mine and he lands on his ass again. He spring actions himself up and lands on his feet.

“That’s what you’re pissed at? That Honey’s perfect day was upset? You’re not pissed that that woman left here without giving you a chance to explain yourself or that she hid not one son, but two, away from you. You didn’t get to say your goodbyes to Kagan, and you didn’t get to see Raider grow up and have a hand in it. She had time to spend with Kagan even if it was a small amount. Honey can never give that back to

you. You're taking it all out on me that you didn't go after your woman and make things right. How the hell is that fair and what would Pop say about you being a damn coward?" That has Rager's attention. Damn, I just pissed him off more. I may need to take this fight a little more seriously.

"You ask me what Dad would say. What the hell would Ma say about you treating a woman the way you did today?" Rager tries to calm himself down. "Get the hell out of the ring. I won't have my brother's death on my conscience."

"Fair enough. What about a beer for the both of us and our brothers here with us?" Rager says nothing but nods his head yes. "Tank, will you get us some beers sent back here and get some ice in baggies for us, or for Rager, anyway?"

Tank is up and gone. Skeeter hangs back but Tag leaves the room. Tank is back in no time with a few beers in one hand and ice bags in the other. Rager and I climb out of the ring, and we sit at a table together.

Tank and Skeeter take one close to us. They're trying to act like they aren't listening to what we're going to say. We both know they're going to listen. I throw one of the ice bags at Rager and he puts it on the edge of his eye. I put mine on my knuckles. "You need to make a point to get back in the gym and have someone to spar with you a couple of times a week. These young guys are going to test you and you need to be ready, old man."

"Fuck you, Reaper. I just stood toe to toe with you." He looks at me, and I laugh.

"But tomorrow, I won't be hurting, and you're going to be feeling your pain."

He just shakes his head. "You worry about your own ass, and I'll worry about mine." He lifts his beer to his lips and takes a drink. "I can't make myself hate Honey. It would be so easy to just point my finger at her and say everything is her fault. Do I know some of it is her fault? Sure. The only thing about that is I knew I loved her then." Rager only hesitates for a second. "I should have checked on her sometime during our time apart. I wanted to, but I just couldn't let myself be that

vulnerable with anyone, and I paid the price for it. Even back in those days, I knew I wanted a relationship like Ma and Pop. I wouldn't accept anything less. I never cheated on Honey. I treated her with respect and made sure everyone else did too. I was a changed man, and I didn't mind it one bit if I had Honey to go home to every night. She was a part of my entire life. That day, I left the clubhouse to get her engagement ring and the new tattoo on my chest over my heart. It was of a honey jar with her name in the middle of it. It's why I called you to get your ass here so you two could meet after I proposed to her. You were going to be my third surprise for her that night. I didn't know she had a surprise for me too. She just left me without a word." Rager wipes his hand down his face. "I'm not saying I'm not pissed at the woman. I am. I'm more pissed than I have ever been in my life, and I haven't even processed everything I was told today. I just hate the idea of ever coming between Honey and her lifelong dream." Rager spills his guts to me.

"Damn, brother, just man up. Apologize to the woman. The rest will fall the way it should. No two people are the same and relationships are different from when Ma and Pop were alive. Ma was a stay-at-home woman. Your woman wants a career and a piece of the pie. No one is saying Ma and Pop did life the wrong way, just like no one can say that you and Honey will do it right. There is no correct recipe in life, just the way that works for you and your woman."

"When the hell did you grow up? Tell me why you're still running from your pain? You lost Jasmin and the baby, and you gave up on life here with your family. You've become cold. If you ask me, you're the one who is being a coward and running." Rager looks at me. "If I find a way to work this out with Honey, then your ass is coming home where you belong, and you're taking your seat back at the table. It's time, brother." I have been thinking this same thing. I have a nephew to whip into shape just like I do my brother. It's time to put down roots.

"You may be right. I'll think about it. You think Honey hates me?" I ask Rager.

He laughs.

“I don’t think you’re her favorite person right now. If she ever comes back to the clubhouse, if I was you, I’d sleep with one eye open and your gun underneath your pillow,” Rager tells me.

“For how long?” I ask.

“At least the next fifty years. Damn, I love that woman when she’s sassy. She has a fire that is on simmer most days, but you piss her off and that simmer becomes an out-of-control fire. She’s so damn sexy.” I look at Rager and he’s serious. Damn, I poked the wrong bear again.

I’m thinking of the conversations that went on today. Something is gnawing at my brain. Then it comes to me.

“Honey said that she came by the clubhouse twice after she left. Who saw her and spoke to her? She was under the assumption that she wasn’t welcome here. Did you give those orders? And if you didn’t, who did? The only ones besides us that were around at the time were Skeeter and Speckle. Skeeter was young, not even eighteen yet.” This has been bothering me since Honey first said it.

“That’s a damn good question. We’ll get to the bottom of that after you answer me one question.” I nod my head at him. “Do you hate Honey? Is that why today happened?” Rager asks me.

“Tyson, I don’t hate Honey. I don’t even know the woman. I know she has spunk, and she is a mama bear when it comes to Raider. I like both those traits. I just didn’t want either of you to be able to run away from the situation that needed to be resolved for your sanity, and it looks like hers too.” I stop and pick the right words. “I think Ma and Pop would love Honey for you and I would never say that lightly. I’m glad you’re going to be able to get to know your son if you play your cards right. If Honey wants to kick me in my balls for the stunt I pulled today, then I won’t fight her on it. I’ll be still and let her have her best shot because I deserve it. I never meant to disrespect her. I just wanted everything out in the open for once. I knew nothing about Raider until Billie said Penny had

a twenty-five-year-old son and then I put it all together. My bad for not having any tact.”

“You really think Ma and Pop would like her? Because if she had a gun today, you would be a dead man.” Rager laughs.

“I’m not letting that woman shoot me for any reason.” I think about it for a second. “You might even get to see Billie marry that hothead of a son you have. I’m giving her a gun for a wedding present.” Rager laughs, and it sounds good to my ears. I would do anything to make my brother happy, even make an ass out of myself.

“Let’s go find the man who is a walking dead man,” I tell my brother and Reaper shakes his head in agreement.

*R*ager

We walk back into the loud part of the clubhouse and the music is blaring. I go over and unplug the jukebox. I look at everyone sitting at the bar, and I see Speckle sitting on his designated stool. I walk up on one side of him and Reaper walks up on his other side. His head is bent over the bar, and I see he's hit the hard stuff tonight.

"Speckle, wake up!" I shake him to wake him. His head turns, and he opens one eye at me.

"What the hell you want, boy?" Speckle barks at me.

"Damn, man, when was the last time you bathed? You smell like whiskey and piss," Reaper tells him from the other side. Speckle slowly moves his head in that direction.

"You two going to make me take a shower? I don't think so." He gets off the bar stool faster and with steadier legs than I thought he would have.

"Do you remember Honey? The woman I was seeing at one time. It's been a while back." I try to refresh Speckle's memory.

"Of course, I remember that bitch. She started the downfall of our club, that fancy bitch coming in the clubhouse. Only whores belong in a motorcycle club. The kind made for fucking, not mouthing, and changing shit up," Speckle goes on. I have to draw my fist up tightly to keep from hitting the man. "When you let the women in, then they bring kids in

next. A man can't even get his rocks off out in the open. It's always the beginning of the end."

"What did you do Speckle?" Reaper asks him. I am so pissed; I can't even form words.

"I did the only thing a good brother would do. I cheered the day she walked out of here for good. Who do you think turned the lights on where you and Chickee were at? It was dark over there and no one would have seen the two of you. I turned the lights on so she could see it all. I also met her at the door the night she came back and gave her the message that the president didn't want her ass anymore. He was fucking his way through the club girls with the town women on the side. Pres knew how to party then." The old man picked his drink up and chugged the rest of it down. He wipes his face with his sleeve. "Then when that doctor called here that night, it was by luck that I answered the phone and told him not to call back. The bitch finally got the message, and that was the last thing I did for this fucking club. This place went in the shitter. Youngsters coming in here and trying to act like men. I took money from the club, and no one ever knew. Who do you think kept whispering in the ears of Three Stripe Brotherhood what your plans were? No one ever pays attention to drunks. I've heard a lot. Now that they were run out of this town, they've moved back up north. The Brotherhood will take your son's pansy-ass club out, and I'll have the last laugh on all of you. That's right, I have known about your son and where he has been all this time. The Brotherhood is the one that put the pieces together that Raider founded his own club. I have known it all. That's why I know that the Brotherhood is headed right back to demolish that so-called club. I'm through with this club." The old man takes his cut off and throws it back on the bar.

I swing before I even know what I've done. Speckle falls to the floor. I step back from him and so does Reaper.

"Everyone in here heard what the old-timer said. He stole from us, and he informed on us. He's a snitch, and he crossed the club. I say he's to be thrown out, stripped of his cut, his tattoo burned from him, and the enforcer will deal with him.

Ayes?” Everyone in the room agrees. “Any nays?” The room stays silent. “It carries and so be it.” Skeeter walks over and takes the man out of the room. Tag comes up and picks his cut up from the bar. I walk closer to Reaper and lower my voice. “That’s handled. I knew it had to be Speckle, but I never suspected any of the rest.” Reaper doesn’t say anything. “I’m out of here in a few and I won’t be back for a few days if I have my way. I’ll have my phone on silent, but I’ll check my phone a few times a day. Keep the club in check about staying out of my business. I want your ass in the road captain’s chair when I call church after I get back. I think my son may need our help.” Reaper grunts at me.

“Just go get your woman and bring her home.” My brother knows me so well. I turn and leave.

LATER THAT AFTERNOON AND THEN THAT
NIGHT

*H*oney

I take the full five minutes and head back into the room. I see a couple of people at my table and walk up to them. I smile at them both and we take pictures of us together. One had a preorder. The other bought two of my books from the *Bitter Roots MC* series. I gave them both a coffee cup for having to wait on me. I felt bad but needed the time to pull myself together. Sapphire did come over to check on me. I apologized to her. She told me that no one noticed except the two tables around me. It was all good, she said. She thanked me for asking them to step out so as not to disrupt the rest of the authors and readers from enjoying themselves.

I sit back down, answering questions from Hope and listen to her take on things. She's my sounding board, and it has helped me the most.

Everyone else, other than my readers, I only answer questions with one-syllable answers. I can't do any more than that at the moment. Before long, we're at the end of the day. I know that many are going out to dinner with the rest of the authors and some readers. Some of us opted out. I want to gather all my things and head to the closest bar, although that isn't an option tonight. I know that alcohol isn't going to help. so I pack up and hug Hope. Declining tonight's dinner invite with her and Charles, I take my shit and head toward my room and my kid. I tell her I may call her later if things get too rough. Holding my head high, I keep looking around for bobette's new victim-to-be.

I look, and there stands Billie with her book cart. Walking over, I see she looks like she is a little mad.

"You okay Billie?" I ask her.

"He pissed me off. I walked away. I can't be with a man who treats me like his daughter. I'm old enough and bright

enough that I have earned my independence,” she tells me, looking spitting mad.

“Well, honey, he’s acting like a child in a man’s body. They can’t seem to help themselves. You’ll learn that he blows smoke up everyone’s ass and expects us all to jump when he tells us to. He acts just like his father,” I tell her, then cringe.

“What happened, if I can ask you? I know it’s none of my business,” Billie states.

“Long story short, he made promises to me and I thought he broke them. I’m partly to blame. I didn’t ask him. I did go back and then was told it was too late. He didn’t want me. I didn’t know he had a twin. I would have confronted him or tried harder. He didn’t even look for me. Never even tried to call. I have kept the same cell number for the last twenty-five years,” I say.

“I understand. I wish I could get him to listen. He made it clear it was none of my business.”

“He doesn’t mean that. He told me you were it for him. I see you both making this work between the two of you. My son has never called and told me he has met the *one*. Don’t close yourself off because you’re pissed at him. It won’t do either one of you any good. Look at me and his father,” I state. Under my breath, I mumble, “*Stupid fucker.*”

“I don’t want to go back tonight with him. He needs to know that he can’t do that shit. If I allow it now, he’s going to continue with that type of bullshit. That’s not me.”

“Stay with me tonight. Let him know now, cause you’re right. He would continue. Go and act like you plan for it to be long term. Don’t put up with any bullshit,” I tell her with a smile.

“Thank you for understanding,” she tells me.

“Anything for my son. You’re a part of him now. Whether it’s together at the moment or not,” I tell her, grinning.

“You’re right. It won’t be for long, but a lesson needs to be learned.

