

A photograph of a very muscular man with dark hair, a beard, and extensive tattoos on his chest and arms. He is shirtless and wearing blue jeans with a black belt. He is looking off to the right side of the frame. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights his physique.

*Unlawful  
Love*

ginni conquest

# UNLAWFUL LOVE

# GINNI CONQUEST



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOU!

# **UNLAWFUL LOVE**

Written by Ginni Conquest

## Unlawful Love

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## UNLAWFUL LOVE

Dynamic hot shot attorney, Sydney “Syd” Graves hasn’t lost a case since she joined her uncle’s firm until Mamba and the Serpents MC challenged her clean record.

Knowing that something wasn’t quite right with the charges, Sydney knew she had to call upon her family ties and rival MC, The Savage Order, to assist her with finding out the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Keeping her MC family heritage to herself during her law practicing years, Sydney knows there will be a price to pay for reaching out to the one man that has haunted her dreams.

Declan “Ice” Brassard, the Vice-President of The Savage Order, has wanted Sydney from the moment he saw her fiery red hair with her personality to match.

Since she’s the President’s daughter, Sydney is off limits to him or any other brothers in the MC. Being near her while working on the case for Mamba,

Ice knows he’s walking a fine line with his feelings and his urge to claim Sydney as his own. Would Ice heed that order from his President or risk losing it all for her?

Caught up in her own feelings for Ice and for the career she worked so hard for, Sydney must also decide if the sacrifices they both will face are worth the heartache.

*To My Mama!*

*Thank you for always being in my Corner!*



# PROLOGUE

THE POUNDING on the door rattled around Mamba's head. Who the fuck was that? Which one of his brothers was busting his nuts, knowing that he went out last night to have a good time? Grabbing the nearest pillow, Mamba covered his whole face and just groaned at the intrusion the sound was making. If it were even possible, this was a headache of epic proportions, worse than how he felt after his patch party celebration. He'd promised himself never again. Well, that promise didn't last. Figuring he would get back at the assholes later, Mamba tried to go back to sleep, but the banging got more insistent with shouting words that seeped into his brain.

“Open up the door. It's the police!”

Now that got his attention. Sitting up slowly, he had to swallow the bile that threatened to come up. Damn, how much JD did he drink last night? Taking a deep breath to calm himself down, Mamba heard several voices outside of his door. Knowing that he'd had his run-ins with Las Vegas's finest in the past, he figured at this point they would shoot first and ask questions later. What the fuck?

Seeing that he slept in his jeans, he reached for the nearest shirt off the top of the clean laundry pile. He pulled it over his head and tucked it into his jeans. Slipping into his boots, he

pulled the jeans out over them. Just because he felt like shit didn't mean he had to look like shit. Those few actions made the pounding in his head even worse. Where the fuck were the aspirins? Raking his fingers through his hair, he hesitated a quick moment while asking himself why in the hell would the cops want him.

The pounding on the door didn't let up as a recognizable voice called out to him.

“Mamba, open up. I know you're in there. We see your bike parked out front. I need you to come out with your hands up.”

Shit, Mamba recognized his cousin Tom's voice. This has got to be bad if his own family member came out to arrest him.

“Yeah, sure, I'm coming out. Don't shoot my ass.”

“Just open the door slowly and show us your hands.”

Grabbing his wallet off the table, he stuck it in his back pocket. Seeing mints also on the table, he threw a few in his mouth to combat morning breath as well as his upset stomach. Wouldn't be a good thing to heave all over the back seat of his cousin's patrol car. As much as he hated the cops, he couldn't do that to his own cousin. Taking his sunglasses for good measure, Mamba put them over his eyes and looked in the mirror. He had a quick flashback of his favorite movie “The Terminator.” Unlike Arnold, he had a feeling he wouldn't be back any time soon. Time to get this over with.

“Alright, I'm coming out, hands up and all that shit.”

As he slowly opened the door, Mamba saw a few guns pointed in his direction but not from his cousin. What the hell

did he do to warrant this welcoming committee? He did what he was told and kept his hands up in the air and in plain sight.

“What the hell Tom? What’s going on?”

“Mamba, you are under arrest for assaulting Miranda Brooks and disorderly conduct.”

“Who the fuck is Miranda Brooks?”

“Turn around and place your hands behind your back. Jesus Mamba, I hate to do this to you but please cooperate.”

Mamba faced the three officers and did what he was told. It would only make matters worse for him if he didn’t. He certainly didn’t need a resisting arrest charge leveled at him on top of this bullshit one. Mamba knew he was an asshole to women but he would never lay a hand on one. This has to be a big mistake that can be cleared up in no time. At least he hoped so. If only he could fucking remember more of what happened last night. Nodding his head once to his cousin, he turned around and placed his hands behind his back. Feeling the steel snap shut on his wrists, he heard his cousin tell the other officers to stand down. While his Miranda Rights were being said to him, Mamba was guided to his cousin’s patrol car.

“Yeah, I understand my fucking rights. This ain’t my first rodeo. For what I’m being accused of, I don’t have a fucking clue.”

As Tom guided Mamba into the back seat, he leaned into the car to talk to him without any of his fellow police officers in hearing range.

“Listen, I already made a call to Cobra. He’s going to meet you at the station. He said not to say a fucking word to anyone. He’s already organizing the MC’s attorney to handle this.”

Tom bowed his head down for a minute as this was a shit show to arrest his own blood. “When this came over the wire, I didn’t trust anyone else to handle this. You know this is killing me, right?”

Looking straight into his cousin’s eyes, it was obvious this sucked big time for him. They were as close as cousins could be. Just Tom decided to follow the law, and he decided to skirt that fine line. Wanting to put Tom’s mind at ease, he shrugged it off like it was a normal day in his life.

“If I have to get my ass arrested, glad it was you, Cuz. Now, could you lock my fucking apartment door before someone robs me? It seems since you and the guys are already busy arresting my ass, no one will be around to protect my shit.”

Tom let out a laugh as he backed out of the car.

“Always the smart ass. Just watch your mouth when you get to the station. I’m sorry man.”

Slamming the door shut, Mamba shook his head and moaned.

“Fucking hangover.”

# ONE

“SIT down and shut the fuck up!” Cobra stood right in Mamba’s face, with Python standing next to him. The one thing you never did was disrespect your President, at least Mamba was thinking clearly about that. Nodding once, he collapsed in the interrogation room chair and held his head in his hands.

“Any of you guys have some aspirin? I can’t think straight right now.”

Digging into his pocket, Python pulled out two aspirins and pushed them over to Mamba.

“Take them quick. I kind of figured you would need them. Surprised they weren’t found on me when they searched us. Sorry, man, that you have to take them dry.”

“I’ll chew them and swallow,” said Mamba as he popped them both in his mouth and crunched down. Python couldn’t help but grimace at his actions, but hell, when you have a hangover, you do what you have to.

“Alright Nurse Nightingale, are you done?” Cobra glanced over at Python as he shrugged his shoulders. Turning back to Mamba, Cobra sat in the chair facing him. Python pulled the other chair over to join them. “Now, what the fuck happened? Or should I ask, what can you remember?”

Shaking his head, Mamba looked around the room at the absurdity of this situation.

“In all honesty, I don’t remember much. I certainly don’t remember this Mandy bitch.”

“Her name is Miranda Brooks. You don’t remember picking up a chick by that name?” Seeing Mamba shrug his shoulders, Cobra drove home the gravity of this situation. “This is serious, Mamba. You are being accused of assaulting her. With your prior, you are facing serious fucking jail time,” informed Cobra. “I promise you, we are going to do everything we can on my watch. I’m just waiting for Grayson Hart to get here so we can start the process going, including your bail. I don’t want you in here for any length of time, ok?”

“Yeah sure, I appreciate it,” said Mamba. His mind was going in 50 million directions. At least the aspirin started kicking in. He could start to rethink his steps from last night.

“I remember driving to the bar, played some pool, drank some JD, quite a bit it seems. Of course, there were bitches there, but I don’t remember speaking to any one girl specifically. I wasn’t out to get laid, I just wanted to hang out. Other than that, I got nothing.”

Hearing his phone ring, Cobra picked it up immediately.

“It’s me. Yeah. Well, that fucking sucks. Who you are sending? Wait, let me put you on speaker. I have Mamba and Python here. Go ahead. It’s Grayson.”

“Hey guys. Sorry to hear about your arrest Mamba but we are going to do everything we can to clear your name.” Hearing Grayson pause to cough up what seemed to be a lung, he took a deep breath and cleared his throat.

“What the hell Grayson? Did you get tested for Covid?” asked Python.

“I don’t have Covid, just the good old flu so that’s why I’m calling. I’m too sick to come down there, let alone stand in the courtroom. Judge Miller will throw my ass out seeing how he is such a germaphobe. So I’m sending you my newest addition to the firm, Syd Graves.”

“How good is he? You know we pay you top dollar for the best representation we can get from you Grayson. I can’t have our boy rot in fucking jail.”

“I promise you that Syd is a killer in the courtroom. Mamba will be free soon, cleared of all charges. In fact, Syd is already arranging bail and will be joining all of you shortly.”

Cobra just glanced at Python and then looked over at Mamba. As calculating as Cobra was, he knew they really didn’t have much of a choice right at this moment.

“Ok Grayson, we trust you. You better pray this works out,” warned Cobra.

“I promise you, Syd is your man for the job. We’ll talk when I get better, but know I am here for you, Mamba. You are in very good hands.” Hearing the line go dead, Mamba folded his arms across his chest.

“What choice do I have?”

“Fucking none,” replied Python. “Now we can only hope this Syd does the trick and gets your sorry ass out of this place.”

As the three of the them just sat there waiting for the attorney, Mamba tried to think long and hard about what he did last night. He might have snuck in a little prayer for help too. One thing he didn’t want to do was disappoint Cobra and

Python, but he knew he already did just that. Thinking back to when he first met them, they had a rough start, but this was a complete shit show. He considered these guys to be his family and he always tried not to fuck them over. Mamba promised himself that when he got out of there, he would pay the club back for the money it was going to cost them to get him out of his mess. A few underground fights should do it.

Seeing Cobra staring at him, Mamba knew he couldn't keep anything from him.

He was a good leader for the Serpents and an even better man.

"I'm sorry Prez." Cobra walked over and placed his hand on Mamba's shoulder.

"Listen Mamba, I know you are thinking about how you are going to pay the club back but we got it. We don't leave anyone behind. You got me?"

Trying not to get too choked up, Mamba nodded his head.

"I promise you Prez I will pay you guys back. Whatever I'm being accused of doing, I hope this Syd person can get it all cleared up. But I owe you guys for everything, and I won't ever forget it." Patting Mamba on the back, Cobra went back to sit down, patiently waiting for the mystery attorney to show up. He did a quick prayer himself that these charges would all go away. He couldn't imagine Mamba being locked up for years. These were his men; if you fucked with one, you fucked with them all.

Hearing footsteps coming down the hallway, they heard a woman's voice singled out over the men.

"Which room is my client in? Jesus, you all need to paint these walls, add some lighting or something. Give it some



character. This place looks like crap.”

All three of the guys just stared at each other.

“Is that my attorney? I thought his name was Syd. What kind of a name is Syd for a girl?”

Cobra held his hand up and turned his head towards the door. He wanted to hear the conversation going on in the hallway.

“Sorry Ms. Graves, we haven’t decided on eggshell creamy white or just plain old eggshell. But sadly, the lighting is out of our budget at the moment,” replied one of the cops sarcastically.

“I think a nice shade of grey to compliment your ruddy complexion would be a step in the right direction. Now, where is my client?”

“Right in here your highness,” replied the officer.

“You were always a dick in high school and a bigger one now Taylor. Now get the hell out of my way and leave me alone with my client.”

“Good luck with him Syd. You are going to need it.”

Pushing the door open with her hip, Mamba’s attorney stood in front of the three guys. All five-foot-four of her, and then some, with her three-inch heels. Sizing the guys up, Syd walked over to the other end of the table and dropped her oversized bag and purse. She knew that she had their attention by their reactions and Syd always loved to make an entrance. With her red, wavy hair and curves in all the right places, she knew how to handle herself in and out of the courtroom to her advantage. This time was no different. Making sure she made eye contact with each one of the guys, it was time to let them know who was in charge. She knew who the Serpents MC

were in this town. This case was going to be a challenge from the start just because of that association.

“So, which one of you is my client?”

Almost afraid to answer her, Mamba slowly raised his hand. While Cobra narrowed his eyes at her, Python just sat back in his chair with a big smile on his face.

“Umm, me, I’m your client.”

“I guess it pays to have a few cops in your back pocket at the Clark County lock up. I don’t know who the two of you are or why you are even allowed in here,” remarked Syd.

Cobra cleared his throat and made the introductions.

“I’m Cobra, the Serpents MC Pres and laughing boy over here is my Sergeant-at-Arms, Python.”

“Well, I’m Sydney Graves, Syd for short. I understand my Uncle Grayson informed you that since he is sick, I’m taking over the case.”

“Uncle? I didn’t know he had a niece that was a lawyer. Grayson has done well for the MC and we wholly trust him. What’s your story?” Cobra was a bit on edge not knowing Syd’s background. Since the MC was going to shell out big bucks to take care of Mamba, he wanted to best person to defend him.