“You got that right, sister.”

We get to my room and I hear Raider inside with his voice raised a little.

“See, he’s a little boy. He can’t even keep his voice down in the room.” I smirk.

Opening the door, I see three sets of eyes staring at me. One is inquisitive, the other looks like “Oh, shit,” and the last madder than hell. Yep, that one is my son.

“Go ahead. I’m ready to answer what I can.”

“I have a brother? Since when and what was his name?”

“Kagan Tyrel was his name. He was killed in an automobile accident that we were all involved in about a week after you were born. I had to get some diapers and a few groceries. I didn’t have anyone to help. I was trying to be so careful. I wasn’t supposed to be driving. I had a C-section. Driving was supposed to be a no-go,” I tell him.

“What I don’t understand is why you never told me. That was my brother. My twin brother and I had a right to know.”

“I couldn’t. I barely coped with it all these years on my own. I didn’t know how to tell you. I was trying to raise a healthy happy boy. It was hard.”

“Is that why you always make tracks about two weeks after my birthday?” he ask me.

“Yeah. I have a few days to try to get myself through that period in my life with my heart intact,” I tell him, tears in my eyes.

“It’s no excuse. You know, I knew some of what you always held back from me about my sperm donor. I overheard you telling your girlfriends that one night. I didn’t know it was more than that. You have lied to me all these years. There is no excuse. You have always said we have a bond no one can break because we’re honest with each other,” he roars out at me.

“No, maybe not with this, but I did the very best that I could. You remember who I am before you say anything else.

Don't say anything that you can't take back. Remember what I have always told you. Some things can't be taken back," I tell him.

"I need time. I'm trying to understand but that man who was downstairs is not my dad. He never will be until I decide that's what I want. Give me some time, Mom," he states, his hands balled to his side.

He looks at Billie. "Are you ready to go, Billie?" Raider asks.

"I'm not going to tonight. Listen to what your mom just told you and just consider it. If I went with you tonight, things would be said that won't be able to be taken back. You are wrong on so many levels, especially how you spoke to me earlier. I am not your child. I thought I was your woman," she states loudly and bluntly.

I'm glancing back and forth between the both of them.

"You are. But you need to listen to me when it comes to my feelings, not someone else," he tells her.

"I don't have to listen to orders. It's called communication and respect. If I can't have either of those, it would never work between us. I deserve respect. Until you can show me some, its stalled out," she tells him on a whisper.

"What the fuck do you mean its stalled out?"

"Just what I said. Stalled. Stop and think of what type of a woman you want. What you're describing is not me. It never will be me."

I see the tears in her eyes as she turns and heads into the bathroom. I hear the door lock and about that time, Raider looks at me.

"What the fuck was all of that?" he snaps.

"Sounded pretty clear to me," I state.

"Fuck this. Let's go, guys. I'm not putting up with this anymore, and I have a stop to make before we head back," Raider snaps out.

“You shouldn’t. Not today. It won’t end well if you plan on going there to the clubhouse. Give him time,” I whisper. I know what type of a temper he has. I don’t want anything said until things settle down for a while.

“I’m just going to find a time that we can sit and talk. I deserve some answers. You won’t give them to me,” he snaps, and I flinch.

“Whatever. Be careful going home. Remember, I love you,” I tell him. I may be mad and upset, but I always tell him I love him.

“I love you too, Mom. Just give me time. I feel like I’ve been lied to my whole life,” he tells me, walking over to the bathroom door. He knocks on it.

“Billie, I’m leaving. You sure you don’t want to go with me.”

“I’m sure. I’ll see you tomorrow sometime. Let me wrap my mind around all of this. I won’t be treated like that,” she tells him.

She opens the door, comes out, and looks up at him. “I love you,” she whispers.

He reaches over, pulling her into him. He wraps his arms around her. He leans in and whispers something in her ear. He then proceeds to lock his lips around hers. This lasts for about three minutes.

Their lips are shiny when they part. She’s torn. I see it in her eyes. He is too. This has all thrown them for a loop. He needs to share his feelings with her. I really never showed him how to do that.

The boys walk over and give me a hug, whispering in my ear that it will all work out.

“I know. It’s just hard that it’s all this kind of fucked up at the moment,” I say. “Take care of him for me. Take care of each other. Let me know when you get back so I don’t worry so much.”

They both jerk their heads up, acknowledging my request. After they all leave, Billie looks at me with sad eyes.

“I need to get my bag from my car. I wasn’t sure if I was going to stay. Raider told me to stay with you. At the time, I wasn’t even thinking about what you would think of that.”

“It’s wonderful. It’ll work out, sweetheart. I promise. He’s a good man. Misguided at times. Stubborn and willful. But would do anything in the world for me, so I know he will for you,” I tell her.

“Okay.” She nods her acknowledgment.

“You hungry? We can go get something to eat when you get back if you want,” I ask.

“That would be perfect. I love Mexican. How does that sound to you?”

“Perfect. One of my favorites too,” I tell her.

Honey

After dinner, we're sitting on the bed, drinking a bottle of wine together. "So, a soul mate. Are you going to marry him? Give me grandbabies some day?" I ask her, while I sip some more wine, I tell her, "I love wine. It's my drink of choice besides coffee.

"You know I love him. Let's take things one day at a time for now though. He hasn't even asked me to move in. You want grandbabies. He'll get a kick out of this. He told me before that would be one of the first things you ask me," Billie tells me laughing.

"I know you do. Look, I made so many mistakes when I was younger. I ended up pregnant. I was at a loss of what to do. I tried to go and tell Rager about the baby. It ended up being twins. I lost Kagan when he was eight days old in a car accident. I was coming back from the grocery store. I needed diapers and formula for them. I wasn't supposed to be driving, but I didn't have anyone to fall back onto for help. I know I have already said this tonight. I just want her to understand my point of view on the whole matter. She's a sounding board.

"I felt so alone. I didn't have the money for the funeral. I sucked it up and went back to try to talk to him. I really needed him. I was told by one of his brothers in the club that I needed to leave. He didn't want me or to have anything to do with me. It was like he knew already that I had been pregnant. I was ruined. Just ruined. My boss found out. I was on FMLA at the time.

“She came over with her family. They paid for his funeral. I slowly paid them back. I lived in the mother-in-law house on the back of their property after the funeral for about three years.” Pausing for a minute, I start back in with my story. “They packed me up. Packed up what little I had and moved me in the same day as the funeral. They saved me. They treated Raider as their grandchild. They still do, Mr. And Mrs. Smith. I also published my first book a month before what would have been their first birthday. Jax was my first book. I still need to revamp it and make it better, but I can’t bring myself to do it.”

“I’ve met them. They’re great people. My mom knows them. They helped her after my dad’s funeral.

“Are you close to your mom?” I ask her.

“Very. She’s like my best friend, my confidant. She always listens, even if she doesn’t agree with what I say. We discuss things. She really likes Raider. She met him once. He didn’t know who she was, but he made a lasting impression on her,” she tells me with a smile.

“I’m glad for that,” I tell her. “It will make things easier for you both with that being the case.”

“So, what are your plans for tomorrow?” Billie asks.

“Well, I plan on getting up, eating, relaxing, and at about noon, checking out and heading home. I have a few things I need to get done this next week and have decided to head home instead of staying an extra day.”

“I’m going to head out as early as possible. Gonna go find my man and have a talk with him. Hopefully it will help having the time for both of us to cool off.”

“Yes. Have faith. Let’s hit the sack and I’ll see you in the morning. I am so glad you’re in his life. I do believe you’re going to be really good for my son,” I say as I slip under the covers. It makes my heart happy for him.

I fall asleep thinking of scissors and bats, and Ms. Bobette doing her thang.



I SLEEP SOMEWHAT, with dreams of blood and gore. I wake up from the dreams, thinking that revenge is at its sweetest. I really can't tell the two of them apart, other than the way they present their wording, they're *identical*.

I get up, order our coffee, and jump in the shower. I had seen when I woke up that Billie was moving around in bed some. I felt her tossing and turning last night too. I hope she's okay. I think yesterday did something to her. Her heart seems to be bent a little.

I walk out after dressing, to the coffee sitting on the stand and Billie sucking some back.

"Taste as good as it looks?" I ask her.

"Actually better," she says with a grin on her face.

"I don't function without it. I need it first thing. Always," I tell her.

"Yes, me too," she says, pausing and looking around. "I really need to talk to Raider. We left too much unsaid. I didn't sleep well and my heart hurts. I think I may leave as soon as I wake up all the way and shower."

"That's good. I think I may stay another day and just rest. Get my mind around everything that's happened. I need some 'me' time. In all honesty, I just don't want to hear anything about anything from Raider at the moment. I know he wants answers, and I want him to get them. I just need time. Tell him I'll be home tomorrow, late afternoon."

"Okay and I totally understand," she tells me while giving me a hug. "Thank you for everything. It was nice meeting you," Billie says.

NEXT NIGHT

*R*ager

I make my way up the hall to where Honey's room is. I paid the man in the security room off so there should be no evidence of my being here. I know Cage from way back and I could have just blackmailed him, but I took the straightforward way out so he wouldn't narc on me. The last twenty-four hours have been a blur for me. My plan is set in cement now and I'm ready to make Honey listen to me.

I brought my truck and enough clothes and food for a week. Honey will have no choice but to wear my t-shirts. My dick is getting hard just thinking of her fine ass in my t-shirt.

I get to her door and slide the keycard that Cage gave me. He'll erase the keycard history in the security room. I'm lucky tonight she didn't use the latch yet. The woman never learns. I get in fast and shut and lock the door. I take the bottle and the rag that I presoaked out of my pocket. This is strong enough to knock a man out, so she should sleep for a few hours. That's all the time I'll need to get her to The lake cabin I have lined up for us.

I hide behind the closet door that is standing open. It isn't long before I hear her come out of the bathroom. As soon as she walks beside the door, I grab her and have the rag over her mouth and nose before she can fight me. She goes limp in my arms, and I place her on the bed.

I grab her one set of clothes and two pairs of panties. I know Honey has plenty with her, so they won't miss a couple of pairs. That's all I take. I don't want to leave any clues for the cops or Raider to follow me.

I pick Honey back up and put her stuff on top of her belly. Damn, she feels good in my arms. I look out the door carefully and see that no one is around. I leave the same I came in and make my way out without being stopped.

I get Honey situated in my truck and lock her in. I go back inside and wiped down my key card and put it on the dresser and close all the curtains. I leave. I get back to my truck and leave the parking lot and head out of town. I keep a watch in my rearview mirror.

The drive to the cabin is fast. I made one stop to gas back up and to grab us some food for tonight—just a couple of meatball sandwiches, both our favorites. Honey is trying to come around and I don't want that to happen yet, so I make it inside and lay her on the sofa. I take the rags out of my pocket and pour some more of the chloroform on it. I only let her inhale it briefly. I don't want her in a deep sleep, but I want the things in the truck brought in and I want Honey tied to the bed before she wakes up. I put the rag and bottle down on the end table and throw the blanket lying over the back of the sofa over Honey.

I get up and make my way back to the truck. I pull it behind the cabin so it can't be seen from the road. I take the things left in the truck out and lock it up. I make my way back to the house.

I put the rag and chloroform in the cabinet in the guest bathroom. I think about it, and I put my gun and truck keys in there as well and then lock everything away. I don't want Honey getting her hands on anything that can knock me out or kill me.

I put our food in the microwave for later when I'm ready to heat it up, and make sure we have everything that we need for the next few days. I walk over to the sofa and look down at Honey. She's still the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. I see the signs of a few laugh lines on her face and few wrinkles around her eyes, but she doesn't look like she has aged twenty-five years like I have. The years have been good to her. She still takes my breath away.

I pick her up and carry her back to the master bedroom. I lay her on the queen-sized bed. I pull the cover from one side and then I place her under the covers. The next part is going to piss her off, but oh well. I need her restrained when she first

wakes up or for a day or two. We'll need to wait and see on that one.

I bind her hands and her feet. She looks delicious. I wish we didn't need to straighten so much shit out before I could take my woman and claim her again. I won't accept anything else but that outcome. When I leave here, she will be mine again and we will be headed to see a preacher or hop a plane to Vegas to make it official. This woman will not slip through my fingers again.

I walk back to the kitchen and get four waters and then return to the bedroom to wait for my sleeping beauty to wake up. I put the bottles on the night table beside the bed and stretch out beside Honey to wait for her to wake up.

*H*oney

I slowly start to wake up and have a screaming headache, as if I went out on a two-day bender. I roll over to get up and go to the bathroom but feel restrained. I spring my eyes open, and I realize that I have been tied up. I'm not at home, nor in my hotel room.