“I can assure you that you are in good hands. I haven’t lost a case yet and I don’t plan on losing this one. I’ve already arranged bail for you so you can get out of this depressing place. But I warn you, we have a lot of work ahead of us to get you cleared of these charges. I’m blunt and don’t put up with any bullshit. I know how tough you MC guys are, but I’m tougher. I’m here to get your ass out of jail and get your name cleared. Your money won’t be wasted with me defending you.

Since this is an assault case and the woman seems to have a somewhat strong story here, we have our work cut out for us. For me, every story has a weakness, and something about this one doesn't sit right with me. So are you going to trust me in defending you?"

Mamba looked over at the two guys; Python still had a shit-eating grin on his face, while Cobra was stoic as always. Leaning back in his chair, he looked at Syd from the top of her fiery red head to her stunning green eyes, right down to her shapely legs with her feet encased in what had to be three-inch heels. Folding his arms across his chest, he gave her his sexy smirk that he knew worked on all the ladies.

"Shit yeah, I'll trust you, Syd. It's ok that I call you Syd since we are going to be working together and all?"

Without missing a beat, Syd took out her business cards. Passing one to Mamba and the other to Cobra, she decided now was a good time to lay down the law.

"Let's make one thing perfectly clear. While you thought that smirk thing you just did would affect me, guess again. It didn't. But it might have been the cause of why you are sitting across from me right now. So why don't you just concentrate on helping me get your ass out of jail instead of trying to screw your chances and ending up with a male roommate for the next 15 years or so?"

While Python squirmed in his chair at her statement, Mamba couldn't get a read on Cobra. This was serious shit but he couldn't help but screw around with her. It kind of helped break the tension hanging in the air. He had a feeling he was going to love sparring with her.

"When you put it like that Syd, I'm all down for helping you. Maybe after this is all done and I'm free, we can

investigate the other possibilities?”

“Not on your life Mamba.”

## TWO

GAZING OUT THE WINDOW, Syd knew she had a few minutes to herself before her new client arrived. Mamba. What the hell kind of road name was that? Not that she wanted to get personal with him, but she was kind of intrigued about it. In fact, all of the guys had snake names. Serpents MC; one knew not to mess with them, that was for sure. She could just kill her uncle for not taking care of himself and getting sick for the one case she didn't want. How many times did she tell him that coffee wasn't a food group and he couldn't just live on that alone? Rundown immune system and boom, sick with the flu, leaving her stuck with this case.

Rapping her head on the window, Syd knew this one was going to be tough but something didn't sit right with her. Why would Mamba assault a woman? What could have been a trigger? Or could this be revenge, a woman scorned? God knows he probably has a revolving door of women and maybe he just screwed with the wrong one. Hey, you never know. Maybe one had high hopes of becoming his old lady and the next morning he didn't remember her name? That's why Syd stayed away from these bad boys. She grew up with them and certainly didn't want to end up with one.

Hearing a slight knock on her door, her assistant and paralegal Kevin Stiles stuck his head in.

“Syd, your appointment just arrived.”

“Thanks Kevin, you can send him in. I’m going to need you in on this meeting too. I have some theories about this case that I’m going to need flushed out.”

“Coffees for all?” Kevin was a good assistant and took care of Syd, especially when she became focused on her cases. He learned a lot from her and would have to admit that she made it very entertaining. They’d become friends over the past few years they’d worked together. Where Syd worked, Kevin was right with her. They made a formidable team.

“Sounds good. Send Mamba in.”

“Mamba? Isn’t that very large snake?”

“And your point is?” Syd raised her eyebrows as though to challenge him.

“Nothing, but I wonder why he got that road name.” Kevin smirked over to Syd.

“Send him in while you still have a job,” smiled Syd.

Bowing down to her while he backed out the door, Syd just shook her head. What would she do without him? If Kevin had one inkling of setting her up with snake man, he had another thing coming. Pulling out her legal pad and other items, Syd started slamming them on the table.

“Damn MC’s, sick uncle, my family, my life, what else is going to go wrong?” Syd was mumbling all of this under her breath when she heard a light tapping on the door.

“Is this a good time or do you need a few minutes?”

Syd felt her face glow a deep shade of red at being caught throwing a bit of a tantrum in front of her client.

“No, no, it’s fine. Please come in Mamba and take a seat. Kevin will bring in some coffee for us and we can get started. Actually, I have an idea about Ms. Brooks that we are going to investigate today. I would love to come up with some concrete evidence about this situation that will help our case.”

“Well, whatever I can do to help with this case, I’m all yours. I’m feeling much better after a night of sleeping in my own bed, more grounded.”

“That’s good, Mamba. I’m going to need you to really think about what happened the other night.”

“Here we go, coffees for all and some of those cookies you like too, Syd.”

“Thanks Kevin. Help yourself, Mamba, since we didn’t know how you took your coffee. And meet my assistant Kevin Stiles.”

“Black is fine.” Reaching for Kevin’s hand, Mamba nodded once at him and sat down in the chair nearest to him.

“Ok then, let’s get started. I know some of this might be a bit redundant, but I just want to have this info for my assistant.” Mamba just stared at Syd with his arms crossed over his chest. His biceps doubled in size in this position, and with the ink work he had, Syd couldn’t have him look like this in the courtroom. Sadly, people’s reactions come from prejudice and that would be the end of Mamba.

“First of all, when we go to court, a long sleeved button down shirt and slacks will be your attire each day.”

“What the fuck for?”

“Because little old granny in the juror box might be scared shitless as you look like the Hulk on steroids that she would convict you right then and there if you dressed like this. If you

have a problem with it, I'll take it up with Cobra, but I think he will agree with me on this."

"Ok, done. Next."

"A nice haircut, shave too would be a good thing." Seeing the look of disbelief on Mamba's face, she relented a bit. He was such a handsome guy that Syd knew she wanted him to come off looking like a good man, someone put together and not someone that could have broken the law.

"Ok, I can agree to a close-cropped, neat beard and a hair trim. Is that fine with you?"

Mamba nodded his head once in agreement.

"Good, so that part is settled, now on to the basics. You are being charged with the aggravated assault of Miranda Brooks, taking place at The Rook Bar and Grill in a bit of a seedy part of town. Good thing is you aren't being accused of rape. According to the police report and the photos taken at the scene, you allegedly did a number on her, especially in her facial area and gave her two cracked ribs. Bruising on her arms and torso too."

"No fucking way would I ever inflict any harm or beat the shit out of a woman! They have the wrong guy! I may be a lot of things Syd but I'm not an abuser!"

"I know Mamba, and that is why I am here. I will prove to the courts that you are innocent of this crime. I promise you this, ok?" Reaching across the table, Syd placed her hand on top of his. She needed Mamba to believe her because if he didn't, how the hell could she prove his innocence in court. "Now I just wanted you to know what we are facing with the charges but I won't let them stick. I want you to trust me."



Mamba shook his head once in agreement. “Ok then, now let’s continue with the rest of the information. Full formal name?”

“Jack Hammond.”

Nodding at Kevin to start taking down the answers, Syd focused her attention back to Mamba.

“What do you do for a living?”

“I’m the bouncer at our club, Ecstasy.” Seeing Syd raise her eyebrows annoyed the hell out of Mamba. “What’s wrong with that? It’s a good paying job for a legitimate business. I’m in charge of keeping the peace at the club as well as being the Enforcer for our MC.”

“What did you do before that?”

For one instant, Mamba felt a sense of pride before he answered her.

“Marine.”

“That’s good. We’ll make sure to mention that Mamba served his country,” remarked Syd. “Please tell me it was an honorable discharge.” Seeing Mamba nod yes, she pulled her hair up in a ponytail. Taking out her pen, she started to tap her legal pad.

“Anything else? Sports, family, I’m trying to build your character for this defense.”

“Kickboxer and MMA fighter, family, none worth mentioning except my MC family. They are my brothers.”

Writing down a few notes herself, Syd didn’t take her eyes off her legal pad when she asked this next question.

“And these brothers will do anything for each other, correct?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

Looking Mamba straight in his eyes, she dropped the next question.

“Even lie for you?”

Mamba just stared at her. Kevin braced himself for the shit storm that was about to erupt. Mamba slammed his fists on top of the table. God, he hated when he was right.

“What the fuck are you talking about? What the fuck do you know about the brotherhood?”

Syd placed her pen down on the pad and folded her hands in front of her.

“If any of your brothers take the stand, this is exactly what is going to happen. The prosecutor will do everything in his power to make you and the MC look like a huge piece of shit in the eyes of the jurors. Chances are they will have already convicted you just by association to the club. I’m trying to prepare your ass not to fall into a trap set up by the prosecution. Do you understand me? I am not your enemy here though at times, I’m sure you will hate my guts, and it will be reciprocated. And to answer your other question, I know about the brotherhood and how it all works. My father is the President of the Savage Order so I know it, I’ve lived it and hated it. Does that answer your fucking question?”

Mamba just stared at her and then started laughing. As he was pounding the desk, Syd grabbed her pens that started rolling off it in all different directions.

“Cobra is going to shit himself when I tell him this. Your father is Thor?”

“Yeah, unfortunately for me. Listen, I keep this information quiet. Please don’t make this a big thing. It’s not

something I need anyone in the courts knowing about. Obviously Kevin knows my secret and now you. I'm sure the rest of your MC will know as soon as you open your mouth but I really need it out of my life, do you understand?"

Wiping the tears from his eyes, Mamba hadn't laughed so hard in such a long time. Even with his brother's busting on him, it wasn't as funny as this. God, he needed that! No wonder this woman has a set of balls on her. She needed to grow a pair to deal with her father.

"Ok, ok I get it. No big deal. Shit, Thor. How does he feel about you becoming a defense attorney?"

"Well, it wasn't good in the beginning. I fought him to go to law school. He said if I was so damn hell-bent on working in the courts, I had to cover my own education. Those were his words. And so I did. I graduated top of my class. His rejection of what I wanted to do worked the opposite on me. So, I proved to him that I could do it, and if he ever needed an attorney, he could kiss my ass."

"Good for you Syd, you should be proud of yourself. I know I'm in good hands with you."

"Thank you Mamba. I appreciate that. Now, let's get back to the night in question. You mentioned that you just wanted to go out to the bar and have a relaxing night, have a drink, play some pool. You should have stuck to Ecstasy, but I guess I understand that you would want a change of scenery. Do you remember the woman in question?"

While Syd was asking these questions, she pulled out a photo of Miranda Brooks.

"Do you recognize this woman?"

Leaning forward, Mamba took the photo from Syd. Gazing at it, the image seemed to be familiar to him but he wasn't 100% sure. It was like he knew her but didn't if that made any sense.

“No, I'm sorry. Her face isn't one that I recognize.”

Taking the photo from Mamba, Syd placed it back in the folder. She felt that he was hiding something from her. That wouldn't work if she was defending him.

“Let's talk more about the underground fighting. They are not fully sanctioned fights, correct?”

“Yes, that's correct. They have them in different clubs in Vegas.”

“How are they set up? Do you ever know any of the fighters that are your opponents?”

“Not really, unless they are pretty regular like me. I have a reputation as a strong fighter and a winner so I'm popular when I hop into the ring.”

“Have you ever beat up someone so badly that they suffered long term effects from their injuries?”

When Mamba didn't answer right away, Syd gazed over at him.

“Well, have you injured somebody so badly that they suffered long term?”

Mamba put his head in his hands. God he didn't want to relive the worst fight of his life, the one that almost made him quit. Syd knew when to be quiet and just let the question settle on her client's mind. She needed him to open up to her if she was going to help him.

Shaking his head, Mamba looked at Syd.

“I almost killed a man with my bare hands.”

# THREE

“OK, can you tell me about it?” Syd held her breath as she waited for Mamba to tell his story. She had a hunch about something, but it was a long shot.

“Oh shit,” Mamba mumbled. Folding his hands together on the table, he kept his eyes down. Doesn’t the past like to rear its ugly head at the worst possible times?

“It was near Christmas, last year. I was offered a huge payout, 20K to get into the arena with another undefeated fighter, Tobias Walker. I was so damn full of myself that I thought shit yeah, I can do this. So I accepted the fight. Now, this was all before the MC became a part of my life. I was an asshole before I met those guys, I’m just a different kind of asshole now.”

Leaning back in his chair, Mamba rubbed his hands on top of his thighs to help with the anxiety that started to kick up a few notches. Syd felt terrible making him relive something so unpleasant, but she needed to know this for the theory she was working on. If this was as major of an incident as she thought it was, then chances are the prosecutor would have this information too. There was no way that asshole will get a one up on her, that was for sure.

“Mamba, I’m sorry to have to ask you about this. Please, take your time.”

Looking anywhere but at Sydney, Mamba took a deep breath. He’d worked so hard at overcoming the feelings of shame that now he felt the walls closing in on him. Almost like the jail cell that was waiting for him if Syd didn’t do her job. Fuck it, after this I might go to therapy as Cobra suggested many times. Deciding to unload his story, he stared right at Sydney.

“Anyway, it was the night of the fight. We were both saying shit to each other to psyche one another out so by the time we were standing in the arena, the adrenaline was at its breaking point. I didn’t hear the crowds or see them. I was so laser focused on my opponent, or I guess you can say target, that he wasn’t going to walk out of the cage on his own power.”