Glancing around, I see the problem—all two hundred plus pounds of him. “What the fuck have you done?” I snarl. He grins like a Cheshire cat.

“Let me fucking go, you pea-sized brain dickhead. How dare you do this to me. All these years, and not once have you ever come for me. Now you wanna tie me up and just lie there with a fucking grin on your face?” I am spitting mad. I don't give him a chance to answer me.

“What the hell did you do to me? My head is killing me,” I mumble. I just lie there glaring at him. He just continues to smile.

“I don't know why you're grinning. This is no laughing matter. When Raider finds out I'm missing, there is going to be hell to pay. You don't want that.”

I keep snapping shit out at him and he just lies there, not answering me. That is making me madder. He ought to know I will get even with him. He bends over toward me. I lie there, waiting for him to get just a little closer. I wait patiently for the moment, praying for just another inch. My patience in waiting pays off.

I jerk up, latching on to his chest with my teeth, biting him as hard as I can. I can hear him cuss and it isn't like a pussy cat meowing. It's more like a scalded cat.

I jerk my mouth away, grinning. Blood is decorating his shirt, and that makes me happy to some extent. He should know not to fuck with me. The balls on this man. How dare he do this to me.

“Well, whatcha got to say, fucker?” I snarl. He moves faster than I'm ready for and before I know it, he's on top of me. He holds my head still so I can't move it. He dives for my lips and the way he kisses me shocks me. I open for him without thinking and he deepens the kiss. He moans and in a second, I'm moaning too. I try to control myself, but he feels so damn good, and I love the way he tastes. My damn body is a traitor because my panties are wet. He backs off, and he's on the other side of me. He smirks at me.

“Was that what you wanted to hear? I promised myself I would be a good boy until you were on board with us being back together but that went out the window when you bit me. Darling, all you had to do was tell me you wanted it rough. I'm up for that. We always burned up the sheets when we were together.” The man has nerve.

“The nerve. The nerve you say. What about when I walked into the clubhouse that day? I had no idea you had a twin. Did you come to explain? No, you didn't. Did you let me explain when the hospital called? Did you let me explain when I came to the clubhouse?” I pause, trying to pull myself together. “No, you didn't. You didn't even call to question why I didn't come. You knew and didn't give a shit about me at all. I floundered. I lost our son and did it all alone. I have done everything all alone. You want to be together? I think it's a little too late for that. I have done all of this on my own. Why would I want to be back with you. *What's changed?*” I yell at him.

“You ask what's changed? You're going to listen to my full explanation, or I will gag you and make you. Here it is. I left the clubhouse that day because I had a few surprises for you that night. The first was this.” He pulls his shirt over his head, and I can see where I bit him. But I also see the one thing that

I never knew he had. “I told you I was going to get a tattoo that represented you on my chest, over my heart. I had it done that day. A honey pot with your name in the middle of it and the day we met. That was surprise number one. After I left the tattoo shop, I went by the jewelers and picked up the ring I had designed for you. I had plans to propose to you that night. My brother was the third surprise. I wanted you to meet my twin brother after I proposed. It was all a misunderstanding. So, what do you say about that?” He takes a box out of his jeans pocket and opens it. The ring is gorgeous.

“That is gorgeous. I love you so much. I mean, I loved you so much. Why didn’t you come and explain? You knew what I said about cheating. Why didn’t you at least call to talk to me?” I ask him. I wait. I know how he is. I always have. He had a reason, but I need to hear why. I need to know that I matter. I don’t know if I can be with a man who has stomped and then shredded my heart all to pieces. It reminds me of my childhood with my dad. It’s one of the reasons why I told him I wouldn’t put up with cheating.

I have lived my life alone. Twenty-five years wasted because he was too fucking macho to stop and explain why he wouldn’t chase me.

I know I have a lot of thinking to do. I do know I need to use the restroom soon as well as needing some Tylenol. My head is killing me.

“What the fuck did you give me?” I ask him.

“You asking me why I didn’t come after you is hard to answer. I didn’t know what you saw that day until later. Reaper wasn’t for sure that you were my woman. He wasn’t sure who you were. I found out later when I knew you should have been at the club to meet me. I was frantic because I couldn’t find you. Then he told me what happened. The thing is, I got pissed because you didn’t confront me or the person you thought was me. I told you a lot of stories about my ma and pop. The only kind of relationship I was interested in with you was one like they had, and you just skipped town without a word or at least a phone call to me. I didn’t think you were going to be a stayer, and I didn’t want a woman who would

run on me. You're the only regret I have ever had. I regret not coming after you, but my damn pride was hurt. I thought I had you all wrong the entire time we were together. I'm a mean son of a bitch but the only thing in my life I regret is letting you go that night. I never knew anything about you coming back to the club or your doctor calling me because of Speckle. He did that on his own." Rager takes a deep breath. "Oh, and it was chloroform that I used on you which I do not regret one bit. The only thing I owe you an apology for is not coming after you that night." Rager says it all so fast.

"I did stick around. I stayed with a girlfriend for a few days. I didn't leave for about three months. I just laid low. I had come by, nervous about telling you I was pregnant. I was waiting to see if you would come. I wanted so bad for you to come," I tell him, tears in my eyes. "I gotta go pee. You need to let me up so I can go," I blubber.

"I want your word that you will hear me out and not try to run. Because if I have to chase you down, I am not going to be a happy man." He hesitates. "I will catch you." He starts undoing my legs and then my hands.

"I will stay and listen. You need to listen to me too. You broke me for anyone else. I couldn't be with any man long term. They were always compared to you," I tell him as I search for the bathroom. I barely make it.

I can hear him outside the door. He doesn't trust me. He will though. I give my word, and it's golden. If he is serious about us, this is the time to get it all straightened out. We should have done this years ago. Maybe aging will make it better this time. I will wait it out. I will know either way if this is going to work out.

Coming out of the bathroom, I see him leaning against the wall. I look at his chest, running my finger up and down where I bit him. "Let me clean this up," I tell him.

Walking back into the restroom, I don't see any peroxide, so I use Dial anti-bacterial soap to clean it up. I don't want it to get infected.

After I get done, he looks down at me with desire in his eyes. “We need to talk first. I see that look in your eyes. It isn’t happening now. I’m hungry, thirsty and need Tylenol, please. In the reverse order would be perfect,” I say softly. He reaches for the medicine cabinet, opens it, and gets the bottle of Tylenol out.

“Let’s go back to the kitchen. I have some meatball sandwiches for us, and I have water in the fridge. I’ll explain Speckle’s part in this.” We walk down the hall and I see the kitchen and living room are an open concept. I like it. Rager pulls a bar stool out for me at the kitchen bar. I watch him as he heats our sandwiches up. He turns back to me and sets the Tylenol in front of me and then gets water from the fridge for me. The timer goes off on the microwave. Rager takes the sandwiches out and then grabs a bag of chips with his mouth and walks over and sits beside me. He puts our food in front of us. “This alright or do you want something to go with it? There’s some coleslaw and potato salad in the fridge if you want either of them.”

“This is perfect. I’m hungry but not starved. Remember my appetite? It’s pretty much the same. It was worse while I was pregnant with the boys,” I tell him then stop when I see him pause. “We have a lot to discuss. Tell me about Speckle. Let’s get this shit all on the table and see if we even mesh anymore. You know we’ve changed over the years. We’re not the same. I’m not the innocent little girl I was way back then. I have a bigger temper and don’t put up with much. You may not like that at all,” I tell him as I take the first bite of my sandwich.

I stop for a moment and chew, look over at him and say, “I was gonna tell you I hated meatball sandwiches now, just to piss you off. Honestly though, it tastes so fucking good.” I smile.

“We do have a lot to discuss, and I want to hear everything you have to tell me about my sons and what you went through, and I mean everything. When we get back to your house, I would like to see any pictures you have or those little things that you can see babies in your belly. Just let me tell you about

Speckle first.” Rager looks a little nervous. “Speckle has been a member of our club since we started the club. He helped us form everything and when he was younger, he pulled his weight. But for the last fifteen or so years, he’s been drunk most of the time. What we didn’t know is he wasn’t as drunk as we thought he was. He’s the one who turned the lights on where Reaper and that club girl were. Reaper had left it dark in there, but he still should have stopped you from leaving so upset. Then when you came to the clubhouse that second night, he told you straight-up lies. I thought you left town the day after you saw Reaper. All your stuff was gone from our apartment. Speckle must have known you were still in town. Speckle was also the one who intercepted the phone call from the doctor. He came clean before we stripped him of his cut, his tattoo, and his life. We voted him out, and it sealed his fate. You never have to worry again.”

“They must have called after the car accident. You were and are on my emergency contact list. I didn’t know that. I’m glad you took his life. He needed to die for what he put me through. Who the fuck does that type of shit? Like I said, I was there for about three months. I left shortly after to where I live now. I was in bad shape after the boys were born. I didn’t have anyone to help me. I packed us up and drove to the store for things that I needed for the boys. We were T-boned and Kagan was killed on impact. I was hurt really badly and had to have surgery. They found my boss’s phone number and called her and her family. They basically took us in as part of their family. Put me up in the apartment that they called the mother-in-law suite outside of their house. They helped me with the funeral arrangements. Helped me get back on my feet during that time. Helped give me a reason to live, to take care of Raider. It was so fucking hard. I missed my baby so badly. I felt as if a piece of me was missing. He was such a happy baby, Tyson. Always had a smile or grin on his face. He loved to cuddle. Raider was and is always demanding, even to this day. He didn’t want to be held as much as Kagan. I think it was God’s way of giving me that extra time with him. I haven’t been the same since the day he was killed.” I pause, remembering those days.

“I started writing about three months after the accident. I put a lot of my pain in my books. They were more than romance. It was all the pain I was feeling inside coming out in the pages. The book sold like wildfire. After I started getting some reviews and I had readers sharing it, it went wild.” I stop and take a deep breath.

“I never told Raider about his brother. I didn’t know how to tell him. He always put too much on his shoulders. I didn’t want to put more on him. I didn’t feel when he was a child that he would understand, and I let my own grief stand in the way. I know it doesn’t make sense to you, but he was mine. The loss of a child is something I wouldn’t wish on anyone. I have some pictures at the house put up. I’ll have to bring them out so that the both of you can see them.”

I turn and look at Tyson and see tears in his eyes. I have never seen them before from him. They are streaming down his face, and he’s not hiding them from me.

“I’m so sorry that you missed all of it. I should have tried harder. I should have made sure it was out of your mouth. If only I hadn’t seen what I did. Maybe things would have been so much different for us.”

He leans in, wrapping his arms around me. He whispers in my ear how sorry he is. His voice is broken as he tries to talk to me. “I’m so sorry I wasn’t there, Honey. I should have been. Never again. You will be first. Always first. You hear me? You know about the club and it’s important to me, but you are always first,” he says.

“I do. You will finally be mine. Someone I can depend on, to help me carry some of the burdens in our lives,” I tell him.

I get up, take our dishes to the sink, rinse them off and load them into the dishwasher. I turn to see him with his head in his hands, his body shaking. He’s weeping silently.

I turn and walk over, scooting between his legs, and wrap my arms around him. I gently kiss the top of his head and let him grieve for what he’s lost. He lost more than I ever did. He never got to meet one of his sons.

I can't change the way things happened. I can listen and try to understand what he was thinking. Do I agree with his decisions? Not really, but I wasn't in his shoes either. All we can do is take one step at a time and try to see if we fit. If not, we'll finally have closure. I owe not only myself but him that.

"I need a shower. I need some more water and a bed," I tell him.

"Sounds good. My anger is still with me but I'll deal with that my way. We will never talk about any of this with malice again," he replies.

I turn and walk toward the shower, stripping when I realize I have no clothes except the ones on my back.

"I have nothing to change into. Did you bring my clothes at least?"

"I brought you one outfit and two pairs of panties. You can sleep in one of my t-shirts. I didn't want anyone to know any of your stuff is missing from the hotel at all. I know Raider and his club is going to be looking for you and he'll probably have the cops looking too, but we need our time together to talk and talk and talk some more. I don't care how long it takes as long as we come to the same conclusion and that's that we're going to be together."

"Wow, so generous," I tell him with a snarky attitude.

"There she is. I love that snarky shit. I have missed it more than I realized. I have some flip-flops and some more panties for you, but I like the ones you pick out better. I just bought some in a bag and they aren't sexy," he replies while walking up behind me with bottles of water.

"I'll be done in a few. I would appreciate it if you would set my clothes out by the door so I can grab them when I get out," I tell him.

He looks at me like I'm crazy and has a little bit of an evil glint in his eyes.

"No, you're not showering with me," I say. "Not this early in everything. A lot has been explained, but it's just a lot all at once."

I watch as he nods, understanding what I'm saying.

"We are sleeping in the same bed. I need you in my arms tonight. I'll be a perfect gentleman unless you start it first," he replies.

"Agreed," I reply after waiting for a moment, while thinking about his demand.

We both are done with our showers and crawling into bed thirty minutes later. I notice the ties are gone. I kind of laugh at his ingenious kidnapping plot of his. It worked. I hope that Raider doesn't find out. If he does, shit is going to hit the fan. Raider will kill him with his bare hands.

I'm lying on my side, comfortable, when I feel Tyson getting more situated leaning over, grabbing me and curling around me.

"You named our boys after me, didn't you?" he asks gruffly.

"I did. I couldn't give them your last name. So, I gave them your first name. Raider is a good man. He finds out I was kidnapped he's going to kill you."

"No evidence left at the scene. I promise. There is nothing on the security cameras either. You can call him tomorrow if you want or send him a text. I have a burner phone with me," he says, laughing.

"He'll figure it out," I tell him.

"I'm sure. But by then, we'll have worked this all out and be ready to face our son," he states.

"Night. You know I never stopped loving you," I tell him in a whisper.

"I love you too, Honey. I always have. I always will. I dreamed about you often. I won't say there has never been a woman in my bed, but she never had my heart. When you left, you took it with you," Tyson replies.

"I'm going to hurt your brother. Get used to the idea now. It's gonna happen."

“I already told him to not go to sleep around you. He told me that if it made you feel better, you could kick him in the balls, and he would stand still for you.”

I giggle.

*H*oney

I wake up in the middle of the night with the feeling of hands all over body. My tits are beaded tightly, and my pussy is so fucking wet. I am so damn horny. I woke up to my hips chasing his hand and his fingers as he uses both to make me wanna come.

“I couldn’t help myself. I felt your ass in my crotch, my dick harder than it’s ever been. I need you right the fuck now. If you don’t want this, you better say no now. ’Cause in about two seconds, I won’t stop,” he says in a husky whisper.

He flips me over onto my back and settles into the vee of my legs. He’s already pulled the t-shirt up and over my head, flinging it onto the floor. His lips hit my neck, nibbling softly, while making his way up to my lips. Once he reaches my lips, he bites, sucks and nibbles all over, making his way back to my neck and tits. By the time he gets to my lower belly, I’m coming, and he hasn’t touched my pussy yet.

When he realizes what he’s done, he’s sliding his big rigid dick inside of me. I’d forgotten how big he is and what he does with it.

I moan when he hits the back of my cervix. He grabs my hips, and thrusts with firm hard strokes inside of me, his dick going at a much faster pace. My breath hitches, and I moan in tandem with him. I feel full, not only in my pussy but my heart too. I have always felt this way with him. It’s not long before my pussy ripples and tightens around his dick while I come

like I haven't in over twenty-five years. Not long after, I can feel him come with some leaking out of me.

He rolls over as I lie there. I'm satisfied like I haven't been in a very long time. He turns his head, looking slumberous.

"I've missed you like nothing in the world. I should have come after you. I will always regret my decision. You have no idea of what my life has turned into. I will always make sure you come first from now on. I will put you up there right next to the club. *Always*. That is one promise I can give you," he tells me.

Whether I can believe that or not, I'm not for sure. Club always comes first. That wasn't the problem. It was his attitude that I shouldn't question him and I should have trust. I did until I saw what I saw. Had I of known about his twin, it may have had a whole different outcome than what it did. I'm not one hundred percent sure though, because I didn't know. That's what it all boils down to.

"We won't know cause we already lost so much. We need to go forward if this is what you think you may want to try. I'm willing and want too. Always remember though, I'm not the same as I was that long ago."

"I would think that neither of us are. I just know I'm not letting you go. We'll figure this out. We will go forward. You were mine then, you still are. You just don't know it, yet," he states as he rolls back on top of me. We fill the next few hours rolling in the sheets.

WE WAKE up about noon and get cleaned up. I walk into the kitchen and he's pouring me a cup of coffee. I walk over and he pulls me into his arms.

"You know, I can't stay here forever. Our kid is probably already looking for me. He won't be happy that I'm missing and he can't find me. You need to get to know him. You're like twins yourselves with the attitude and some mannerisms.

"I want to spend some time with you. Is there a reason we can't do that?" he asks me.

“No, but I do have things to do at home that I can’t put off. I should have been home already. Did you bring my laptop or phone with you?”

“Nope. I figured I would have more problems if you had them. I want this to be about us for a time.”

“I understand but you need to remember that I do have obligations that I need to make sure are met. That means I really need to be home by tomorrow morning.”

“How is this going to work? I understand the obligations, I have some myself. Today, as a matter of fact, but we need us time. How are we going to handle that?” he growls out, seemingly frustrated.

“I don’t know. If we want to it work, there are going to be concessions from the both of us. It won’t be all one-sided,” I tell him.

“Move here. That would help,” he says.

“I won’t until I know this is going to last. I won’t uproot myself and our child without knowing one hundred percent that we are doing this for real.”

“It is for real. I told you that.”

“You said that before and look what happened.”

“I said it’s going to last, and it is.”

“Just because you said it is doesn’t make it so.” I pause trying to put into words what I’m saying so he understands. “We both seem to want it to work, but we both will need to put in the effort to make that happen. I don’t want to make any moves until we know that it’s there.” I tell him, rubbing my hand on his back. Yes we’re still in each other’s arms. I love being here. We need to take it one day at a time. He shouldn’t expect me to pack up and move all at once.

“I get that doesn’t fucking mean I have to like it. This is what we’ll do. I’ll go back and finish up what I need to do and come to your place. I would like to go to the cemetery to visit Kagan and get to know my other son if he’s willing. You will have time to do what’s needed there. We can commute back

and forth, depending on our obligations and what needs to be taken care of.”

“I think that’s a great compromise. I’m willing to do that for us.”

“Thank you. It means a lot,” he replies as he hands me my phone.

I call home with Rager’s cell on speaker so I can get some things ready while I listen to Raider giving me hell for not touching base and just leaving the way I did. I didn’t tell him I was kidnapped. That wouldn’t go over too well and in all honesty, I want him to have that relationship with his dad and uncle.

As of right now, I don’t see that happening unless I push it. I made a lot of mistakes back then. One of them was not telling him about his father. There have been too many secrets and regrets that I’ll have to live with for the rest of my life. Either way, it wasn’t fair to either of them.

“When are you coming home, Mom? Who’s phone are you calling me from anyway?” he asks me.

“I plan on being there tomorrow mid-morning, Your dad’s phone.” I tell him fast, praying that he doesn’t catch what I just said.

“I thought you had a meeting tomorrow.”

“I do. I’ll make my meeting,” I tell him.

“So, why are you waiting until the last minute to get home? That isn’t like you at all,” he asks, inquisitively.

“Well, I’m spending some time with your dad if you must know, I state. I know as soon as I say that, he’s going to go off.

“Why the fuck are you doing that?” he snarls.

Just about the time he says that, Rager walked up behind me and snatches the phone from my hand. Oh, not a good move at all. That makes me mad. It will also not score any points between him and his son.

“You don’t talk to your mother that way. I will not tolerate that kind of disrespect toward your mom. You got that, kid?” he snarls out.

“Fuck you. I’ll talk to my mom however I chose too,” Raider growls.

“I’m going to whip your ass if I ever hear that tone while talking with your mom again. I won’t put up with it,” Rager snaps back.

“Let me talk to my mom,” Raider demands.

I take the phone back when he hands it to me, sad that it’s going to come to this. Raider won’t give him a chance, I can already tell from his tone of his voice.

“I’ll be home tomorrow, Raider,” I state as I hit the end button on the phone. I don’t wait for an answer or reply. I’m ashamed of the way he spoke to me. I also know he won’t speak to me that way again ’cause he’s going to get the wrath of Momma handed to him like it’s not been handed since he was eighteen and thought he could do what he wanted while living with me. He was raised better than that.

I turn, handing him his phone back. “I’m sorry for the way he spoke. He was raised better,” I tell him, not looking at him.

Lifting my chin with his finger, he says, “That’s on him, not you and how you raised him. He’s angry. It’s going to take time for him to come to terms with everything that is going on, but I won’t stand by and allow it if I hear it. I will lay his grown ass out. Know that now. Nothing will hurt you again if it’s ever in my power to stop it,” he tells me.

I lean into him. It feels like coming home. “Thank you. He would never raise his hand to me. His tongue is another matter. It gets razor sharp when he’s pissed off,” I mumble.

“Not the point. He shouldn’t be doing that. He’s a grown-ass man who needs to learn to control his tongue, especially toward his mom.”

“I know.” I sigh. “I want to have a life with you. I want that more than anything. What if he just won’t let us make

amends for his childhood?" I ask. "It's what is bothering me the most. I'm afraid that he may hinder our relationship."

"Our relationship is ours. Not his, not anyone else's ever again. It's ours. We will work this out between us. I won't let him or anyone else step between us," he tells me. "You understand. We want this, and it's ours to control. No one else's."

"Understood."

We spend the rest of the day talking, lying around, and I cook us dinner. He sits on the countertop while I cook. He offered to help, but I needed something to do with my hands. I'm used to writing every day even if it's only for thirty minutes. I need that, a routine of sorts. Later, after dinner, we pack everything up and head toward the hotel where we spend the rest of the night making love.

It's five in the morning as he walks me to the car.

"Be careful with going home. I'll be there later tonight. I plan on spending at least a week. That okay still?" he asks me.

"Of course. I would love that. Remember that you may not get a warm welcome from Raider. He's just..." I pause. "A dick at times. Just like you," I say, giggling. I sound like a schoolgirl.

*H*oney

I arrive and make my meeting, get home, and unpack. I call and let Raider know I'm home.

"I'll be by later today, Mom. I got a lot going on at the moment. We need to talk, though," he says.

"Oh, yes we do, young man. We will be having a discussion," I tell him in a voice he hasn't heard in a long time.

"What?" he asks with exasperation.

"You know what. You will never speak to me that way again. I don't care how pissed off you are at me. I am your mother. You were raised better than that," I tell him.

"Mom, I don't have time for this shit right now," he says.

"There is no excuse. We will discuss this later when you're here. I'm done for now," I tell him in a tone he understands.

I take and do my laundry, write for about two hours, and take a small nap. Waking up, I notice it's about five-ish in the evening. I decide to make a one-pot meal of beef stroganoff and have it simmering on the stove.

It's easy, fast, and homemade. Hopefully my two guys will like it.

I hear Raider as he pulls up and walks into the kitchen through the back door.

"Hey, Ma. You have a good trip home?" he asks me.

“Yes, quiet, and soothing. I had a lot to think about,” I tell him.

“Hey, you’re going to be a grandma,” he spits out.

“Really? Congratulations to the both of you,” I say. “Where is Billie?” I ask.

“With her mom. I proposed to her while she was lying on the exam table. I’ve had her ring for a long time,” he tells me.

“What did she say?”

“Well, she said yes, but with stipulations. I don’t know what they are at the moment. She’s carrying my baby so it won’t matter. She’s going to whether she likes it or not,” he tells me with his chest puffed out.

“You know that if she has stipulations, you may not like them,” I tell him.

“Maybe, maybe not. But that’s my baby in her belly and she’s mine.”

“Okay, if that’s what you think.”

He huffs a little then I change the subject to the one I have dreaded all day long.

“Look. You will not speak to me the way you did yesterday on the phone. I won’t put up with it. You understand me.”

“Look, Ma, I don’t want anything to do with Rager. He’s bad news. You don’t need or want him in your life. Look what he allowed to happen before.”

“Watch the tone, *right now*.”

He glares at me. He wants to say something, I can see it in his eyes. He’s holding off, though.

“Spit it out,” I tell him.

“I don’t like you having anything to do with him and you need to remember that I’m a man now and not some child you can boss around,” he tells me.

“You don’t get a say in that,” I tell him.

“After what he did? I may not have anything to say about what you do but I do have a say in what I do and what my family does,” he says exasperated.

“That wasn’t him. A lot went on that I knew nothing of. That’s between him and me. When I deem that it’s your business, I’ll tell you. You have to understand a couple of things. One, I have always loved your dad. Always. Two, had I known what went on, we would still be together. You need to step back and let us figure out if that’s what we want now,” I say matter-of-factly.