Mamba had to stop for a second to get control over his emotions. Making two fists with his hands, he remembered the bloody mess they were after he pounded them into the man’s face. Looking away from his hands, he heard Syd call his name.

“Mamba, you don’t have to tell me anything you don’t want me to know, ok?”

Not missing a beat, Mamba spoke over Sydney. Kevin even stopped writing at this point.

“I hit him, over and over and over again I hit him. I can imagine it was like a sledgehammer hitting his face. I felt his bones actually shatter underneath my knuckles but I couldn’t stop hitting him. It was a high, I can’t explain it. I was invincible in this arena on this particular night. There was blood everywhere, on our clothes, the matt, even splattered on

my face. I could hear him moaning until he just passed out. He went totally limp.” Giving a little laugh, Mamba continued. “It took three guys to get me off of him and then I tried to hit them. I heard people yelling “stop the fight, he is killing him.” Women were screaming, men were yelling. It was total pandemonium. I don’t know what was wrong with me that night. It was not something I am proud of today, that’s for sure. That was a different me. I know I was battling old ghosts in my life; my shitty dad, foster families, the crappy life that was dealt to me, the jealousy I had for other kids and what they had and I didn’t. It was no excuse for almost killing that man. Everything came to the surface. I was out of control until I met Python and Cobra.”

Syd just sat there drained after listening to his story. Blinking back the tears, Syd realized she was getting caught up in Mamba’s story, maybe too much so. She didn’t want to get attached to him and make it personal. She needed to keep this business as usual. She was used to being a cold-hearted bitch in the courtroom and needed to remember that feeling now. Kevin stepped out for a few bottles of water and handed one to Mamba and the other to Syd. Nodding her thanks, she took out her cell phone. Still on the fence about making the phone call that she wanted to avoid at all costs, Syd wanted to gather some more facts before opening that door. She knew once that door was opened, it would be difficult to close it.

“Thanks man.” Mamba nodded at Kevin while he opened up the bottle. Draining it in one long swallow, he felt a little better getting this off his chest. But he didn’t know why Syd wanted to know about this.

“Well, I can see that you have remorse for what you did and that you are a better man now with the MC. Do you know what happened with your opponent?”



“Since it was an underground fight, the organizers cleared everyone out, especially before any of the police showed up. They have their own doctor on the scene to handle injuries but not shit like this. They took him out of the arena and my people took me out too.”

“Was there anyone that you can remember that was with the fighter when they took him away? A wife or girlfriend? Brother?”

Mamba started thinking and shook his head.

“Yeah, there was a woman, brunette, crying over him. She was trying to hold onto him and the doctor pushed her away. I saw they had him hooked up to an IV so I didn’t kill him, he was alive at least. I told the organizer to give him the 20K, I couldn’t take that blood money. That’s what it felt like to me at that point. I remember she just looked at me with so much hatred in her face. She actually spit on the matt in front of me before she ran off after them. My people grabbed me as the police sirens were heard in the distance.”

“Were you ever formally charged for this fight?”

Mamba just shook his head no.

“The organizers keep this shit on the down low. It’s their livelihood. The fighters know the chances of what can happen once you step in the arena. But no, nothing ever came of this.”

Syd looked over at Kevin and he nodded his agreement.

“Mamba, I don’t want you to lose it when I tell you this.” Taking a deep breath, Sydney knew that Mamba’s past was coming up to take a big chunk out of his ass.

“I did my own investigation of Miranda Brooks. She’s the sister of the man you almost killed, the man who suffers from

a debilitating neurological disorder from the fight. Miranda Brooks is her married name. Her maiden name is Walker.

# FOUR

AFTER DROPPING that information bomb on Mamba and even Kevin, Sydney was beyond exhausted. She was happy to finish out the day putting her notes in order. Mamba pretty much walked out of the office in a daze.

“Hey Boss, you did good today. I can’t believe you put that Brooks woman together with the fighter.”

“Well, I was thinking of the woman scorned scenario. When I heard the name of the fighter, I almost fell out of my seat. I realized that maybe I was really onto something.”

“Pokerfaced Mama, that’s what I’m going to call you from now on. Pokerfaced Mama,” laughed Kevin.

“I’m far from figuring it all out yet. I have a motive of why on her part but I have to prove that Mamba didn’t do these injuries to her. So I know what I have to do and I don’t want to call him. What a mess. Shit,” replied Syd.

“Yeah, you have to call him. I think you are going to need his help with this or at least one of the guy’s assistance.” Kevin winked at Sydney while she packed up her briefcase.

“Don’t you dare start about Ice. I’m trying hard not to think about that man. He’s definitely not good for my career, that’s for sure.” Pacing back and forth, she started to formulate

how she would start the conversation with the person she had to call. “I might as well get this over with. When you hear yelling, come in and tell me that I have a call waiting for me, ok?”

“What? Hell no! I will not get in the middle of that, absolutely not.” Kevin put his hands up in the air. “You know I will do anything for you but I’m out. See you tomorrow.”

“Coward!” yelled Syd.

“With a capital C!”

Syd never saw Kevin move so fast to get away from her. She could have used his support right about now. Grabbing her cell phone like it was diseased, she sat down in her chair and scrolled through the numbers. Finding the one she was searching for, Syd kept her finger hovering over the call button for a few extra seconds. She knew she needed his help but didn’t want to deal with the bullshit that came with it.

Hitting the number she dreaded, Syd closed her eyes while waiting for him to pick up. She didn’t have long to wait. On the first ring, she heard the deep baritone voice answer.

“Baby Girl.”

Taking a deep breath, Syd just said one word.

“Thor.”

“Shit, is that anyway to greet your father? It’s been what, six months? And I get a fucking Thor.”

“Ok, hello Daddy. Is that what you want to hear?”

“Depending if you mean it or not. Thinking not but to what do I owe the honor of this phone call. I don’t think it’s because you miss me.”

Not answering right away, Syd felt this was a huge mistake on her part, but she started it, and now she had to see it through.

“I know you are still there as I can hear you breathing. Everything aside, are you ok?” For one second, she felt a fatherly vibe coming through the phone.

“Yes, I’m good. Work is good. But I need your help, or rather, I need Ice’s help.”

Feeling the mood shift through the phone, she could imagine her dad start to pace and run his hand through his hair. He always got so worked up where Syd was concerned. Just thinking that his little girl might be in danger always drove him to the breaking point from zero to sixty.

“Wait, let me get Ice over here.”

Hearing muted voices over the line, Syd heard a door slam in the background. She closed her eyes thinking about Ice. God, she had it bad for that man. Her father’s VP and his voice of reason. Black hair and green eyes, Syd felt an attraction to him when she first met him. She knew nothing could come of it as her father would kill him and disown her. She didn’t think Ice noticed her either, even though she would catch him just staring at her from time to time. Whatever. Hearing his voice come over the speaker made her cross her legs little tighter.

“Darlin’, how are you? It’s been a while,” said Ice.

Deciding to use her best lawyer’s voice, she needed to keep every other emotion out of the conversation.

“I know. I called the both of you as I need your help on a case I’m working on. Now Dad, don’t lose it until I finish, ok?”

“No promises Baby Girl.”

“Typical.” Taking a deep breath, Syd went through the case with both of the men. Surprised that her father didn’t interrupt her story, she dropped the bomb on them.

“So I’m defending Mamba, the Enforcer for the Serpents MC.”

“The fuck you are!” Thor slammed his fist on the table as other choice words came out of his mouth. Hearing Ice calming her dad in the background, she heard him take a deep breath.

“Daddy, are you done?”

“I’m going to kill Grayson! I told your mother I didn’t want you working for her brother, but she convinced me that since his firm was the best in Las Vegas, you should be with the best. Why the fuck are you handling this and not him?”

“He has the flu and I’m the only one that was available and to be honest, I’m the best he has. All I can tell you is that Mamba is innocent, I know that. I went with my hunch and it’s all coming together. The favor I need comes from Ice, but of course, out of respect, I came to you first, Daddy. I need Ice to do what he does best with all of his computers and hack into systems for me. I need any and all security videos from The Rook that he can track. I need to look into any bank accounts that Miranda Brooks has. She must have made some kind of payout to someone to frame my client. I don’t have much time to get this done. His court date is next week.”

“I’ll do it,” answered Ice.

“Are you really going to get our club mixed up with the Serpents Dec?”

Syd took it as a good sign when her dad called Ice by his given name. She was counting on Ice to break through to her

dad as she needed his assistance to prove that Mamba was innocent.

“Listen Zack, this could be a good move for us too. Think about it. I’ll help Syd get her client cleared of the charges and we forge somewhat of a truce with the Serpents. Syd wins her case, it’s a win for all of us,” remarked Ice.

“I don’t like my Baby Girl all mixed up with another MC, that’s all. What happens if he is found guilty? I’ll always be concerned about blow back from them.”

“I understand that, but I know Mamba. Well not really know him, but I’m acquainted with him. He’s an asshole but our kind of asshole. He’s solid with his MC and a Marine too, from what I hear,” said Ice.

“Listen Daddy, I know in my heart that Mamba is being set up. You and Ice are the only ones that can help me clear him. Can I count on you to help me?” Sydney held her breath to see what her father would want in return. Thor didn’t help anyone without something in return.

“Dinner every Sunday,” demanded Thor.

“Excuse me?” Syd rolled her eyes as she knew she was being brought back into the fold.

“Dinner every Sunday at the club. That’s what I want in return for having Ice assist you. Just think how happy that would make your Mama and me. Take it or leave it Baby Girl.”

Not giving it another thought, Syd answered her dad.

“I’ll take it.”

“Done. Now I’ll leave you to speak to Ice. Let him know exactly what you need and he’ll get it for you. And Syd?”

“Yes Daddy?”

“I’m very proud of you.”

Totally shocked at his appraisal of her Syd was left speechless. Hearing the door slam in the background, she knew that her dad left the room.

“Darlin’, are you there?”

“Umm yeah Dec. I’m here. What the hell was that?”

“I’m guessing that’s a father who is proud of who his daughter has become. Don’t be so hard on him Syd.”

“He has a shitty way of showing it at times. I knew this was going to cost me,” remarked Syd.

“But is that so bad? The family would love to see you and have you back in their lives. I know I would love to see you again.” Hearing Declan clear his throat, Syd thought to tease him a little.

“Have you missed me Dec? I mean, you never seemed to notice me when I was hanging around.”

“More than you know, Sweetness. The way that I miss you would cause me to lose my balls where your dad is concerned.”

Now Syd didn’t know what to say about this bit of information. Her attraction to Dec was there, but she didn’t realize he felt the same about her. Now was not the time to get involved, not while this case was going on. Making an adult decision that she hoped would not cost her a chance of happiness, she put the brakes on. Besides, she couldn’t break her own rule of staying away from guys in the MC, or could she? Her hormones were telling her otherwise.



“Dec, keeping your balls intact is of the utmost importance to me. How would we be able to make beautiful babies together?”

“Jesus Syd. I’m being serious here. You know how it works.”

“And I’m being serious too. I know exactly how it all works. I can’t think about anything except this case right now. So please stop saying these things to me.”

“Fair enough. I’m here for you Syd. What exactly do you need me to do? Can you give me at least two days to gather all intel?”

“Yes, that’s great,” remarked Syd. She went through everything that she needed Dec to do for her, praying that he wouldn’t get caught.

“Trust me, I did this in the service. I was the best at what I did. I won’t get caught, Sweetness.”

“I owe you Dec.”

“Yeah, you do, but don’t worry. I’ll be around to collect. See you at dinner.”

Hearing the phone disconnect, she dropped hers on her desk and put her head in her hands. Damn those men. Infuriating. Her father wasn’t as bad as she thought he would be, but now she was stuck with family dinners at the club. That wouldn’t be so bad, though, thought Syd. She missed her brother Dylan terribly and her mama. She even missed the other guys. They were her extended family. But Declan Brassard? She was going to steer clear of him. Screw him. Collect what? He never gave her an indication of any attraction and now he says these things to her on the phone. He hardly ever said two words to her when she visited her family.

And since it seemed like the attraction was always one sided on her part, she was going to put him on the back burner. She hadn't worked so hard as an attorney to screw things up for herself now by being associated with him. How would that look in her line of work to have a boyfriend in an MC? Her brain was telling her one thing but her ovaries were telling her another. Yep, he checked all the boxes in column A for her. Declan was exactly the type of man she would want to be with. But Syd was determined not to think of anything but her case right now. She would deal with Declan in a few days when he came back to her with information. First, she would have to tell Mamba that her father's club was going to help. That should go over like a lead balloon with Cobra. But maybe not if it meant keeping Mamba out of prison. She felt like she was in a Romeo and Juliet type of case without the romance. Well, the romance part being two rival MCs. Time to get focused on clearing Mamba's name. Putting up her bitch wall, Syd grabbed her bags and left for the evening.

# FIVE

IT WAS the day before the arraignment hearing and the stress of that alone was taking a toll on Syd. Not sleeping well while preparing her case, Syd was more than ready to argue mistaken identity to the prosecuting attorney Miles Brackston.

Her goal was to get these charges thrown out of court once Ice brought over all the evidence today.