“Well, I don’t fucking like it. He’s nothing but an asshole and someone who runs a one-percenter club. Illegal shit, Mom. You don’t know the type of man he is. You’re also forgetting that I was impacted by what he did as well,” he snarls at me.

Just about that time, I hear the back door slam. Rager comes in, picks our son up by his collar and punches him in the mouth.

“I told you not to speak to your mother that way,” he rages.

Raider stands and staggers a little. “You motherfucker. After the way you treated her, you dare to tell me how to speak to my mother.” Raider swings and they match punch for punch. There is no stopping either of them. I shake my head, walking out to go get the instant ice packs from the bathroom. They will both need them.

I hear a motorcycle start as I take off toward the kitchen. I walk in to see Rager with a bloody lip and nose. I squeeze the icepack and shake it. Handing it to him, I walk over and start to pick up the fucking mess they made.

“Don’t. I made it, I’ll clean it. I told you I wasn’t going to stand by and allow him to talk to you that way anymore. It’s not going to happen. He’s a grown-ass man,” he says as he walks over and lifts me up off the floor. He sets me on the counter.

“I said I’ll clean it up. Let me get you a drink,” he says, leaning in and kissing me on the lips.

I drink my wine as he cleans up the mess. It was a mess too. One of my chairs got broken and Raider is going to pay to have it fixed.

After cleaning up, I set up the bar with our dinner and we sit down to eat. I had made enough for our son to eat with us. This is one of his favorite dishes and he missed out.

“How was your trip up here?” I ask.

“Good. My brother is coming up tomorrow. He wants to get to know you and our son. Although the second may be a little harder for him to accomplish,” he says, laughing.

“It may be. He’s more than welcome to stay here. We have three bedrooms. Just put him in the furthest from ours.”

“I like that,” he responds.

“What?”

“Ours.”

“Me too. I got all my stuff done and will be able to come down for two weeks on Sunday. I want to try and speak with Raider again before we leave. I still want to talk to him about his brother.”

“Yeah. Me too. I mean, I want to know everything there is.”

“Yeah. I have the pictures of him pulled out. And those of the two of them together. I made a photo album for Raider. I always intended to tell him but I never did. It was a time when my heart hurt the worst,” I tell him.

We clean up together and walk into the living room. I go down the hallway and pick up the box of what I have of Kagan—pictures, ultrasound pics, booties and such. I want to share this with him and Raider both. Tonight it’s for him and me.

We go through all of it, and by the end, we both cry in each other’s arms.

“He was such a good baby. Nothing like our hotheaded son. He was quiet and such a cuddler.

“What happened in the accident?” he asks.

“I was t-boned. I have the papers from the accident,” I tell him.

“I would like to see them when you get a chance,” he tells me.

“Okay. I’ll get them for you when we head back to bed. I’m in need of some sleep. It’s been a long stressful day for me,” she says as my phone rings.

“Let me get this and we can talk when I get back there.”

“Okay,” I tell him as I reach up and softly touch his lips with mine. I turn and walk away.

“Hello,” is all I hear as I fade into the back bedroom.

I’m crawling out of the shower as he walks in.

“Everything okay?” I ask.

“Yeah. Billie wants to talk to me and Reaper tomorrow. I have no idea why but it’s got me concerned,” he tells me.

“She’s pregnant. Raider asked her to marry him. I don’t have a clue why she would want to see you both,” I tell him.

“We’re going to be grandparents then,” he says with a smile on his face.

“Yeah, we are. I really like Billie. Raider is going to have his world turned upside down though. Billie isn’t going to put up with any of his shit,” I tell him.

“Well, I guess Reaper and I will find out tomorrow,” he says as he strips off his clothes.

“I guess maybe I should have waited to take my shower,” I say as I rub my hands up his chest.

“There is an answer to that,” he replies.

“What’s that?” I ask as he picks me up in his arms and steps back into the shower. We were in there long enough for the water to turn cold and for me to feel really good by the time we got out.

*B*illie

I sit here and I wait for Rager and Reaper to show up. I know what I'm doing may backfire on me, but it's necessary to take risks sometimes for the outcome to be what you want. I know I have Mom right outside if I need backup with these two men.

My mom worked two doubles this week, and she just got off a graveyard shift at the hospital. I told her I didn't need her here. I'm a grown woman and I can hold my own dealing with two men. Raider had the same argument with me, but I won that one. Mom doesn't take no for an answer. Even if I am nineteen years old, she's still a mama bear for all her children. She thought I might at least need moral support today. I don't understand her position but she's here anyway. Her being asleep means she trusts me but still wants to be close.

My mom works harder than she needs to. We make enough money with what we get from the farm to live on. I make a good check each week along with our foreman and the other four men we keep as full-time workers. That doesn't include the extra help we have during the first big harvest. I think she misses Dad, and the thought of being on the farm all the time without him is too much for her. She's a strong woman, but she had been with Dad since she was fifteen years old. She married him at sixteen and I was born the following year when she was only seventeen. While she carried me, she continued to go to school and work the farm with Dad. After Ryan was born and only six months old, she was twenty-one and started

college at a community college. She finally got her nursing classes finished after Maggie was born, Mom was still only twenty-nine years old. She worked full time with Dad by doing the books and working in the fields, taking care of us kids while being a full-time student. I don't know how she juggled it all but she and Dad made it work. I just hope I can be half the woman that she is now at thirty-eight years old. My mind keeps wandering to different ways about the way Mom and Dad made things work when I hear motorcycles outside.

I lift my head and concentrate on what I want to say today. I need to keep on track. I see Rager and Reaper walk through the front door, and they have smiles on their faces. I raise my hand and wave them over. They make their way over, stopping to shake some hands on the way. I picked the right place to meet at least.

“Sweetheart, why did you ask us to meet you at the Veteran’s Post?” Rager asks as he and Reaper sit down. I hand them both a ticket and they just look at me.

“It’s a ticket for you to get a buffet breakfast. It’s why the Post is open this morning. There are some veterans that need new wheelchairs in this area, so the first Thursday of every month they have a buffet-style breakfast and use the ticket money to help the ones in need to purchase or upgrade their chairs,” I explain to them. “We always buy a lot of tickets for it each month. My dad and granddad were veterans. We’ve done this for years. It’s a tradition my dad started. When they do the dinner later this month, we’ll supply the vegetables and add in some desserts.”

“Well, I’m starving. I’ll find their donation jar and add some money for us,” Reaper says to Rager, as he stands up and walks away.

“You just keep surprising me, Billie,” Rager tells me.

“We can go somewhere else if you’d like,” I tell Rager. He laughs a small laugh.

“Billie, I feel as comfortable here as I do in my clubhouse. You see, once you serve in the military, you have brothers in arms, brothers on the battlefield, and brothers you can breathe

easily around and just be yourself, no matter how flawed you are. This place is just fine.” I relax a little bit.

“Good. Go get your breakfast and I’ll wait on you.” I see Reaper talking to some of the men and then when he sees Rager making his way toward the food buffet, he comes back to the table.

“Tyson is smiling so it can’t be too bad of a talk,” Reaper says as he sits at the table with me. I see the front door open and see my mom making her way over to the buffet. She grabs two plates and starts filling them after she gives the woman by the register the tickets. I thought she was going to sleep while I was talking to Rager and Reaper.

“I hope Rager doesn’t think this was going to be a bad conversation.”

Reaper settles himself and digs into his food. I see he’s chewing as I wait for him to answer after he swallows.

“He thinks you were meeting us today to say your old man won’t let you talk to us again. I hope that’s not the case.” Reaper picks his cup up and takes a drink of coffee. Mom walks up to the table and looks at Reaper, and he turns his head to look at her. His eyebrows raise and I see when that bad boy smile returns to his face. Mom puts a plate in front of me and Rager puts his plate where he had been sitting. He too looks at my mom, but his eyes have no interest in them, only a puzzled look.

“Rager.” I point to him. “And Reaper,” I point to him. “This is my mom, Frannie. I thought you were going to sleep while we were here.” I introduce the three. Mom looks at the two men and then her eyes are on me.

“Why would I sleep when I can sit here with these handsome men with you? You need to eat. You’re eating for two now. Would you like juice, water, or milk?” I smile at my mom. She’s being such a mom. It’s what she does best.

“I was waiting for you to wake up so you wouldn’t need to eat alone. I’ll get the drinks,” I say but Mom is shaking her head.

“You start eating and I’ll get them. Which one would you like?”

“Just water, please, and thank you. I should be waiting on you. You’re the one who just worked a graveyard shift.” Mom walks over to me and kisses the top of my head.

“I got this.” She smiles down at me as I look up at her. “Can I get you two anything while I’m up there?”

“No but thank you.” Rager speaks first.

“I could answer that question in a lot of different ways, beautiful, but since I need to put my best foot forward with Billie, I’ll just say, no thanks.” Reaper winks at my mom. Oh, this is going to be fun to watch. Reaper is not going to know what hit him. My mom is a feisty one.

“Handsome, that would be the safest answer for you. You are too innocent for the likes of me.”

Rager chokes on his food and I hit him on the back. Then Mom does something I have never seen her do. She winks at Reaper. Mom goes back to the counter to get our drinks.

“Billie, you have been holding out on your uncle Reaper. Where have you been hiding that gorgeous woman?” This makes me laugh.

“If you can dish it out, my mom can take it and sling more back at you, but she’s not serious. My mom hasn’t dated since my dad passed five years ago,” I tell Reaper.

“No offense to you, but we’ll see about that.” I know not to encourage Reaper, so I just let it drop. Mom needs someone to try to bring her out of her shell.

“Why is your mom here? Don’t get me wrong, she’s easy on the eyes, not that I’m looking just observing. Is this going to be a bad conversation? Does Raider have a problem with us being friends and don’t think this old man missed the part about you eating for two?” Rager is direct and to the point. Mom is back with my water and her juice.

“I’m glad you didn’t miss that part Grandpa-to-be or whatever he or she calls you. It’s part of the reason I’m here,”

I answer Rager and I can't miss the smiles of the two men at the table.

"Billie, quit leaving the man in suspense and get to the point. Don't let them think Raider is bossing you around," Mom speaks up.

"Yeah, kid, don't make me think I need to go beat the ass of my only nephew," Reaper says with a smile on his face. My surprise is that Mom has a smile on her face, and it's directed at Reaper.

"This man, I like. Straight to the point. My Billie won't let any man dictate to her. She comes from a long strong stock of women," my mom says proudly.

"I bet she does," Reaper responds.

"Could you two give Billie the chance to say what she needs? You can flirt on your own time." That makes my mom blush lightly across her cheeks.

"And she blushes too," Reaper says but Rager cuts his eyes to me. "This is me shutting up."

"Okay, Billie, just say what you need to." Rager gives me the floor. I let out a breath and then relax a little more. I have butterflies in my stomach.

"I came to ask you to give me away at my wedding." That time, Reaper spits his coffee out. At least he had enough sense to turn his head.

"Sorry, didn't expect that one," Reaper says without a smile on his face. I look at Rager and he seems a bit surprised too.

"Let me explain," I start.

"Just let me ask a question. You are marrying my son, right? This is his child?" That has my mom moving closer to the table and looking Rager straight in the eyes.

"My girl doesn't lie, ever. Not even if it causes her pain. She wasn't raised that way and she is no slut. If you think any differently, then you and I have a problem." Mom is raising her voice the more she talks.

“Mom, I have this. They don’t have all the facts yet. These men are my friends, please. Just chill a minute so I can explain.” My mom’s eyes don’t leave Rager’s, but she does sit back in her chair.

“When I left Honey at the hotel the other morning, I wasn’t feeling well and I wanted to talk to Raider. I thought it was because I wanted to make sure everything was alright between Raider and me. I was going to go and see him at the clubhouse. The further I drove, the sicker I felt. I was ten minutes from our city limits and I had to pull over on the side of the road and I got sick. I wanted to see Raider but just washing my mouth out with water left a bad taste in my mouth. I know, too much information. I decided to go home to brush my teeth and change my clothes and shoes. I’m not very graceful when I get sick on the side of the road. Anyway, long story short, I went by the house. I got sick a few more times, and I thought I caught some bug. Then I saw my tampons in my bathroom closet when I was getting a new tube of toothpaste out and it dawned on me, I hadn’t had my period in a while. With the things going on in my life with having a new boyfriend, keeping up with my workload with the farm, my online classes, and getting ready for the signing. I just wasn’t paying close enough attention. I got dressed and went to the store and bought an early pregnancy test.” I stop and take a drink of my water. “You have guessed it by now, the test was positive.”