While Miles was a bastard in the courtroom, Syd was ready for anything he could throw at her. They had a mutual respect for each other as they did their job for their respective clients and the state. At one point, Miles made a play for her outside of the courtroom arena but Syd turned him down. She couldn't see herself with anyone but the man who was her father's second in command. Knowing her father, that romance would never be allowed. Ice pretty much ruined any other guy's chances for her, so Syd just concentrated solidly on her work. Pushing these thoughts out of her mind, Syd had placed a call to Miles when she arrived at the office to inform him of the evidence supporting a dismissal. Making her wait was all a part of his game, one that she knew how to play as well.

"Good morning, Syd," smiled Kevin as he walked into the conference room. "I have Brackston on line one for you.

Mamba and his group will be here in a half hour. Ice and your Dad will be here shortly too. Should I send them in when they get here?"

Nodding yes, Syd took a deep breath and answered the line.

"Miles, it's been a while, how are the courts treating you?"

"Syd! Great to hear your voice. I'm looking forward to seeing you in court tomorrow. What's this about evidence that proves your client is an innocent party?"

"I see we are getting right to it. Ok, Miles, I have several pieces of evidence that prove my client had nothing to do with this assault charge, as well as being framed for it."

Hearing a chuckle in the background, Miles didn't believe her for an instant.

"Really Syd? You are talking about an Enforcer for the Serpents MC, not an altar boy here. You really are reaching Syd."

"Actually Miles, I'm not. And I'm sensing a bit of prejudice on your part too, correct? Jack is an upstanding citizen who just happens to be part of a brotherhood, a club of men that ride motorcycles, they are not criminals. When this evidence is submitted today, you and Judge Miller will have to dismiss the charges."

Looking up, Kevin brought her father and Ice into the room. Motioning to them to take the chairs around the table, she continued her conversation with Miles.

"No, not prejudiced, just going by their reputation in the Vegas area. What kind of evidence do you have?"

“I will get everything over to your office shortly. You’ll see that there is no cause to charge my client with this crime. Let’s just say it took a bit of investigative work on my part. The person that is blackmailing my client is the problem here. Jack is innocent.”

“Ok Syd, I’ll go over the evidence with my team here. I’ll see you tomorrow in court.”

Hearing the click on the other end of the line, Syd dropped her phone on her desk and went over to see her father and Ice. As her father stood up, he held his arms out to Syd. Without a second thought, she stepped right into his embrace. She needed his strength right now.

“Baby Girl, I missed you so much.”

“I missed you too.” Blinking away her tears, she looked over at Ice. She saw him wink at her, which made her roll her eyes at him.

“Were you able to get everything I needed?”

“Yes, did you have any doubts?” Ice took a defensive stance with his arms folded across his chest. Swallowing hard, Syd just shook her head.

“No, I didn’t.” Stepping away from her father, she motioned for them to sit down again. She was anxious to see the evidence before Mamba, Cobra and Python walked in. She was going to break the news of the Savage Order helping out with Mamba’s case when they arrived. Having them all in the same room together was making her more nervous than going to court.

“There’s one thing I have to mention to both of you. Mamba, Cobra and Python will be here in a few minutes. I

haven't told them about you helping Mamba's case yet. I hope that everyone can conduct themselves respectfully."

"Well, it won't be a family reunion, that's for sure," said Thor. Ice just shook his head and smiled. "Let's just get this evidence set and we'll be out of here." Watching Ice's fingers fly over the keyboard made Syd think of things that she had no business thinking about. She knew she had to rein in her feelings. Switching into lawyer mode, Syd concentrated on what Ice was talking about but not before he noticed the expression on her face. Where was her poker face when she needed it? Smirking at her, he pointed over to the screen.

"First of all, here is the video at The Rook. They have cameras inside and on all four sides on the outside. I know the owner, smart guy but stupid when it comes to protecting passwords into his computer. This video shows Mamba coming into the bar at 8pm. Glad there are time stamps on this video too. Makes proving his innocence much easier. Now in this screen, you can see Mamba is having a few shots at the bar and this one shows him playing pool at 8:25 pm. Looks like a few ladies gather around the table watching him and another guy play a game together."

Syd looks closely at the footage and points to the brunette.

"There, that's Miranda. Looks like she is trying to get Mamba's attention but he's pretty much ignoring her."

"I was wondering which one of the ladies was accusing Mamba. Anyway, he starts another game with someone else while the ladies are still hanging around. Everyone is drinking and having a good time. This is now at 9:30 pm."

They continue watching the video when they notice that Mamba walks away.

“This camera angle shows him going into the men’s room at 10:05 pm, and then he goes back to the bar for another shot. He starts a conversation with someone at the bar which takes the time to 11:30 pm. So he is there from 10:10 pm to 11:30 pm. You can see he is throwing money on the bar as he gets ready to leave. Now, when I zip back to where the girls are, Miranda goes to the ladies’ room at 10:30 pm and never makes it back to the bar. I looked at the cameras on the outside and came up with this.”

Syd looks to where Ice is pointing and almost gets sick while watching Miranda getting punched in the face until she falls to the ground. Then her assailant kicks her a few times in her side. The man is built like Mamba but not as tall as him.

“As you can see, this isn’t Mamba. The only thing he is guilty of is drinking and driving that night. While she was being assaulted, he was in the bar area having a conversation. He has an alibi.”

“I didn’t remember much from that night,” said Mamba as he walked into the room. Cobra and Python were right behind him as Thor and Ice stood up from their chairs.

“What the hell are you doing here Thor?” asked Cobra.

“Nice to see you too, Cobra,” answered Thor.

Syd went to stand between all five men. She refused to have any problems in her office and told them so.

“Sit down, all of you, now, and I’ll explain. The main thing is I have the evidence needed to have this case dropped.” Nodding their heads, the men all took their seats and waited for Syd to explain. Kevin came into the room for moral support to deal with all the testosterone facing her.

“Ok, I knew something was very wrong with this case from the beginning. The only people I knew that could help crack this case were Ice and my father.”

You could hear a pin drop with that first line. Syd thought she might as well rip the bandage off. By Cobra and Python’s reaction, Syd guessed that Mamba didn’t say anything to them about this.

“You’re kidding,” whispered Python.

“I didn’t tell them yet,” said Mamba.

“She’s my Baby Girl,” answered Thor. “I wasn’t too happy that she was defending your enforcer but she is damn good at what she does. When she came to us for help, Ice here knew that he had to help her. Syd was so sure that Mamba was innocent that we knew we had to help a brother, though from another club.”

Cobra just looked at Thor.

“What do you want?”

Thor cocked his head to the side and looked Cobra dead in his eyes.

“Mutual respect. You don’t fuck with my guys; we don’t fuck with your guys. And who knows, maybe we’ll need your help someday.”

Cobra looked over at Python and saw a slight affirmative nod from him.

“What do you have, Syd, to prove Mamba’s innocence?”

Ice replayed and explained everything that he already showed Syd and Kevin.



“This is unbelievable,” said Cobra. “Do you know who the man is?”

“Actually, I do. I was able to get a solid close up on his face when his bandana slipped down. The asshole’s name is Clarence Barber; career criminal. Seems as though they know each other from the past.” Ice pulled up a close up of the actual criminal who caused Miranda’s injuries.

“How do you know that?” asked Mamba.

“One really needs to be careful about what they post on Facebook. They were a thing at one time about eight months ago. My guess is that she pinned this beating on Mamba as he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. She might have seen this as revenge for almost killing her brother last year in a fight. Perfect way to get back at Mamba and not having Clarence come back and finish the job on her. If Mamba wasn’t at the bar, she would have probably picked some other unsuspecting asshole, no offense Mamba.”

“None taken, dickhead.”

“Boys, play nice,” admonished Syd.

“Anyway, I’m guessing that since her ex is really bad news, she didn’t want to implicate him. I feel sorry for Miranda but this video evidence shows otherwise. He will have to answer to this crime if she decides to press charges against him.”

“I just want to make sure there wasn’t anything else, like bank account transfers to this Clarence to blackmail Mamba.” Syd wanted to make sure there wasn’t anything else to ruin her case.

“No, nothing like that. Just this video tape from The Rook that clearly shows your innocence Mamba.”

Syd squealed with happiness and hugged Ice from behind.

“Thank you!” Kissing his cheek, she raised her eyes to her father who was clearly not missing the exchange between them. Pulling herself away from Ice, she addressed all the men in the room while slipping back into lawyer mode.

“I will get this video evidence over to Miles Brackston now. He’s already aware that this is coming so he can review it with his team. Mamba, we have to be in court at nine o’clock tomorrow morning. I suggest a good night’s sleep for all. We have a big day tomorrow.”

Cobra came over to Syd and grabbed hold of her hands.

“You are an amazing attorney and an even better woman. Thank you for helping Mamba.” Giving Syd a hug, he turned to Thor. “Our MC owes the Savage Order a debt of gratitude.” Extending his hand out to Thor, Thor grabbed his hand in a firm handshake.

“This is not our normal way of getting things done but it seems like my Baby Girl helped to bridge some of that gap.”

Mamba shook Ice’s hand as Thor and Python also exchanged a handshake. Syd and Kevin just stood to the side smiling.

“It’s a good day, Syd. No blood shed, just a good old bromance between clubs.”

“I wouldn’t say that too loud if I were you, Kevin. We may never find your body,” whispered Syd.

# SIX

THE COURTROOM WAS PACKED to capacity. Syd knew that not one of the Serpents MC would stay home, as well as the Savage Order. Though they sat on different sides like at a wedding, they were all there to support one of their own, Jack “Mamba” Hammond.

Syd sent the video tape evidence over to Miles Brackston who informed her that he would make his statement to the court. While Syd knew this video was admissible and in favor of her client’s innocence, the waiting was nerve-wracking.

She also had an ace in the hole if everything went sideways. Looking at the room, she zeroed in on her parents and brother. Thor winked at her as her mom blew her a kiss.

“All rise. The Honorable Judge Miller is presiding.” Syd’s heartbeat picked up a few notches as she thought ‘it’s game on’. Looking at Mamba, he whispered “You got this.” Checking out Mamba’s courtroom attire, Syd gave him an approving look. “Yes, we do.”

“Good morning. It’s a full house today,” remarked Judge Miller. Looking down at Syd and Miles, he nodded at both of them.

“Well, Counselors. I understand that there is evidence to prove the innocence of Jack Hammond. Assault case. Let’s

have it Ms. Graves.”

“Thank you, your Honor. I have video evidence to show that my client, Mr. Hammond, was a mistaken identity case for the attack that Miranda Brooks sustained. Everything was sent over to Mr. Brackston’s office last night for review.”

“And how did you obtain this video evidence Ms. Graves?”

“Very carefully your Honor,” answered Syd.

“Watch it, Ms. Graves. I know how you and Mr. Brackston are in the courtroom and how you love to entertain us. This is a serious situation and I want to make sure all the ducks are in order; do you understand me?”

“Yes, your Honor.”

“So since I’m guessing that you used persuasion to obtain the video, let’s just go to the evidence at hand. Mr. Brackston, how do you respond to this video tape evidence?”

“Very convincing your Honor.”

“Your Honor?” Syd stepped around her desk. “If it pleases the court, I would love to play the video tape so my client can be cleared of all charges. You will note that there are time stamps on each of the frames that clearly show that Mr. Hammond was not the person who caused these injuries and is being wrongly accused.”

“Let’s see this video tape that you obtained so questionably,” answered Judge Miller. Walking over to her laptop, Syd hit the play button and watched with the interested court room. She made sure to explain the time stamps on each frame compared to where Mamba was when Miranda was being assaulted. She wanted to drive that point home so there would be no questions as to his whereabouts. Once it was

completed, she shut it off and went back to her table. Squeezing Mamba's hand, she held her breath at Judge Miller's and Miles Brackston's verdicts.

“Well, ok then, this video clearly shows time and place and an alibi for Mr. Hammond. But what I don't understand is why he was the person Ms. Brooks blamed for this assault.”

Syd stood before the court once again.

“Your Honor, if I may. I would like to call Ms. Miranda Brooks to the stand.”

“Objection your Honor. I was not aware of the victim being called to the stand,” exclaimed Miles.

“Your Honor, I want to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Mr. Hammond is totally innocent of this crime and wrongfully accused.”

Looking at both counselors, the judge nodded in agreement.

“I'll allow it as I want to know her reasoning as well.”

From the back of the courtroom, Miranda Brooks stood up and slowly walked to the stand. There were several gasps in the courtroom as they noticed the bruises on Miranda's face. No amount of makeup could cover the damage that was inflicted upon her. She was wringing her hands in nervous anticipation of what was going to happen. Moving past Syd, the bailiff helped her into the stand.

“Please raise your right hand: Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?”

Looking like the battered and scared woman that she was, Miranda said “I do.”

Syd walked over to where Miranda was sitting.

“Good morning Ms. Brooks. How are you today?”

“A little nervous actually.”

“That’s ok. Me too.” Hearing scattered laughter in the court, Syd wanted to do her best to calm Miranda down.

“Now, the night in question, were you at The Rook?”

“Yes, I was.”

“Do you go there often?”

“I like to go there once in a while with my friends.”

“And were your friends with you that night?”

“Yes, we were having a girl’s night out.”

“Can you take a look at Mr. Hammond? Do you know him?”

“I saw him at the bar.”

“Do you know him from anywhere else?”

Miranda looked over at Mamba. Nodding her head, she looked back over to Syd.

“He is a fighter here in Vegas.”

“Have you seen him fight?”

“Yes in a match with my brother last year.”

“And how did that fight end?”

“My brother sustained a serious head injury.”

“How did that make you feel?”

Miranda took a deep breath. “Angry I suppose.”

“Did you approach Mr. Hammond at The Rook?”

“Yes I did.”

“Did he remember you from that night at the fight?”

“No, he didn’t.”

“How did that make you feel?”

Miles called out from the bench.

“Objection your Honor. I don’t see what her feelings for Mr. Hammond have to do with this case.”

“Sustained. I want to see where this is going, Ms. Graves.”

“I’m trying to establish motive for wrongfully blaming my client your Honor.”

“Make this fast Ms. Graves.”

“Yes, your Honor. Now Ms. Brooks on the night in question, you stated you approached Mr. Hammond. What was the reason?”

“Curiosity. I wanted to see if he might have remembered me from that fight.”

Walking closer to Miranda, Syd knew that she had to get Miranda to admit who beat her.

“Now, I’m sorry to have to make you relive last week’s attack. The video shows you going into the ladies’ room but never making it back to the bar. The video shows Mr. Hammond at the bar during this time so it’s difficult to be in two places at one time. Who was the man that attacked you at the bar that night?”

Miranda’s eyes welled up with tears as she started shaking her head.

“Please don’t make me say,” whispered Miranda.

“Ms. Brooks, answer the question,” said Judge Miller.

Looking at Miranda, Syd recognized a woman who was abused and scared for her life.

“Miranda, are you afraid to mention his name for retaliation from him?”

“Yes, I am,” replied Miranda as the tears rolled down her face. Handing her a tissue, Syd decided that this woman needed serious therapy to get her through this abuse. She decided to take another tactic to prove Mamba’s innocence.

“Ok, Ms. Brooks. Is the man who assaulted you in this courtroom?”

“No,” cried Miranda. “He’s not.”

“So why did you place the blame on my client?”

“To get back at him for hurting my brother. Since he was at the bar, I put the blame on him. I can’t say who did this to me for fear of my life.”

“No other questions your Honor.”

Turning away from Syd, she looked over at Miles who was clearly moved by Miranda’s testimony. He nodded his head at Syd in respect. She glanced at Ice and he winked at her. She felt her face flood with redness. Damn that man, to do that to her right in the middle of an important case.

“Mr. Brackston, do you have any questions for the witness?”

“No sir, your Honor, but I would like to request a meeting with Ms. Brooks after we are adjourned.”

“I think that is a good idea Counselor. Ms. Brooks, you may step down.”



The bailiff came over to help Miranda off the stand as she was hysterically crying. Walking past Mamba, she whispered “I’m sorry” to him. He just nodded his head, clearly upset like everyone else in the courtroom after hearing her testimony.

“Mr. Hammond, please stand.”

Mamba and Syd stood side by side as Miles stood across the aisle from them.

“Counselor, what say you?”

“In regards to the video evidence and the testimony of Ms. Miranda Brooks, the state of Nevada releases all charges on Mr. Jack Hammond.”

With one big resounding yes throughout the courtroom, Syd and Mamba hugged each other. Hearing the gavel hit, Sydney breathed a sigh of relief and had gratitude for winning this case.

“Thank you, Syd. You are fucking amazing! I don’t know how to even begin to thank you.”

“You could have gone to jail for a long time Jack. This is why I do what I do.”

Seeing Cobra and Python reaching over the rail to hug Mamba, Syd went across the aisle to shake Miles’ hand.

“Good one Syd. I didn’t see that one coming. If you ever want a job in the prosecutor’s office, I’ll get you in.”

“That’s ok Miles. I kind of like the side I’m on. I’ll see you on the next case.”

Her mom and dad came up to the railing. With tears in her eyes, her mom broke down.

“That poor girl. She needs help, Syd.”

“I know Mama. Miles is going to get justice for her and therapy too. She will be in good hands. That scumbag better not reach out to Uncle Grayson’s office to defend him. I won’t have anything to do with that guy.”

Feeling her dad kiss the top of her head, he nodded his approval at her.

“See you Sunday.”

# SEVEN

AS SUNDAY ROLLED AROUND, so did her family's dinner, one that Syd hadn't attended in six months. It wasn't just going to be a family celebration, but a whole MC celebration with an invitation extended to the Serpents MC. The MC's planned on celebrating Mamba's freedom and tentative agreement of peace between them. Deciding to take her bike, Syd loved the feeling of being on the open road. She was born and bred into the MC life, biker royalty so to speak. Even though she tried to keep it from her life, it was in her blood.

Always liking to make an entrance, Syd was what she considered fashionably late. Roaring down the road to the clubhouse, the prospects waved her through the gate. Finding a spot in the shade, Syd parked her bike and saw that the parking lot was already packed with both of the MC's. Taking off her helmet, her red, wavy hair cascaded down her back. She noticed a few of the Serpents MC standing around with the Savage Order as all eyes were on her. Raising their beer bottles in her direction, she waved at the guys while climbing up the stairs to club house. Music was full force and so was the BBQ from the delicious smells that surrounded the place.

"There she is, my savior!" yelled Mamba. Picking Syd up, he twirled her around and around.

“Enough Mamba, please put me down. You’re going to make me sick,” laughed Syd.

“Ok. Listen, that prosecuting attorney asked me if I wanted to press charges on Miranda. I told him what for? She has suffered enough, and she really needs to go after the fuckhead that did this to her.”

“I agree with you but sometimes these women are scared of what might happen to them. I don’t know if she will ever go against him. I only hope that she gets the therapy that she so obviously needs to move on with her life.”

“Well, thank you again, Syd. If you ever need anything, you reach out to me and the guys, ok?”

Touching his face, Syd winked at him.

“Ok Mamba. Thank you.” Kissing her on the cheek, Mamba took off to meet up with his fellow Serpents. Syd smiled as he walked away.

“I would kind of hope that your smile would be for me,” whispered Ice.

“Oh really? Is that what you want to collect from me as payment for the video? Just a smile?”

“I want a kiss.” Declan stared right into Syd’s eyes with his demand.

“Are you crazy? Right here? Do you have a death wish?”

“You are worth the risk Syd.” Seeing Thor motion to Ice, he kissed her on the cheek and went over to stand by Thor. Of course, Thor didn’t miss the attraction between his daughter and VP and just stared at him while he stood next to him.

“What the fuck was that?”

“What do you think it was?” Ice stared right back at Thor. He refused to back down from his President and friend and he refused to stay away from Syd any longer. Time to stake his claim even if Thor beat the shit out of him. Syd was worth it.

Before Thor could even reply, Cobra stood up next to Thor with Python by his side.

“A toast please: To Syd for saving our own. To Mamba: don’t fuck up again,

To Savage Order: to new beginnings.”

Hearing the yelling of the guys, Syd caught the burning need coming from Ice’s eyes as he met hers. Syd’s heart skipped a few beats.

“To new beginnings, holy shit,” whispered Syd.

**EIGHT**

## ***THREE YEARS BEFORE THE CLUBHOUSE PARTY***

STANDING in front of The Savage Order's Clubhouse, I go over and over in my mind exactly what I'm going to say to Thor, otherwise known as dear old Dad. It's time I follow through on my decision to change my major in college and go to Law School. It's really what I wanted to do instead of going into Journalism, which is what I have been studying. It's my life and not his. He has tried, sometimes successfully, to control my life.

I can already hear his same statement in my head; "I'm doing this to protect you Sydney. Don't you realize that you are a target because of me and the club?"

How many times have I heard him repeat this in every argument we have? But now, I have to drop the bomb on him that I'm changing up my major and packing it all in for Law School. I just feel the need, the calling to help the people that need assistance when they are in a legal jam. And trust me, being the daughter of an MC President, I can argue my way out of everything, or at least have the balls to attempt that feat.

Taking a deep breath, I rub my hands nervously down my pants, toss my hair back and push open the clubhouse door. Standing just inside the main pool and bar room, I scan the area to see which club members are hanging out today. They will be unfortunate witnesses when the proverbial shit hits the fan, the walls and the ceiling with all of the yelling that I'm anticipating happening within ten minutes or so.

OK, I don't know all of the guys that are hanging out as I really don't come by the club that much. As much as I really

love my Dad, I try to keep this part of my life on the quiet side and under wraps. I figure no one needs to know my family business. Either they would run for the hills if they knew, or my girlfriends would beg to be invited to a club party to hook up with one of the guys. That's not what I need in my life. I love my girlfriends but they can become a bit needy when it comes to guys. And with these guys, forget it. One and done is the motto with some of them. It's not fair to the girls so I'd rather keep things to myself.

Seeing Mack wave to me from the bar, I head on over there to get a shot before I deal with my father. Mack was an original when my Dad started this chapter and an "adopted Uncle" to me. They go way back in the Marine's together. He is one tough son of a bitch but with a heart of gold. Just don't fuck with him and you'll live to see another day. Pulling out the stool, I lean over to give Mack a kiss on the cheek. Leave it up to him to keep wearing the old standby cologne "Old Spice." I always remembered that scent growing up when I came by the clubhouse with my mom.

"Hey Baby Girl, what brings you down here to the club?" Seeing me scrunch up my face just made him chuckle and wipe down the bar. "Do I have to call 911 when you head into the lion's den? Should I keep a couple of the guys within arm's reach if shit starts to fly?"

"Maybe." Sitting my ass on the stool, I rest my chin between my hands. "Why the hell does he have to make things in life so difficult for me? Can't I just have a normal father/daughter relationship with him?" Mack doesn't answer but just wipes down a glass before putting it in front of me.

"Maker's Mark?" Mack holds the bottle in the air before I motion yes to the glass in front of me.



“Not too much, I still need my wits about me.”

As Mack pours a shot of the bourbon into the glass, he starts to clear his throat. That’s a sign some pearls of wisdom will be coming my way.

“Listen Baby Girl. I have known you since the day you were born. Your brother was first born and right way, your Daddy was set on grooming him to take over the MC when it’s time. Oh, but when you came along, oh my God, the world came to a standstill with you. You know the saying “the apple of one’s eye”? Well, your Daddy couldn’t believe that you were a part of him. He would say to me “Mack, she’s the best part of me, the one thing the good Lord blessed me with.” I always agreed with him on that a point.” Grabbing a beer, he tossed the cap into the garbage and leaned in closer to me. “What you need to remember is that deep down inside your father is a rock solid man that would do anything for you, your brother, your Mama and this club, including laying his life down for any of us. He’s one tough mother fucker, born that way and made that way thanks to good ole Uncle Sam. He wants the very best for you, never doubt that when you go inside to tell him the news that you want to tell him. There is going to be yelling, there is going to be tears but in the long run, you are his Baby Girl. There is nothing he wouldn’t do for you. Never forget that.”

I couldn’t stop my eyes from welling up as Mack shared his feelings with me. Raising my glass to his beer bottle, we clinked them together which caused some of the other members to look over our way.

“No shit, there’s my sister! What’s up Syd? What the hell brings you down here to see us?”

Walking over to the bar was my handsome brother Dylan. Mack is right, Dad is grooming him to be President one day. Watching him with his swagger type of walk definitely reminds me of our Dad but thirty years younger. Pulling me up out of the chair, Dylan picks me up in a big bear hug, almost cutting off my air supply.

“Nice to see you too, Dylan, but can you stop hugging me so tight? I don’t think you know how strong you are now.”

Dropping my ass back in the chair, he grabs my glass to smell it. Raising his eyebrows, he passes it back to me.

“I’ll take one guess why the liquid courage. Name starts with a “T” and ends with a roar!” Banging his hand on the bar, I just roll my eyes at him.

“You should take your act on the road. That was really original Dylan.”

“Hell, I thought so. Don’t you think so Mack?”

“I wouldn’t be so quick to quit your day job boy,” laughed Mack.

Tossing a lime at Mack, Dylan turned his attention back to me.

“Seriously, what’s up with you coming down here? You hardly grace us with your presence anymore.” Leaning up against the bar, he shrugs his shoulder while waiting for my answer.

“Well, I guess my secret is out. You know that I attend college, right? The place where I have to study my ass off to get good grades.” As Dylan rolled his eyes, I continued. “I’m here to see Dad about something personal, is that alright with you? Is he in a good mood?”

Mack and Dylan both started laughing.

“Oh yeah, right, does a bear shit in the woods? That man was born in a bad mood,” laughs Mack. “Listen Baby Girl, pick your battles. That’s all I’m going to say, pick your battles.”

This is going to be worse than I’m thinking it is. Tossing back the Maker’s, I slam the glass on the bar, tuning out Mack and Dylan since they are trying to one-up each other with old sayings to describe our father. My stomach was already in knots without listening to those two guys. I decide to use this time to glance around the great room to see what’s going on while waiting for the chance to see Dad.

Spotting a small crowd gathered around a pool table, I saw bets being placed. This never ended well with these members. One was always called a cheater and then fists would fly. I noticed the joker of the club, Road Captain “Lightning,” chalking up a pool stick. He got his road name from the Marine’s when he was Sharp Shooter. No one could move as fast as he on the draw. Actually, his name should have been Jokester or something along those lines. That would have fit him better but what do I know.

“City” was also a member that was throwing money on the pool table. He got his road name from, well, you guessed it, he was a New York City boy, born and raised. He was also an accountant in what he calls “his former life” so he’s the perfect Treasurer for the club.