“You told Raider?” Rager asks.

“Of course, I did. I went straight to the clubhouse and told him. We got in to see the doctor that afternoon, and this is your grandchild.” I take out the ultrasound photos I still have with me. I point out where the baby is to Rager and Mom shows Reaper.

“You’ve seen these?” Rager asks Mom.

“I was there the day they were done. Billie and I have no secrets. Billie told me the first time they had sex. It was her first time, and that is something my girl wouldn’t keep from me. Billie has been an adult for five years, way before her time. She makes good decisions and I like Raider. He’s a good

man. I think she chose well.” Mom and I never have secrets from each other. Our entire family is that way. If one member of our family is going through something, then we all are. We support each other and it makes us closer.

“I think they did this a little backward, don’t you think?” Reaper speaks up.

“They may have jumped the gun a little, but that boy had a ring in his pocket the day the ultrasound was done and he proposed to her while she was still lying on the exam table. He already had his own plan in motion. This just speeds it up a little. I couldn’t care less if they get married next week or in the next ten years if Raider takes care of his little family. Our family usually stands by traditions, but these are new days. They’re a younger generation and how they do things is up to them. I dare someone to judge them and let me hear it.” My mom is always in my corner. “The only thing that I don’t like is his dad put bruises on him. In my book, that’s a shame and I don’t care what you were arguing about. That boy is not to blame for what two adults caused years ago. You need to remember that.” Mom points at Rager and then shuts up.

I ignore her words. I don’t want to cause another argument today. There’s been too much arguing if you ask me.

“Raider is talking to Honey today and showing her a picture like these. Raider and I didn’t know what was up between you and Honey since he received the text that she was going to be home today.” I look at my hands and then back to Rager. “When you’re both ready to share with everyone, know that I am here, but I don’t want to know anything that Raider doesn’t know first. That is your family business, and I am not a part of that.”

“The hell you ain’t,” Reaper speaks up.

“You got that right,” Mom says, but the only one I want to hear their opinion of is Rager.

“You’re our family even if you and Raider don’t ever get married. You’re carrying my grandchild. You’re under my protection from this day forward.” Rager puts his hand over mine.

“Thank you. I thought you might think I was trying to trap Raider.” I let my fear be heard.

“Billie, I think you’re too good for any damn man. I want to have a relationship with Raider because I’ve already missed so much, but even if that never happens, you’re my daughter from this day forward. I’ll make sure that you and all your family will never need to fear anything again.” I see the tears in Rager’s eyes. I won’t let my tears fall, not yet, anyway.

“Ditto that,” Reaper says and I reach for his hand. The three of us hold hands for a few more seconds. “What’s with this giving you away? We just got you.” I feel a tear roll down my face. I quickly wipe it away.

“Like Mom said, Raider popped the question while I was still on the exam table and I, of course, said yes. I love that man with all my heart but I gave him a stipulation.” Mom muffles a laugh under her breath. Reaper and Rager both look at Mom.

“Don’t look at me. My daughter is as stubborn as the day is long and when she gets something in her head, she’s going to get her way. She won’t marry Raider until he’s old and gray unless he agrees to her stipulations and he hasn’t yet.” Mom is right, I am stubborn, but I come by it naturally. I want to marry Raider now but I don’t want Raider to look back on our wedding and be disappointed his dad wasn’t there.

“Spill it, darlin’,” Rager says.

“I told Raider the only way I would marry him is if you give me away.” I raise my hand to keep Rager from talking. “The day you spent with me, walking around the MMM book signing event, meant something to me. It’s something like my dad would do with me. I mean, I know you had your own motives trying to pump me for information on Honey and Raider, but it was like my dad was there. I guess that’s why I won’t accept no for an answer. I don’t care what the wedding is like—big, small, fancy, or everyone come as they are—but I have always wanted to share that with my dad. I want you to be the one who walks me down the aisle. I talked to my mom about it and she approves. Her only stipulation is that when the

officiate asks who gives me away, you say, ‘I do along with her mom, Francesca Nesbit.’ I can live with that.” I then look at Reaper. “I would like for you to walk my mom to her chair. Cole is going to walk Honey to her seat.” I finish. I know my hormones are all over the place but this is something I need more than want or that is how it feels.

“Who the hell is Cole?” Reaper asks me but I can tell he only beat Rager to asking the question.

“Cole is Raider’s best friend. He’s also the enforcer for Raider’s club and Honey has known him since he was a small child. Raider and Cole have been best friends since before they started school together. He also calls Honey Mom just like Raider,” I try to reassure Rager. Jealousy runs in that family’s blood. “So, will you Rager? Will you be my dad for my day?”

“What did Raider say about it? Does he want me there for your wedding?” Rager asks.

“Don’t sugarcoat it for him, Billie. He’s a man, and that’s something for him and his son to work out.” I frown at Mom, and she gives me those mom eyes.

“Raider doesn’t want you there. You two need to talk your problems out. I want you there. I want you to be my dad for the day and give me away with my mom. I won’t get married unless that happens. That’s the bottom line. Raider will get on board or we’ll live in sin for the rest of our lives. *Life Stands Still For No One*, and he will give these few things to me for our wedding day.” I am determined.

“I told you she was stubborn,” Mom speaks up. I look at Reaper and for the first time, this man has nothing to say. I look back to Rager and I see the tears he’s fighting. Nope, I will not cry. I feel so vulnerable waiting for his answer. Maybe I misunderstood, and he doesn’t think that much of me.

“All you had to do was ask. The day we met in Conroe, I enjoyed spending the day with you and talking. I figured out that I had met a young lady who I genuinely liked and enjoyed spending the day with. The situation that day was screwed up, but you were a joy to get to know. I would be honored to be the one who walks you to my son, no matter what he thinks of

it. I will be there with you every step of the way during your pregnancy and for as long as you will have me in your life. I just don't want to be what you and Raider argue over." I look at Reaper and wait for him to answer me.

"I will do whatever you ask of me as long as it isn't to be in delivery room when you deliver our next family member." We all laugh over that one. I can finally breathe easy again.

"You let Billie Jo handle Raider and everything will be just fine," Mom adds to the conversation.

"Since we're all family now, Frannie, I am Tyrel Sullivan and this is my twin brother, Tyson Sullivan. Billie introduced us by our road names," Reaper tells my mom.

"Billie has explained everything about motorcycle clubs and real names and road names and some of the rules of Raider's club," Mom tells Reaper. "This has been nice meeting the both of you. Road names or birth names, doesn't matter to me as long as I know what name to call you. I've been stuck with Frannie since right after I was born. My grandma gave it to me. Not that it's anything like yours." Mom looks at me then. "Eat up, Billie. We need to get a move on so I can catch a nap before tonight's shift."

"What are you two ladies up to today?" Rager asks.

"We're going to plan everything for the wedding so as soon as Raider gets on board, then it can happen in the next couple of weeks," I answer.

"It's going to be a small wedding?" Rager asks me.

"I wanted to do a huge wedding but Billie won't have anything to do with that. I know she'll be my only shot at a fancy wedding. Ryan is going to stay at home as long as he can but we'll be downsizing. Maybe he'll learn to keep his room clean at least." Mom laughs at what she just said. "Maggie, my youngest, will be getting married in her camo pants and combat boots. That girl has a pair for every day."

Rager laughs. "That a girl. No harm in that."

Mom laughs. "She tried to wear them for a dance recital. Then there was the time that I thought I would buy her pink

camo shorts like I had seen on other little girls. She wouldn't even try them on. She put her hands on her hips, looked at me, and asked 'where she was supposed to hide in pink shorts, Candy Land? Camo helps me blend in and then I can attack whenever I want. I'm a soldier, and anyway, I outgrew Candy Land a long time ago.' Then she huffed out of the room." Mom just shakes her head. I finish my fruit on my plate. I laugh at the memory. *Maggie had been mad for a week. She's said she's going to be a soldier when she grows up.*

"Thank you both. I know our day will be complete now," I say to them.

"I understand that you want me to walk you to Raider on your day and it has to do with feeling your dad close. Are you sure about this? I just want to give you every chance to come to your senses." Rager smiles and winks at me. I think he's trying to ease the heavy feelings this conversation has left, but I know I need to give him the whole truth.

"Rager, I gave you my main reason for wanting you to be there with me but I need to tell you, I will have a table set up with a picture of my dad and me on it and there is one other reason for this." Rager doesn't say anything, giving me time to say what I need to.

"I wasn't raised in a home full of drama. We were just a loving family. I want a family like that for Raider and me. You can't have that without always telling the truth between family members. Never leave anything unsaid. We only have the moment guaranteed in life, loyalty, and to face our problems and not run away from them or avoid them." I look at my mom for some reassurance and she nods her head at me. "If Raider keeps avoiding his issues with you and Honey, I think he'll regret it. And regret can only fester and ruin everything around it. I don't want to teach our children that's the way to handle things. A parent's job is to teach their children the better way to face life. We love, nurture, and protect them, but they need to know that when life gets hard, all you can do is put your nose to the grindstone and work through it. That's what I want to teach our children, like Mom and Dad did us. I

won't marry a man who thinks he can run from the troubles that come our way."

"That's my girl," Mom says proudly.

"I think my son chose very well." Rager smiles at me. "I want you to call me Tyson. I am going to be your father-in-law."

"You're going to be much more than that," I tell him.

"Damn, this shit is heavy. Billie don't forget, I'm also your uncle and I've never had a niece to spoil before." I smile at Reaper.

"A woman never turns down a good spoiling," I reply.

"Are you going to make us wear monkey suits that have those ties that chokes a man to death?" Reaper asks with his two hands on his throat like he's choking himself. It makes me laugh.

"No tuxes and no suits. Good jeans and a button-up shirt with your cut over it is fine, along with your normal boots. No flowers or anything," I explain. "The only reason I'm wearing a dress is because Mom asked me to. I will either have my cowboy boots on or be barefoot. I refuse to be uncomfortable on my day. No band or anything extravagant. We can hook someone's phone up to speakers and have a playlist," I finish.

"We are having barbeque with the fixings and I did insist on a wedding cake. Come with a big appetite. If it doesn't rain, it will be outside. If it does, then I'll get a tent or clean out a barn. When Billie says she wants a no-fuss wedding, she means it." My mom is still upset I won't have a big fancy wedding. I didn't want to hurt her feelings but there is no need to spend that much money for one day. It can be just as nice but in an uncomplicated way. I can save the money that would be spent on a big wedding to add some modern furniture when we move into the big house, not counting all the baby stuff, we'll need to buy. The numbers keep adding up in my head.

"Let us know if we can help with anything," Rager adds.

"We will. I may need some help getting the barn squared away just in case it rains," Mom answers.

“I’m sorry to leave good company, but Mom and I need to get the shopping done so she can get some sleep.” I stand up. Both Rager and Reaper do the same. Mom is the last one up. Rager moves toward me and takes me in his arms and gives me a fatherly hug. I hug him back.

He softly says for my ears only, “Thank you, Billie. I would hate to miss your day or Raider’s. I love you, girlie.” I hug Rager a little tighter. Rager releases me and backs away. Reaper takes his place, and he has his own soft words for me.

“Thank you, Billie. Rager needed this and that makes you that more special to me. Love you.” I have tears in my eyes and Mom hands me a napkin.

“Let me get this hormonal woman out of here. It was good to meet you both and I hope we see more of you in the future,” my mom tells the two brothers as we walk out of the post. Now all I need to do is get Raider on board with all of this.

*H*oney

Look who's here? I smile as I walk up to Reaper and give him a hug. I lean back and punch him in the dick.

"Don't fuck with me anymore. You let me believe you were Ty in the sex shop. Then you had the audacity to fucking wink at me. I was so damn mad at him, you jackass." I pause. "You let me believe you were Rager at the clubhouse and you never did a thing to correct the situation you helped to cause," I say to him.

He's bent over, holding his balls. He deserves more but I feel so much better that he's hurting a little bit.

"Fuck, that hurt, little lady. I promise not to piss you off again," he mumbles.

"I told you brother. I told you," Rager says, laughing out loud.

"I guess. Damn, she has a mean streak a mile long," Reaper says to him.

"I told you. Never mess with her. She will get even. I promise," Rager states back.

"I ain't putting up with any shit from either of you," I tell the both of them. "What are you all doing tomorrow?" I ask. I have a reason I need to know. Raider called and wants to talk to me by myself. I promised him that at least.

"We're going to go check out the clubhouse at some point. Reaper here wants to meet him on his own territory. At that

time, I'll be heading back here. I promised to go find a couple of bike frames for the boys to make some motorcycles. They do those and make bank off them," Rager tell me.

"Are they all still around?" I ask.

"They all are. You don't have to worry about him ever being at the clubhouse again," Rager tells me.

"You sure it won't be a problem with me coming down for a while?" I ask.

"Honey, our home is still there. It will always be our home. I haven't stayed there for some twenty-odd years, but I have maintained it. Did some remodeling to keep it updated. If there's something you don't like, we'll fix it to your specifications," he tells me. "Are you coming home with me?" he asks.

"I think I might for a while. If we wanna make this work, we need to be together. It won't work if were apart," I tell him. I step closer, wrapping my arms around him. I jump up and wrap my legs around his waist. He instantly gets hard.

"Not now. Later I'll take care of that hard log of yours. Your brother is here and I'm giving him no excuse to hate me for anything other than me punching his junk," I say with an evil grin.

"You are still so damn evil," Rager tells me with a smile.

"Yep, don't forget it. You know how much I love you," I tell him. I don't want to hold back anymore. It's been a long time coming.

"I love you just as much. We got this, baby. We will make it. We put each other first, we will make it. It's not all going to be roses, but if we try and we communicate with one another, we can do this."

"We will make it. We went over twenty-five years without marrying anyone else. We both knew we were meant to be together. No one else. Are you fellas hungry?" I ask them.

"Yeah. We will be in an hour or two," Reaper says.

"Are you sure you'll be okay to eat?" I ask him.

“You are evil and yes,” he replies.

“Good. I pulled steaks out and they’re marinating now. I’ll throw some bakes in and toss a salad or make some little cabbages,” I say.

“That sounds good and I would eat all of it. Even the brussel sprouts,” Rager says.

“Perfect. I need to get some more work done. You all make yourselves at home. Do your thing. I’ll be in my office if you all need something,” I tell them. I give Rager a hug and head down the hall to my office. I made one of the four bedrooms into an office. I use the closet as swag and book storage.

I settle into my chair and order some supplies that I need, mostly books for the next signing. I order ink pens and buttons. After that, I file paperwork from the last signing and begin the next chapter in my book. I’m in there until I hear a knock on my door.

“Come in.”

“Hey, Honey, you ready to eat?” Rager asks.

“I’m so sorry. Of course. Let me save this and I’ll cook our dinner. I sometimes lose track of the time,” I tell him.

“Honey, I already cooked. It’s ready. Don’t rush. We’ll wait on you,” he tells me as he leans down and kisses me.

I turn and start saving all my shit. I stand after turning off my PC.

Dinner was a lively affair. We sat around and they had a beer. I had some wine. It wasn’t long before I was in bed, in a deep sleep. It had been a really long day.



THE NEXT MORNING

The men have left to go to some junkyards looking for bike frames. I’m sitting here waiting for Raider to show up. I never did tell Ty that he was coming over to see me this

morning. I forgot, in all honesty. I need this conversation with our son though.

I hear him pull up on his motorcycle and pour us both a cup of coffee, waiting for him to walk through the back door.

“Morning, kid,” I say to him.

“Good morning, Mom.”

“I wanted to talk and tell you what my plans are for the next few weeks. I need you to accept them, not give me shit. It’s something I need to do for me.”

“Mom, I love you. We’ve had words the last few times we’ve talked, but you need to know I only need to accept something if I agree with it. We can agree to disagree, Mom. It’s what happens in the world these days.” He grins at me, and I know he’s only half serious.

“I will always love you, Raider. You know that. Lately, you’ve been an ass while talking with me. That’s why your dad hit you. He told you he wouldn’t put up with it. But that isn’t what I wanted to talk to you about. I plan on going back with him to Houston for a while. We want to see if we can make it work. We can’t do this with one of us living here, and one of us living there. I know you don’t agree with me, but I need to see if it will work. I have always loved your dad. Always. That’s why no other man worked. I couldn’t open my heart to them. I need you to accept my decision,” I tell him.

“Mom, I love you, but I don’t necessarily like you or understand your thinking. You took Rager’s side over me even though it was you and me against the world for so long. I know I was an ass toward you and Rager, and I have every right to be mad as hell over everything that has come out lately. I’m the innocent person in this. I will process and I will try to understand but he isn’t my dad until I say he is. That won’t be until I trust him and that’s something you’re going to need to understand. You can’t fix the hatred I have felt toward him for years.” Raider takes a breath. “If I had known all the facts, the whole time, I wouldn’t have been so surprised. I do love you and that will never change but the rest, you’ll need to be patient with me. I’m trying. No man puts his hands on me

and doesn't pay for it. He's a stranger to me and if I decide he isn't allowed around my family, then that's how it's going to be."

"I don't like you at the moment either. Things in life change us. Sure, there are things I have never told anyone. It was us against the world. You were all I had left. Life fucks us over and we just have to learn to live with it. When shit like that happens, we do have to take it and live with it. I not only lost your father, I lost a son. I grieved like no other and still do. It took a part of my heart that I will never get back. I never meant to keep any of that from you. I just never had the right moment to tell you. It is still hard. No it's not perfect between your dad and me. Will it be? Shit, I don't know. What I do know is he was always my happy. My heart. My love. I don't know if we'll make it, but I do know I have to do this for my happiness. I have been sad long enough. I want that love in my life. I want a life partner. You're grown and having a baby with the woman you love. You're making your family," I say, but pause, trying to get my line of thinking straightened out in my head. "I am so happy for you. I need you to understand that I want you to have that relationship with your dad, and yes it will be on both your timelines, but please understand what I'm doing is for me and me alone," I say, my eyes teary and my throat clogged.

"Yeah, Mom, I get it, but I need to do what is best for my family, and you need to understand that. Billie and I are having twins. I'm going to be making the decision on what is right for our family with Billie's input. Don't mention this to Rager. Billie wants to tell him and Reaper together. I know that you and I are good. We always have been, and we always will be, but Rager is something we can't discuss if you're going to get this upset. I can't stand your tears. Please, Mom, accept this. Just like you want this thing with Rager for you, I need this from you. I love you. Your opinion is always important to me, but I just ask this one thing of you." Raider tells me with that stubborn look on his face.

"I do understand and that is all I can ask of you for now. I know you and know that one day, you'll come to terms with what is going on. I love you for that. Thank you for listening

to me. I have an album I want to give you. It's one of your brothers that I did up for you. I'm always here if you have any questions about him. I made two journals during the first year after his death, explaining what he was like, what it did to me after the accident. I'm giving them to you so maybe you can understand my pain and why I couldn't tell you about him." I pause. "If you want them now," I say.

"I do want them, Mom. I can understand why you didn't talk about Kagan. I remember the way you would go into depression around my birthday every year. Now that I'm having children of my own, I can't imagine losing one. The thought crushes me. I haven't met my children yet or held it in my arms. but the death of that child is what my nightmares are made of now. I'm just not ready to let Rager get close to me yet. I've seen your pain all these years over that man, and I can't forget the pain that I had over not having a dad growing up like the other kids did. I'll try to adjust, and I'll try to come to terms with it, but just give me time. I do want happiness for you and if Rager is who gives that to you, then I'll accept that. Be happy, Mom." Raider looks so broken up over all this.

Knowing what this is doing to him, I decide to get up and get the album and journal for him. He's accepted that I'm going home with Rager. The next part is up to the two of them. Did I help in this drift? Yes, I did, but it wasn't all my fault. A lot of circumstances helped prod it along. I pray over time that they can work it out for both their sakes, and for mine too. They are both of my men. One who has had my heart for years and the other from my heart. As long as they both remember that, it'll be okay.

I walk back to the kitchen with the album and journal in a bag for Raider. I had one picture not in the album, but I had that made up for him the other day. It was the only picture of them together, right after they were born. For some reason, that's the only one I had taken of them together. I wanted them to know growing up that although twins, they were each their own person. I slide the bag with the frame on top over to him. I wait to see if he turns it over to look at it.

He does. “We looked so much alike. I wonder if my twins will look alike?” Raider stops talking and puts the photo back in the bag and stands up. “I need to look at these either by myself or with Billie. They are both painful and yet they fill in some of my questions.” Raider looks at me. “I love you, Mom, and I always will. Just keep in mind, if Rager ever hurts you again, I will end him. You don’t deserve anymore pain from anyone, especially him.” We move toward each other.

“I love you too, kid. He’ll treat me right or I’ll hit him in his balls too.” I say with tears running down my face. “We’re heading that way this Sunday. I wanted you to know. Can you take care of the house for me? Make sure no one breaks in. Have the ladies come in and knock the dust off every once in a while. Make sure you call me every once in a while. Okay?”

“Yes, Ma. I promise.”

I lean in and give my kid another hug, knowing this will be the last one for a while. I see him turn, grab his bag, and he walks out without turning around. I know this is his way of dealing with it all. I stand there, tears streaming down my face. I feel as if I’ve lost another part of myself.

TWO MONTHS LATER

Rager

I'm sitting in the diner close to our clubhouse. It's nothing special to look at. It has easy access from the interstate, but this place isn't something that would catch a tourist's eyes. The outside of the building is run-down and the parking lot is small. The inside has booths that have seen better days. The tables have nicks in them and the booth part of it worn. They're not stiff like new ones. They're worn, soft, smooth, and familiar. A few interstate stragglers come in and are surprised by the delicious food this place has but it's mostly locals that come here. I've been coming here for years for their scrumptious food.

I hope Raider likes it. He invited me for breakfast and the talk we've been avoiding. He doesn't trust me. That stings, but then again, it makes me proud. He knows to watch his six and takes nothing at face value. It'll make him a strong president for his club.

The waitress has brought my coffee, and she has my order. I've been up for a few hours. Honey woke up with my tongue on her clit and she showed me her appreciation by going down on me in the shower. Our relationship has grown by leaps and bounds since we've been back together. I don't know how I went twenty-five years without that woman. I need her to be able to breathe. The thought of losing her again is unbearable. She's going nowhere. I don't care if I need to kidnap her again and then never let her go.

We're both excited about Billie and Raider getting married and I hope after today that will be sooner rather than later. I know Billie has been having a bad bout with morning sickness. We spoke on the phone and a few texts here and there, but Honey said she's been at home and on bedrest for the last week. If it gets any worse, then she may need to stay in the hospital a few days under watchful eyes. Honey said that she was the same way in her first trimester, whatever that is.

I'm a dumbass when it comes to pregnancies, morning sickness, and whatever else is to come. It just seems extreme needing to be in the hospital with her hooked up to everything. Yes, Frannie explained it all to me. She's a nurse, but it went in one ear and out the other.

I see that Raider has pulled into the parking lot. He gives me nothing with his facial expressions. Here goes nothing.

As soon as Raider has been seated, the waitress brings him a coffee like I asked her to and takes his order for food. We sit across from each other and just observe each other. I'm waiting on him to speak and he's waiting for me. I won't break the stalemate.

"How are we going to co-exist in the lives of Mom and Billie?" I smile at my son. He's straight to the point just like Honey.

"How do you want to co-exist?" I ask him.

"That's how this is going to go?" I want to laugh but I fight it. He's Honey made over—quick to anger.

"I know how I want our relationship to go but that doesn't matter if you aren't on the same page. You're the one who has set the boundaries so far and I have respected your wishes. You tell me how you want this to go and then we barter an agreement," I answer Raider.

"This isn't a game, old man. This is my family's lives." Raider pouts. I bet that works on Honey but I'm not going to pamper a grown-ass man.

"I will tell you this, you can call me Rager or you can call me Tyson, but unless you want me to call you son, then don't call me old man. I'm respecting you and I damn sure demand the same respect from you. I'm not your mom or Billie and the pouting face doesn't work on me." Raider glares at me.

"Fair enough. Just know I won't be calling you dad anytime soon. I understand you didn't know about me or my twin. I didn't even know about Kagan and that pisses me off. Mom had no right to keep him from me, but I understand why she couldn't tell me. It hurts her too much. Billie has taught

me that it does no good to run from something. Mom needs to face her pain so she can move on or at least exist without that pain weighing her down.” I see Raider needs to work through his pain about Kagan too. This came out of nowhere. He’s bottling that pain up just like me, and how Honey has done it for years. I’ve been thinking on something and I guess it’s time to share.