“Taser” was also manning the pool table. Unfortunately, he got his road name from too many run-ins with the law and meeting his match with the Taser gun. Being at least two hundred and fifty pounds of muscles and tattoos, it took a

good dosage to bring him to his knees. He is the Sergeant of Arms for the club, which is the perfect job for him.

The one thing I notice with all of the guys in the club is that they are hot. Plain and simple, like sexy hot! There have been a few that I would have loved to get to know more personally but the guys never seem to be interested in me. I would bet money that has something to do with my Dad and club business. I have no idea what their real stories are other than some served or were businessmen. Dad must have a prerequisite for what the Savage Order member requirement is, but I'll never know. It's not my business; it's club business.

Hearing whoops and yelling, I spot a man that I have never seen before walk through the front door. All of the guys drop the pool sticks to go over to see this stranger. What a gorgeous man! He's definitely wearing a cut with the Savage Order patch on the back. On the front of his cut, I can make out the words "Ice" and "Vice-President." Holy shit, this is my Dad's right-hand man that he mentioned in passing. I wonder why you didn't mention him to me Dad!

Not taking my eyes off of him, he walked with the other guys back to the pool table. I felt my heart race while looking at him as I have never, ever had a reaction to a man like this before. Tall, maybe close to 6'2, strongly built, defined muscles with tattoos on his forearms, which I'm sure are all over that chest of his underneath the tight Henley he's wearing. Not an ounce of fat on that body either. Definitely sex on a stick. Thick dark hair a tad on the longer side, which I love, but his eyes? Does he have green or hazel eyes? I'm too far away to see. A nice scruff on his face, his hair tousled, like he just had my hands running through it as he had his face down my...

“Hey Sis, get your mind out of the gutter. I can see you checking Ice out and it’s not happening for you. You know Dad, it will never happen.”

Trying to act all cool, I shrugged my shoulder like he didn’t affect me at all.

“I was just wondering who that man is. I haven’t seen him around, that’s all.”

Pushing against my shoulder, Dylan made a sound with his lips like he didn’t believe a word that I said.

“Yeah, good try Syd. I could see the porno flick you had racing through that brain of yours.” Taking a chug of his beer, he motioned the bottle neck towards me. “You never come around so you wouldn’t have met Ice. He served under Dad in the Marine’s. And just to answer the questions you have about him, his name is Declan Brassard, thirty-two, single and certainly not ready to get into trouble with the Princess of the Savage Order or the President!”

Now that comment got my red-headed, fiery temper going full throttle.

“Screw you Dylan! I’m so sick of you and Dad running my life. Do you hear me?” I guess I yelled the last part loudly because the whole club stopped talking and turned to look at me. Feeling my face turn as red as my hair, I glanced around the room and came eye to eye with Declan “Ice” Brassard. Oh dear lord, I can’t stop my hormones from flying looking at that man. When someone says the world came to a halt, well, it did when we made eye contact with his panty melting stare. Until a booming voice shook the walls and broke into my fantasy.

“Baby Girl, is there a problem regarding me and your brother?”

I swear, all Dad needed was the big hammer that Thor used. Dad was a scary looking guy, handsome as hell, but scary nonetheless. Military short, dark blonde hair, stormy blue eyes and muscles that put “The Rock” to shame. Just his stance alone would put anyone on edge. And sadly, the Maker’s Mark didn’t give me the liquid courage I needed. Also, being embarrassed in front of the club, including the new “hotness”, was not my choice for how this discussion was going to go with dear old Dad.

“No, no problem but do you have a minute? I want to discuss something with you.” Hearing my brother snicker, I kicked him in the shin to shut him up but not before hearing him curse under his breath. Smirking at him sweetly, I gave him a little wave in his face.

“Thanks Mack for the drink.”

“Remember what I said Baby Girl.” Winking at me, I heard him start to reprimand my brother for annoying the hell out of me. At least someone in the club was in my corner.

Standing up, I started to dread this conversation but knew it was one that had to happen. Where was mom when I needed her? She was always good to tame this beast when he flew off the handle.

“Come on Baby Girl, let’s talk.” Putting his arm around me, he escorted me towards his office but not before acknowledging his VP. “Ice, welcome back. Give me a bit with my daughter and then we’ll catch up.”

“Sure thing Thor. I’ll be right here.”

Oh my God, that voice. I couldn’t help myself from looking at him again and when I said looking at him, well,

let's just say he received my message loud and clear. And judging by his reaction, I bet he liked what he saw in me too.

“Anytime you are ready, Baby Girl.”

I couldn't control the blush that stained my cheeks as Dad caught me checking out his VP. I felt it creeping up as I lowered my eyes from Declan's. Looking up at my Dad, I saw his eyes narrow and that was not a good sign. Walking past him into the office, I nervously clasped my hands together.

“Sit.” When I heard the door shut, I tensed right up. As Dad sat down at the desk, he leaned back with his hands folded on his chest.

“So what did you want to speak to me about?”

Clearing my throat, I decided to take the full plunge and get it over with. I knew that I couldn't use any sweet looks or words with Thor. That kind of feminine charm didn't work on him. I just had to hit him with it full on.

“OK, I wanted to talk to you about my college education and what I want to do now.”

Seeing Dad raise his eyebrows into his hairline, I knew this was his tactic to throw me off a bit. It wasn't going to work. Time to rip the bandage off.

“I don't want to continue with journalism. I want to go to Law School. I applied. With my good grades, I got accepted. So I start in September.”

I knew my side of the conversation came off nervous and stilted. I also knew when to shut my mouth and just let the words roll around in that brain of his.

“No.” Simple answer, no emotion from him yet. Just “no.”

“What do you mean no?”

Thor just shrugged his shoulders. “Just what I said, no.”

“Not acceptable and not the answer I want to hear Dad.”

Thor leaned forward in his chair and braced his hands on his desk. Now this wasn't Dad, this was the President of the Savage Order I was dealing with.

“OK, how about this isn't going to happen. I don't want my daughter getting mixed up with God knows what kind of criminals so when you can't get them out of the trouble, then what? Blowback comes back to you from a family member or maybe a gang member! I don't want you beaten, threatened or even killed by someone. So no, it's a big fucking no! Do you understand me?”

By then, Thor's voice was at volume ten so I'm sure the whole club heard what was going on, especially when he pounded his desk. Jesus, I didn't want him to have a stroke but now he just pissed me the hell off!

“You know what, I can't believe you Dad! This is my life, my chance to do something that I want to do. You have tried, no I take that back, you have controlled my life every step of the way! I'm sick and tired of being under your control, and now your clone of a son is following in your footsteps, thinking his baby sister needs his fucking protection. Well, guess again Dad. I can control my own life, and to hell with you and Dylan, too!”

Pushing the chair away when he stood up, it knocked over with a loud thud as it slammed into the wall. Great, now the whole club thinks we are killing each other.

“Don't you dare speak to me like that, Baby Girl! I will not be disrespected in my club. You are still my daughter, that



alone puts a target on your head. I will not have you in the line of fire while defending or prosecuting some low life!”

“Not all of the people that need an attorney are low life’s, Dad! What if you need an attorney or Mack or any of the other guys? Are you saying they are, what was the term you used, oh yeah, low life’s? It’s my calling, it’s what I want to do. Don’t you understand that?”

“I don’t want you to become a lawyer!” Towering over me, I hated that I had to look up at him. I kind of figured he was using his size to his advantage but I needed to stand my ground.

“And I don’t care what you say about this. I came here to discuss my chosen career, not to be bullied by my own father. I’m sorry that I thought I could have a civil discussion with you. I never thought you would be so closeminded to what I want to do with my life!” I was on the verge of tears but refused to show any weakness.

Hearing a soft knock at the door, I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw my Mama walk inside. Giving me a small smile, she closed the door and took my hand in hers.

“Zach, is everything okay with the both of you? Mack reached out and said that I needed to come over right away.”

I felt her calmness radiate throughout the room. Blinking back my tears, I looked over at the mirrored image of myself twenty-five years from now. If I have to explain my Mama, she has a quiet strength. She knows what makes my Dad tick and knows how to get him to see reason amid the chaos. And right now, this room was full of chaos. Thank God, no destruction. I really thought things would have been flying around the room. Dad was definitely in the Category 5 range right about now.

“Shit, leave it to Mack. He called you? I’m guessing everyone heard us.” Running his hand over his face, looked over at Mama.

“Yes, they were just concerned, that’s all love.”

Dad reached down to pick up his chair and sat down with what seemed like the weight of the world on his shoulders.

“Come here Sarah.” Patting his lap, my Mama went over to him and did what he asked of her. Hugging her tight, I waited for the beast in him to calm down. Taking my own seat, I knew when to shut up and let nature take its course.

Mama placed her hand gently on his face.

“Now, tell me what Sydney has done that upset you so very much?”

Dad looked over at me and then to his wife.

“She wants to go to Law School. Already applied and got accepted.”

Mama nodded once and turned to me.

“Is this what you really want to do?”

“It’s what I really want to do Mama. I understand Dad’s point of being concerned that I’ll place myself in danger, but I feel he is overreacting. I just want to do something good in my life and feel this is the right path for me.”

Nodding at me, she spoke with a quiet calm.

“You have always made good choices Sydney. Though I understand your father’s point of view, we can’t stop you from following your dream, right Zack?” As my Dad looked up at the ceiling, I knew Mama was getting the situation under control. Thank God for this strong lady. “And, don’t forget

Zack, my brother has a successful firm right here in Vegas. When Sydney passes the bar, I'm sure he will take her under his wing."

Seeing my Dad look me straight in my eyes, the President was back and all business.

"How are you paying for this education?"

"I have a full ride actually." I felt a deep pride being able to announce that bit of information. But then his next words cut me to the chase.

"Good, because my intention is not to pay for it. I can't back something I'm against."

"Zack, don't say this to our daughter!"

Standing up, I have had enough of his bullshit for the rest of my life. As much as I appreciated Mama sticking up for me, I was so done.

"Good, because if you ever need a lawyer, you are shit out of luck!"

It felt so good to see the shocked look on his face. And even better when I slammed the door behind me.

# NINE

WHO THE HELL was that babe? Declan just stared at the empty space where the redheaded goddess had been standing with Thor. She definitely takes after her mom, Sarah. My kind of woman: An angel's face and a body he could spend hours worshipping. That red hair! To think of it brushing his chest when she put her lips on him or when he wrapped it tight around his hand while she was... Seeing a hand wave in his face, Declan blinked a few times before he got his head on straight.

“Yep, he got a damn good look at Sydney,” laughed Lightning. “She does have that effect when you first meet her. Kind of like Helen of Troy, though. But I’ll give you two words: Off limits.”

I took offense with what Lightning just said.

“What the fuck do you mean?”

“OK, playboy here doesn’t understand so I’ll spell it out for you. You really can’t be all that dumb as our VP.” Taser stepped up to explain how it was in regards to Sydney. “No touchy, no feely, or you will come back from living hell minus one body part when Thor gets through with you.” Taser laid it all out on the table for Ice.

Laughing at all of the guys, they just stared back at me with stern looks on their faces.

“Come on guys, it’s not like she’s jailbait or anything like that.”

“No, but she’s Thor’s Baby Girl, and in his eyes, we aren’t worthy of even breathing the same air as her,” answered City as he went over to rack up the balls. “Come on guys, let’s play. Ice will learn soon enough if he’s not careful. His balls could be rolling on this table with these.”

Ice took what the guys said in stride but when did he ever listen to the voice of reason. Well, as a Marine he did, but this woman was something else. Needing to have a drink, he met Mack at the bar and ordered a beer.

“Nice to see you back Ice.”

“Thanks Mack. Glad to be back. And hey, thanks for the beer.”

Just as Ice took a big swig of his beer, they heard a huge crash and then Thor’s voice that could bring the roof down.

“Oh shit, I was afraid of this.” Reaching into his pocket, Mack took out his cell and punched in a few numbers. Hearing a woman’s voice come over the speaker, I knew that Mack was calling in the big guns.

“Mack, what’s wrong? You only call me on this line if there is something wrong?” Ice gathered that Mack called Thor’s ole lady, Sarah. He quickly explained what was going on and then hung up. Sarah was the only person that got Thor to calm down. A quiet strength, she made a great ole lady, knowing when to lead the other ladies and her man. This seemed like the right call, especially when Ice heard Sydney yelling back at her father.

“You called Sarah?”

“Yeah, this seems to be getting out of hand quickly. Before they kill each other, let’s see what Sarah can do.”

The clubhouse door opened and in walked the first lady of the clubhouse. Now, Ice saw firsthand where Sydney got her beauty from. Seeing Sarah walk past the bar, she nodded at the both of us as she continued towards Thor’s office. Hearing her knock softly, we saw her close the door behind her.

“Now let’s hope everyone calms down. Hey, do you boys want a round?” Seeing the other guys nod, Mack got all of the beers lined up. “This show is over as far as I’m concerned.”

“Let’s drink to Sarah,” remarked Lightning. “To the Lady and the Beast!”

“Unless you want your balls in a sling, I would keep that kind of talk down to a minimum or not at all funny man,” warned Mack.

“Yes sir,” replied Lightning as he held onto to balls.