“I think you’re right about Kagan. We all need to work through that pain instead of keeping it bottled up. After you and Billie work out your difference of opinion and Honey and I have a few months to settle into our relationship,” I see Raider stiffen at that last part, “I think we should have a private memorial for Kagan so we can remember him in a slideshow and say our goodbyes. Your mom has plenty of pictures for it. Not that we’re going to forget him but so we have some peace about him being gone. I know this will be difficult for Honey and that’s why I’m saying this for a few months from now or even after Billie has the baby. Then Honey will have the baby to be happy about. Not that the baby can be any kind of replacement but that way when the ceremony is over, Honey will have the baby to snuggle with. Billie will be over the delivery so she can be there to support you. What do you think about that?” I’ve thought long and hard about this. I don’t know about everyone else, but I need this. I need to remember my other son, even though I never even saw him one time. “I’ll be sure that Honey is strong enough to go through it again and we as a family will be there for her.” Raider sits there and thinks about it for a few minutes while he drinks his coffee. I see the tears in his eyes but he won’t let them fall in front of me. He’s too proud for that. I eat more of my food. The waitress approaches our table and sets Raider’s breakfast in front of him. She fills our coffee cups again.

“I think that we all need it and I think Kagan deserves it, but Mom needs to be on board with it. She’s already gone through the pain of his funeral. She turns into a different person during the time of year that Kagan died. I never knew what was wrong with her. She goes into a depression and she cries a lot. I just wish she had shared with me so I could have

helped her through it. I understand that when I was a child, she didn't tell me to protect me from the pain, but when I became an adult, I have no idea why she kept my twin from me. I don't think I'll ever understand that part and it's a contention between Mom and me up until I read the journal that she gave me to read." Raider is looking down at his plate and not me. This is a burden he's carrying inside of him. He doesn't like to be at odds with his mom and it is weighing on him. "If this happens, then it will need to be after the babies are here."

I almost spit my coffee out. Raider looks at me when he says it and I see his smile. Yep, he did that on purpose.

"The doctor broke the news to us when Billie had to go to the hospital because she passed out the other day. They did another sonogram with 3-D imaging and they found a second heartbeat. The second baby had been hiding behind the other one. It was a shocking surprise. We have decided to name them Keegan and Kagan. Billie said those are unisex names and can be used for either boys or girls. This is all new to me and I didn't even know they had unisex names."

"You know more than I do and I'm sorry for that. Billie will lead you in the right direction and if she doesn't, then I am sure your mom and Frannie will," I tell him sincerely. I watch his eyes soften at the mention of his mom and Frannie. I know Frannie and he have bonded over Billie, and Frannie thinks Raider can do no wrong.

"I can't take it anymore; I know you didn't know about Kagan and me. I can wrap my head around that fact but in here," he points to his heart, "it hasn't caught up to it yet. Every time that you and I are in the same room, it's like a big elephant is sitting in the middle of the room and you and I are dodging the thing. The way I deal is with anger and I don't want to do that anymore. I have accepted Billie's stipulation to our wedding. You are going to give her away. I know you won't back out of it gracefully because Billie is very hard to say no to and I want to make her happy. That's all I want to do besides protecting her and our children."

"You know, sooner or later you'll need to find a way to say no to her for her own good and the good of your family," I tell

him after I finish my food. “But you’re right. I won’t break her dream by saying no. I am honored to do it. I was hesitant at first, but after I thought about it and she explained everything, I would never say no to that. You’re not the only man who she has wrapped around her little finger.” Raider laughs about that.

“I’ve noticed. Reaper is a pain in my ass and he keeps sniffing around Frannie. Billie loves him along with you. I won’t interfere with that unless you or anyone put her and my children at risk,” Raider tells me without blinking an eye.

“Reaper and I won’t put any of you in danger. Your club is the one that needs to worry about danger. The Three Striped Brotherhood was run out of our town for the shit they were pulling on our club. We had to deal with a brother who had been with us from the beginning of our club but they’ve gone back to their hometown now and that’s in your club’s territory. Don’t underestimate that gang of hoodlums and assholes. They left their toll on our town and your town is smaller. They’re pushing drugs on kids. They all need to be sent to hell and I don’t mind being the one to send them there. I won’t lose any sleep over it.” I hate those fuckers.

“Don’t make promises that you can’t keep. You’ll be looking over your shoulder for the rest of your life with all the enemies your club has made. I’m not saying that our club doesn’t have our share of enemies, we do. We try to stay on the right side of the law. None of our brothers have had to go to prison yet, but we do dole out our kind of justice to pedophiles and people who abuse their spouses. We just haven’t gotten caught yet because our club is the law in our small town.” Raider takes in a long breath. “Look, I didn’t come here to talk club dynamics today. I just don’t want our family to get caught in any crossfire for either of our clubs.” Raider said it—*our* family. That gives me hope—hope of a relationship with my only son.

“I understand and agree. The only thing I have to say on our clubs’ subject is if your ever need anything when it comes to your club, just let me know. My club was started by family and we run it as a family. That includes you. I won’t push it

now. We're here for assistance if need be." I say what needs to be said about the subject.

"You're right, that is for later. I just wanted to have this talk so we can co-exist in this family. We can work on us later after we take care of Mom and Billie." Raider is a good man and I know I have no right to claim that any of that is from of me. I know this is how Honey has raised him. I do feel proud of him and it makes my heart feel good. He gives me hope for our future. That's all I can ask for. "Mom loves you and I know she never stopped loving you through all these years. I can accept that. I didn't want to at first but she's happier now than I have ever seen her. Her eyes glow and she laughs real laughs, not the fake ones she's covered with forever. I would never interfere with that. I want Mom happy and you make her that way. That almost choked me to say out loud." We both laugh about that.

"Thank you for that. I won't push you for anything. I just don't want you to put up walls between us and close doors in my face. I have loved you from the moment I found out you existed." He shakes his head in acknowledgment of what I've said.

"Just give me some time to get on the same page. I've hated the thought of what I thought you did to us. I know what I pictured in my head isn't true now but I just need to process. There is so much going on at once. I'll process it but on my timeline." Raider's eyes tell me he's telling me the truth.

"That's all I ask of you. I'm going to put this out there for you to consider. I'm not pushing you though. Next spring, Reaper and I will be going to a cabin between here and your town. It's on a big lake and we stay for three or four days every year. We just have some downtime. It's mostly swimming, boating, and fishing, a lot of fishing. The cabin has plenty of room, five or six bedrooms. Reaper has invited Ryan. You're invited if you want to come. No pressure. You have a lot of time to think about it. It's completely up to you if you come." Raider shakes his head, thinking about it. While he finishes up his food, I motion for the waitress to bring me the

check. I know Raider won't want to linger. He's been away from Billie since early this morning.

"I'll consider it. Is this just a man thing or can Billie come if she wants?" I knew he'd ask that question.

"If Billie is alright with that then by all means, get her to come too. Reaper and I do this every year to just get away. We bought the cabin last year. We may just turn it into a family thing," I answer Raider honestly. "I think your mom would like that."

"You're right, she would and so would Billie if her family can come too." I laugh at that.

"I think Reaper would be on board with that. He has a thing for Frannie but that little tidbit of information didn't come from me. One day, I'll tell you all about your uncle Reaper and why this is a big step for him," I tell Raider.

"I think I would enjoy that. I would like to know about my grandparents and any other family you have someday." I feel tears burning my eyes. I need to take a deep breath to keep them from falling.

"I would enjoy telling you," I tell him. The waitress brings the check and I pay her and give her a generous tip.

"Can I get you gentlemen anything else?" the waitress asks. I look at Raider. He shakes his head no but takes his wallet out of his pocket and hands her a ten-dollar bill.

"That's for you, ma'am. The food and service were great." The woman smiles.

"Thank you for the tip, both of you," she says and then walks away. I smile at my son.

"You know, we left her a thirty-dollar tip for a twenty-dollar tab." We both laugh. We stand and he looks at me and I look at him, both of us with tears in our eyes but too proud to let them fall. I don't know if I should just walk away or say something that I know he doesn't want to hear yet. My stomach feels like I might be sick. Before I can think about it Raider sticks his hand out so we can shake hands. Not how I want this to end but I'll take the effort it takes Raider to put his

hand out to me. I shake his hand and then step back before I give in to the need to hug him.

“Billie wants all the people in the wedding to get together at her mom’s. Billie and Frannie are going to cook for us. It’s supposed to be an engagement dinner and to discuss everything that Billie has taken care of. Frannie wanted a big dinner at a restaurant but Billie wants simple. They’ve been butting heads in between Billie’s getting sick. I know it’s not funny, but when you’re there listening to them, it’s all I can do not to laugh. I keep it to myself so they don’t both throw me out. Mom was there the other day, and she had to have wine to deal with the two of them. She only stayed for an hour,” Raider says with a smile on his face.

Honey had told me about that day. She said that Billie wanted simple and wanted to save the money to spend on the baby or I guess babies now. Frannie wants the fine china and crystal glasses and for the entire thing to be catered. Billie will have none of it. I don’t want to be anywhere near that house.

“That sounds good to me. Honey will tell me when it is. I’ll be there. If you need me to help with anything, just let me know,” I tell him. I talked to Honey about this. If Raider and Billie were doing this to be sensible because they didn’t have the money to do it the way Frannie wanted it, I would have been more than happy to pay for it. Honey assured me that they had plenty of money, that Billie was just the type of woman that didn’t want the fancy. I see nothing wrong with that. “I’ll see you then.” I start to turn and walk away. Raider grabs me and gives me a short hug. I pat him on the back and I try not to grab hold and hug him tight.

“I want this to work. I want a dad in my life. I just need a little time.” I feel the tear roll down my cheek and I don’t give a fuck who sees it. I have my son giving me a hug for the first time in his life. It ends too soon and we’re both wiping our faces. “I need to get on the road.” He leaves me standing there and I feel my heart has doubled in size. I walk out of that diner feeling a lot lighter. I know my son and I will work this out and we’ll have each other in our lives.

*R*ager

I walk through the backdoor after seeing my son. I don't know if Honey knew he was in town. I don't want her pissed if she didn't know. He called me to set up the meet. I wanted, no needed, to do that for him.

"Hey, Ty, everything okay? You look a little lost." she says, wrapping her arms around his waist.

"Good. Did you know Raider was coming to town to see me?" I ask her.

"Ummm, No. Did he?" she asks.

"Yeah, we had breakfast together. He's already on his way back to Billie. Did you know they were having twins?" I ask her.

"Ummm, yes. He asked me not to say anything."

"He told me. Twins. Can you believe that? Usually they skip generations," I tell her. "Well, the wedding is on for sure. He came down to ask and reaffirm that I would walk Billie down the aisle. I told him of course."

"That's good. What else? I know that's not all."

"Well, he told me that we were going to work on us as a father and son. He was tired of fighting it. He also gave me a hug. Gotta say, it brought tears to my eyes," I tell her, kissing the top of her head.

"Really?" she asks, leaning her head backward.

“Yep, that means we’re getting married as soon as their wedding is over. Remember our deal. We fly to Vegas, the two of us,” I state.

“Yes, and I agree as soon as the wedding is over, we’re leaving on a jet plane. I can’t wait to be your wife,” she says. “You are my heart. My love. Your ol’ lady. Forever.”

“You got that right. I’m going to be your old man, your husband. The love of your life,” I remind me.

“Yes, I am. So, not to change the subject but, I have a book signing next month in Ohio. I need to go to it. Are you going with me?” she asks me.

“We’ll see. Can I let you know later this week after church?” I ask her.

“Yes, of course. I need to hit publish on this next book but after that, will you take me for a motorcycle ride?” she asks me.

“Of course, I’ll take you anywhere you wanna go.”

“I just want to put my arms around you for a while. I love going with you on the bike. I don’t feel like I get to enough with all my writing. Maybe stop off somewhere for dinner,” she says.

“Anywhere you want to go for dinner. I would love a big steak,” I tell her.

“I do too. Sounds so good. Thank you for being you. For coming back into my life. For loving me,” she says.

“Ditto,” I reply.



TWO MONTHS after the wedding of our son, we get on the plane and head off into the sunset for Vegas. We are finally getting married on Valentines day.

THE END

NOTE TO READERS:

Twisted Road of Secrets & Regrets is part of a trilogy. The three novellas are linked by happenings in parts of the book but need to be read in the order they are published. They also share characters. They will all three be part of the MMM series. The first novella is written with co-authors Vera Quinn & Penny Anglene,

The second novella is *Life Stands Still For No One*. It will be published on May the eighth. It is written by Vera Quinn and will have small excerpts from *Twisted Road of Secrets & Regrets* but will concentrate on Billie and Raider's story.

The third book, *Reaper's Redemption*, will release before the end of 2023. Penny Anglene will be writing this book. The story will concentrate on Reaper and Frannie.

These will need to be read in order to understand the storyline.

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