While those guys continued to talk, I let my mind wander to what was going on in that office. What the hell did Sydney do to drive Thor insane? He always was a control freak when it came to our platoon but he was off the rails with his daughter. And the way she looked at me, she might as well have hung up a sign that said “Open for Business.” I’m not stupid when it comes to knowing when a lady is interested. Shit, she was beyond interested. Those blue eyes just killed me as they seemed to look right into my soul. Syd laid the gauntlet down and I planned to pick that right up and run to her. Could I handle any fallout from Thor? Well, I would probably be in a hospital bed for a few days, but holy shit, she is so worth the beating.

Hearing the office door slam open, Sydney came storming out of the room. She headed right for the front door and no one made a move to stop her. We all kind of stood there with our mouths open. All I saw was tears in her beautiful baby blues and long legs that moved quickly across the floor with wavy red hair swaying in time with her hips.

Sarah came out next, moving quickly after her daughter while Thor just watched from his office door.

“Ice, come on in.” Walking back inside his office, I looked over at Mack.

“Better be smart man,” warned Mack. “I saw the look on your face when you looked at Sydney. Not the path you want to travel on, son.”

“Hand me another beer Mack. I’ll take it to Thor.”

Nodding at me, Mack grabbed a beer and handed it to me.

“Good luck Ice.”

Not knowing if he was wishing me good luck for this meeting or in any decisions I made about Sydney, I figured I would steer clear of any conversation in regards to her and let Thor take the lead.

Knocking on the door, Thor motioned me to sit down in the vacated chair that Sydney was grilled in. I could smell her light cologne that lingered in the air. Shit, time to concentrate on what my President was saying.

“Hey, sorry Prez, my mind just wandered for a sec. Oh and here’s a beer from Mack.”

Thor thanked him as he drank half of the bottle without stopping.

“Jesus, that girl is going to be the death of me,” whispered Thor. Shaking his head, he sat down. “So everything went well on the run?”

“Yeah, no issues, no run-ins. All went according to plan.”

“That’s good. I certainly don’t want any issues with the Serpents. Cobra can be a bastard when he wants to be. There’s no reason why two clubs can’t be in Vegas, just as long as we respect our territories.”

“My sentiments exactly. I know Python a bit better from the service. I can definitely relate to him. He’s a standup guy, funny as shit. Would keep us all laughing.”

Seeing Thor looking down at his hands, I knew he wasn’t listening to me. The fight with Sydney must have really affected him.

“Hey Prez, you OK?”

Hearing the deep sigh, Thor shook his head.

“No, I’m not okay. I hate fighting with my daughter, hate that all of your heard that shit and hate when my ole lady knows me better than I know myself.” Shaking his head, Thor had a small smile on his face.

“You know Dec, I would do anything for those girls. My Sarah, shit, what did I do to deserve such a good, beautiful and kind woman? I’ve done so many horrible things in my life that she just grounds me, do you understand that?”

Nodding my head yes, as I kind of had a similar feeling when I was in the same room with Sydney. How fucking weird was that? I didn’t even talk to her but I felt a connection from across the room. But heeding Mack’s advice, I would never volunteer that information to Thor. I wanted to walk out of the office with my balls intact.



“My daughter Sydney is more like me than she would ever admit. We can be like oil and vinegar at times. She got her temper from me and beauty from her mama. Sydney would drive the Pope crazy if she had to.” Finishing the rest of the beer, Thor tossed it in the garbage and continued on with what happened. “Now she wants to change her major and become an attorney. Shit, God knows she would make one hell of an attorney as she argues with me constantly. She definitely has had a lot of practice.” Leaning back in his chair, Thor rubbed his hands down his face. “I just worry about her Dec. Especially if she gets involved in a case that can backfire on her.”

“I think that trying to stop her from following her path would be more detrimental than her losing a few cases.”

“So your saying that I should keep my fucking mouth shut and just let her live and let live?”

“Remember when we were in Iraq and we had those newbies fighting alongside of us?”

Thor shook his head in agreement. “Yeah, I remember. What’s your point?”

“The point is you were so anxious about them out in the field that you were going to hold them back but that’s not what they wanted. That’s not what they were trained to do. They wanted to serve their country. So it’s the same with Sydney. She is going to get the training and education to be a damn good attorney. She needs to go after her dream like the new guys needed to do their job. Does that make sense?” I waited for the words to seep into Thor’s brain to help him see reason. Watching him nod his head, he clapped his hands once. Startling me, his next words excited and worried me at the same time.

“I have an idea and you are perfect for the job.”

“What kind of job?”

“Sydney is going to UNLV. You are going to keep an eye on her.”

I just looked at Thor like he lost his mind. I felt the color drain out of my face and head south. Shifting to make myself comfortable, I knew this was a bad idea. How could I be in control around her at all times? I just saw that sexy lady across the room and had a hard on. I had to make Thor see reason and fast. Fuck my life!

“Listen Zack, I’m not a baby sitter, even to someone like your daughter. I’m sure that she will hate your idea.” Hell, with the way she looked at me, she might really love this plan. “Shouldn’t this be a job for a prospect or someone else? I’m your VP for God’s sake!”

“And that’s exactly why I’m asking you. I trust you, not one of the prospects. You don’t have to spend every waking moment of the day watching her. That’s not possible. But touch base with her, make sure she is okay and that no one is harassing her. Can you do that for me? That’s why I trust you Dec. She would be in safe hands with you.”

Staring at Thor, I felt my head nod yes. Oh shit, what have I gotten myself into? He just placed his daughter right in my path. And then the words that came next sealed my fate.

“And if you touch her Ice, I will kill you. Don’t ever doubt that.”

And you know what? I believe him.

# TEN

LIGHTNING and I were at the club as it was moving day for Sydney. Unfortunately, I was suckered in to helping move the princess. Once she found out that I was her so called “watch dog,” she was definitely pushing my buttons. I’ve been trying to avoid her at all costs but she has really been driving me insane when I’m at the clubhouse. The innuendos, the flirting is all killing me and she knows it. Everyone has to be blind and dumb not to see how she is around me. I definitely deserve an Oscar for my acting performance. But seriously, how much can a man take, right? Just Lightning knows what I’m going through, and that asshole is loving every minute of it. I’ll get back at him when the time comes or when he falls like a rock for his future ole lady. I can’t wait for that day!

So today, I couldn’t avoid Sydney. She was able to secure an apartment on campus. All I know is that I was told to help her move her belongings with some of the prospects. Thank God it came fully furnished so we didn’t have to handle any heavy shit. It had to be close to 100 degrees outside today. Las Vegas summers were just too damn hot!

At least Lightning loaded up the cooler for me. Of course, the idiot said he had “plans in the garage today” so he was very sorry he couldn’t help me. I really needed him there as a buffer zone, not that I couldn’t handle being around her. I

didn't trust Sydney around me. No telling what that crazy redhead would try to do when it was just us in her apartment.

Seeing Lightning pull a cooler behind him, he dropped down onto the barstool next to me.

“So I have a shit load of waters in there for you guys. You know, I'm really sorry that I can't be there with all of you, man.”

“Yeah, I bet you are. I just want to get this over and done with as soon as possible. My plan is I'll have the prospects do most of the carrying. I took a good look at what Sydney loaded up with them last night in that 18 foot Ryder truck. It's a lot of shit.” Opening up a bottle of water, I was in the process of drinking the bottle down when I heard Lightning say “Oh shit!” as he looked behind me.

Turning my head with the bottle still attached to my lips, I ended up spitting out the water that was in my mouth and started choking.

“You okay there lover boy?” Lightning started slapping me on the back. When I could breathe again, I whispered over to him.

“What the fuck is she wearing?” I was looking at Sydney from the top of her skin-tight KISS tank top down to her shorter than short denim shorts with her ass cheeks popping right out of them down to her chucks on her feet. With her red head in a messy knot on top of her head, this lady was going to be the death of me.

“Well, at least her feet are covered up nicely,” remarked Lightning.

“Fuck my life!” I slammed the water bottle on top of the bar.

“Yeah, that’s going to be your mantra for the next few years,” laughed Lightning.

“I can’t have her walking around the prospects like that. They will be walking hard-ons all day while moving her. And what about the other students on campus?”

“Don’t you mean other male students on campus? And maybe some ladies too?” Slapping his hand on the bar, Lightning stood up. “Well, I wish you all the very best of luck Ice. Hope you are as good as your road name says you are because you, my friend, are going to have to be an iceberg around that little lady. I’m out!”

“Yeah, thanks. See you later asshole.” Deciding to march over to Sydney, I grabbed her arm to move her out of anyone else’s hearing. I didn’t want anyone reporting anything back to Thor what our conversation was about.

“Hey, what are you doing Ice?” Sydney tried to pull her arm away from me but to no avail. Stopping us at the bottom of the stairs, I nodded towards them.

“I want you to go back upstairs and put some clothes on.”

Pulling her arm away from me, she stood facing me with her hands on her hips and a very pissed off look on her face.

“What are you, another “Dad” to tell me what to do? And what’s wrong with what I have on? It’s so hot outside, I just want to be comfortable.”

“What’s wrong with what you have on? Jesus, your ass is sticking out of the back of your shorts! How the hell do you expect the prospects to get anything done with you walking around like that?”

Sydney stared at me with a smirk on her face as a seductive look settled into her eyes. Oh, she knew right then

and there I was toast.

“I think that you might be including yourself in that comment too. Let’s not kid ourselves thinking we aren’t attracted to each other, right, Ice?”

I couldn’t take my eyes off her lips when she said my name. It was worse when she licked her bottom lip. Stepping away from her, I pointed to the stairs.

“I’m asking you nicely to please put on a different pair of shorts. Don’t make this difficult for me.” Shaking my head, I ran my hands through my hair. “Listen, I’m going to be honest here. Your dad asked me to do a job and I have to see it through. So could you please do this for me?”

“OK.” Sydney turned and headed for the stairs. Ice looked at her ass as she walked away. OK? He couldn’t believe she agreed without a complaint. Hearing someone clear their throat, Ice turned around and saw Thor standing there. Oh shit. Ice started thinking of horrible things to get himself under control before walking over to Thor.

“What the hell is going on?”

Ice knew he had to come up with some kind of excuse and quickly.

“Well, Sydney decided to go change her clothes for the move. That’s all.”

Looking right through Ice, Thor waited a beat before nodding his head.

“Just make sure she gets settled in her apartment. I’ll see you later.”

Walking away to his office, Thor slammed the door as Sydney came back down the stairs. She changed into another

pair of shorts that didn't have her ass cheeks hanging out of the back of them. These just showed off that curvy ass even more but I knew that I had to pick my battles with her. Deciding to get the cooler, I followed her to the front door.

“I'll put this in the truck and drive it for you. The prospects will follow us to your apartment. Once we unload, I'll make sure you are all set and then drive the truck back to the rental company so you don't have to worry about it. Sound good?”

“Sure Ice or can I call you Dec? I would prefer that if it's okay with you.”

Liking the way my name sounded coming from her lips, I agreed.

“Yeah, that's fine. Now, let's get going. It's going to be hotter than hell in a few hours. Best to get the bulk of this unloaded before then.”

So I figured we could get this all done in four, maybe five hours, send the prospects back to the clubhouse. Then call Lightning to come and pick me at the truck rental place. All I had to do was get through the next few hours being around Sydney and not lose it.

Pushing the cooler in the back, I climbed in the cab with Sydney sitting next to me. I took a side glance at how the seatbelt settled between her breasts right down to her shapely bare legs that were crossed at the ankles. She made her chucks look sexy just sitting there. She was definitely one sexy lady and she knew it.

“So Dec, are you going to start the truck or not?”

Realizing she caught me staring, I slammed the key into the ignition and the truck made a grinding sound as it started.

“What a piece of shit! I hope it gets us there in one piece.” Looking to make sure the prospects were ready to roll, I made a gesture that we were ready to go. Pulling away from the clubhouse, Thor was standing there with his arms crossed over his chest and what I would describe as a thundercloud look on his face.

“Did you say goodbye to your Dad?”

Hearing a sound of annoyance come from Sydney, she turned to look at me.

“Are you kidding? It’s going to be awhile until we see eye to eye about my new career so why bother getting aggravated. I don’t need him to worry about my life, not when you are assigned to check in with me. Now, how does that work Dec? Do we keep in contact by text or maybe late night visits when I’m done with school and you are done with work?”

My thoughts turned to late night visits that included overnight stays as well as turning in my patch so everything listed above was definitely out of the question.

“Texts,” I answered abruptly.

Seeing Sydney smirk at my answer, I just thought God give me the strength with this vixen. But I felt the pull she had on me already.

“So Dec, why don’t you tell me about yourself?”

“Nothing much to tell,” I answered quickly.

“How do you know Dad? What do you do for a living? How long have you been with The Savage Order?”

To pass the time on the ride, I decided to answer her. It kept my mind off other things.



“I served with your Dad in the Marines. He was my Master Sergeant and such a tough bastard. When he said jump, you answered yes sir, how high sir,” I replied with a chuckle. “We hit it off from the beginning even though I was a smartass. The paces he put me through finally broke me. My family life wasn’t the greatest so the Marines and The Savage Order grounded me so to speak. I run the garage business in town. The club invested in it and in me and it works out for all of us. And to answer your last question, I’ve been with the MC for about ten years now.”

“That’s good Dec, well, not your family part. I’m sorry about that.” Looking out the window, Sydney touched a spot of dirt that was there and tried to wipe it off. “I always said that family is everything but Dad makes life so difficult a good part of the time. Thank God for my Mama. She knows how to work him, to keep him calm. And Dylan, he’s our Dad’s clone. Shitty for me. You know, that was part of the argument we had. If only I was born male, none of this would be happening right now. But because I have tits and a pussy, it’s a whole other ballgame.”

Swerving the truck when she said that, I heard a horn blaring on the right side of the truck. Shit! This is how easy Syd throws me off with her comments.

“Jesus Dec. What’s the matter with you?”

“Pothole,” I quickly replied, realizing how lame of an excuse that was.

“What pothole? This is a newly blacktopped road.”

Leave it to Sydney to notice that bit of information. Safe to say she will make a damn good attorney.

Finally pulling up to the apartment complex, we lucked out that there was a space right in front of her apartment stairs. Moving out of the truck quickly, I got the back doors open with the prospect's assistance and started unloading. While we were making great progress, I made sure to be outside when Sydney was inside. It seemed to be a very childish way to be but I was preserving my own sanity. Unfortunately, I misjudged the inside / outside timing and realized she was standing next to me. As I looked at the boxes labeled clothes, I went to grab one to take up.

“No Dec, let the prospects take those. You can take these.”

Sydney starts to hand me boxes labeled lingerie. And they were in clear containers too! What the hell? She smiled sweetly at me and walked away. Over her shoulder she commented.

“Be a doll and put those containers in my bedroom Dec. Thank you.”

Looking back down into the containers, I saw all kinds of flimsy, see through, lacy items in every color imaginable. Hearing the prospects chuckle at my expense, I got pissed off.

“You boys have a problem?”

“No sir” they both answered together. They couldn't contain their smirks though. If this gets back to the clubhouse, I will be the laughing joke but I'll be damned if I'll let them carry these containers to her bedroom. I'm already claiming Sydney in my own way and protecting her from prying eyes.

“Get back to work on carrying those other boxes in so we can get the hell out of here.”

Seeing them scramble for the truck, I walked up the stairs to her apartment. Checking it out, the layout looked great and

most of all safe. Making mental notes to make sure the windows were locked and secured before I left, I'd double check the front door locks as well. Bright and airy was a good way to describe her new place. She should be happy here for the next three years. Walking down the hall, I found her bedroom easy enough and placed her containers on the dresser. Hearing her footsteps coming down the hall, I braced myself for what she needed next.

“Oh, there you are Dec. I was wondering if you would help me with the shelving in the living room before you leave.”

“Yeah, sure I can.” If Sydney only knew I would do anything she asked of me, I really don't know if she would be shocked. Needing to get out of the bedroom and away from the bed, I moved past Sydney as fast as I could. A man can only take so much.

## ***A FEW HOURS LATER***

“That’s the last of it,” remarked Earl, who was one of the prospects. “OK if we get back to the clubhouse? Taser just texted that he needed our help if we were done.”

“Yeah, that’s fine. I’ll just be about a half hour more here. Then I’ll drive the truck back to the rental place and Lightning is going to pick me up when I get there.” Shaking Earl’s hand and then the other prospect’s, I acknowledged their help. “You guys did good today. Thanks.”

“Welcome,” replied Earl as both prospects got on their bikes and took off. Shit, now I’m alone with Sydney. Heading back into the apartment, I found her bent over looking for some tools and nails to put up the shelving. That ass of hers was just begging to be smacked. Coming up behind her to help, she spun around with the hammer in her hand.

“Hold on Sweetness, it’s just me.”

“Jesus Dec, you scared the shit out of me!”

“Well, maybe you should close the door instead of leaving it wide open for strangers to come in.”

I was standing so close to Sydney that I could smell the perfume she was wearing and even noticed the light freckles she had on both cheeks. Seeing her blue eyes lock with my green ones, I knew I was letting fate run its course. And to hell with the repercussions.

“I have to kiss you Sydney.”

Pulling her even closer to me so that our bodies touched, I lightly touched her cheek. Seeing her blink a few times, the sass came out of her mouth.

“Well, what the hell took you so long?”

Knowing that I locked the door, I lightly placed my lips on hers. Keeping it sweet at first, things heated up very quickly as though we both knew this was something we shouldn't be doing. Hearing the hammer drop from her hand, Sydney ran her hands through my hair. Feeling her tongue against mine did me in. As I picked her up, I felt her legs lock around my waist. Feeling the heat of her sex calling to me just made me all the harder. I don't remember another woman ever affecting me this way. Needing to find the nearest wall or counter top to place her against, I found myself tripping over the hammer that she dropped.

“Fuck!” I felt my ankle twist a bit as Sydney giggled into my neck. I loved that sound and was curious how she would sound with me buried deep inside her.

Finding my way to the kitchen counter, I sat Sydney there and continued where we left off. Wedged between her legs, I knew she felt how much I wanted her. As she started rubbing herself against me, I could feel the heat of her pussy through my jeans. Hearing her moan against my lips, I angled my face to deepen our kiss. Needing more than that, I moved my lips down her neck and kissed the sensitive part by her neck and shoulder. Coming back up to her ear, I bit down on the lobe and told her to lose the tank top.

Hearing her breathless “yes”, I lifted it off her and saw the black, see-through, lace bra with nipples begging to be kissed. Pulling the cups down, I took one of her nipples between my teeth and bit down on it. Seeing Sydney with her head back

and her sexy lips open was a sight that would be forever seared in my brain. Cupping her other breast, I teased her nipple until I moved my mouth there.

“Jesus Dec, I need more of you.”

Feeling her hands reach for my pants, I picked her up from the counter and walked us back to her bedroom. After laying her on the bed, I took my cut off and placed it across the dresser. The shirt came next and I tossed it on the floor. Sydney’s eyes looked me up and down. I knew how good my body looked from working out every day but to see her appreciation of it made the hours of torture worth it.

“Shorts off now,” I commanded Sydney. Watching her wiggle out of them, my jeans joined her shorts on the floor. Leaning over her, I unclasped her bra and slowly pulled it off her perfect tits. Kissing her down the length of her body, I finally knelt between her legs. The month of torture was coming to an end. She was a perfect goddess, her red hair swirling around her face and blue eyes a shade darker with desire. Reaching for her black thong, I tore that right off of her body. Smirking down at her, I leaned over to have a taste of what was driving me so crazy. Hearing her moaning sounds as I swiped my tongue through both sides of her opening made me so hard that it was becoming painful. Locking onto her clit and flicking it with my tongue drove her body up higher that I had to hold her in place. Easing my finger, and then two of them, inside of her while sucking her brought her to climax while she rode my fingers. Her moans slowly became whimpers as she came down from her high. Looking up at her, I reached down for the condom that was in my jeans pocket. Ripping it open with my teeth, I pulled my boxers down and rolled it down my length. As she looked at me, I saw the desire in her eyes.

“Please Dec,” whispered Sydney.

“I know what you need Sweetness.”

Leaning over her, I kissed her so she tasted herself on my lips. Lifting her hips up to mine, I drove in deep in one thrust so Sydney could feel every inch of me. I closed my eyes at the incredible feeling of finally coming home. No one has ever felt like this to me before. Gazing down at her, our eyes locked to each other's and I knew that this was my woman. No doubt about it. I was claiming her as my own and was never going to let her go.

With steady strokes, I knew that Sydney was just about ready to crash down around my dick. I just needed to hang in there for a few more minutes. I poured all of my feelings for her into this moment. As her legs wrapped around me, I pounded harder into her. Feeling her inner walls grasp at me, I heard her call out my name as I joined her in total bliss. Slowly opening my eyes, I saw Sydney's sweet smile. God she was beautiful. No other would come after this woman.

“It was the shorts, right?” Laughing out loud, I realized this was sweet pillow talk, something I've never experienced before with any other woman.

“No, it was the sweetness poured in them.” Laying my head between her breasts, I didn't want to pull out of heaven just yet but knew that I didn't want to have a mess. I just needed to catch my breath and wrap my brain about this experience. Feeling Sydney move her hands through my hair, I felt like I was home. I couldn't wait to experience more with her but knew I had to get back to the clubhouse. Although I certainly didn't want to leave her so soon after this.

As I eased out of her, I told her I would be right back but knew we had to talk about us, about this and where we stood

with it all. Tossing the condom out, I washed up quickly and brought a washcloth out for her.

Watching her wipe her face, neck and then breasts, she put on her bra as I ruined her panties. No regrets there. Walking into the bathroom with her sassy ass swaying, Sydney looked over her shoulder before she closed the bathroom door. Damn that woman. Pulling on my tee-shirt, underwear, jeans and boots, I heard banging on the door. What the holy fuck? Sydney popped her head out of the bathroom door.

“Please tell me you are expecting someone?”

“No Dec. No one.”

Running my hands through my hair, I moved to her bedroom door.

“Don’t come out no matter what. I’ll get rid of whoever is there. And get some clothes on for God’s sake.”

Seeing Sydney nod her head yes, I walked out of the room and closed the door.

Bracing myself for the worst, I looked through the peephole and saw Lightning standing there with a big grin on his face. He was waving a finger, his middle finger to be exact. Opening the door, I couldn’t help but exclaim “Fuck my life.”

“Yeah, I told you that would be your mantra.” Standing still, he pointed at me. “And, oh my God! What is that on your neck?”

Grabbing my neck, I knew I looked like I got caught doing the one thing I shouldn’t have been doing.

“Got cha!” yelled Lightning slapping his thigh. “Aren’t you going to let me in?”



Opening the door, I grabbed him by the neck before shutting it.

“So why the fuck are you here anyway?”

Brushing himself off and cracking his neck side to side, he decided to answer my question.

“You can thank your lucky stars that I’m here instead of Taser. Thor was going to send him but our little prospect Earl, who seems to have taken a liking to you, spoke up and said you wanted me to meet you at the Ryder truck place. Quick thinking on his part, wouldn’t you say?”

Rubbing my head, I remembered that I did say I wanted Lightning to pick me up. Now I know Earl was paying attention and for that, I’m grateful.

“Yeah, he’s a good one.”

“Now I’m thinking you had things going on here, so I waited another twenty minutes downstairs, you know, thinking that would be enough time and all with how long you last. Taser would have ratted your ass out right away.” Watching Lightning as he picked up Sydney’s tank top off the floor, he twirled it around in the air until I grabbed it.

“Yeah, I know. Thanks for being here but can you go now? I need to talk to Sydney without your nosey ass here.”

Hearing the floor creak, I knew my future life was standing behind me. Seeing Lightning’s response confirmed my thoughts, as he had a big smile on his face.

“Oh, hey Sydney. How’s it going?”

Wrapping her arms around my waist, I just looked up at the ceiling. My life was a comedy of errors right now, with a

big fist waiting for me at the end of the story. Looking down at Sydney, she was smiling sweetly at the both of us.

“I’m doing great now Lightning. And if you tell my father anything, I will personally cut your balls off and hang them from my car mirror.”

“My lips are totally sealed Sydney.” Holding his nuts, he grimaced. “You definitely have your Daddy in you.”

Wanting to get rid of him, I pushed him towards the door.

“So Lightning, give me about a half hour to get to the Ryder place. I’ll meet you there, I just need to discuss a few things with Sydney before I leave.”

“Sure thing Ice. I’ll just let myself out.” Walking the rest of the way to the door, Lightning placed his hand on the door knob. Turning around, he looked over at us.

“Never thought I would see the day but I’m happy for you Dec. Your secret is safe with me but I think I just signed up for an ass whooping too.” Winking at both of them, he let himself out. Knowing that I couldn’t start anything that I couldn’t finish, I kissed Sydney’s forehead and led her to couch. Sitting down, I pulled her down on my lap.

Smoothing her hair back from her face, I held her in the crook of my arm.

“You know, we will have to be discreet about all of this.”

“Yes, I agree.” I felt her hand go down the front of my chest.

“You know, that was incredible back there.”

“Yes, I agree.” Feeling her kiss my neck, I gave a sigh. She was driving me crazy already.

“You know that I’m claiming you. Forever and ever.”

“You better be, as there is no turning back.” Feeling her touch me through my jeans was making me harder than a rock.

“We’ll have to find a way to tell your dad.”

“Let’s take it one day at a time. I have three years to get through.” Feeling my zipper being slowly pulled down, I knew that I was going to end up inside her any minute.

“I’m good with that. I’ll figure out when I can sneak away and be here with you. Lightning seems on board too, which is a good thing.” Flipping Sydney onto her back, I leaned over her with my arms on either side of her body.

“It will all work out. Let’s not worry about it now, Dec, but we’ll have to keep our stories in sync so we don’t screw up.”

The only screwing that would be happening would be right now as we christened her couch. I knew that Lightning would be waiting another hour, not twenty minutes like he thinks. I had to take care of my Sweetness.

# ELEVEN

## ***TWO YEARS BEFORE THE CLUBHOUSE PARTY***

THINGS HAVE BEEN GOING JUST fine between Dec and me. Barring a couple of close slip-ups when I'm at the clubhouse for a get together or at one of Mama's famous BBQ's, we've been very careful. It's to the point that no one pays attention to us which is a good thing. Especially my Dad. I hate not sharing my relationship with my Mama though. I've never kept anything from her. If I told her about Dec, she would feel obligated to tell my Dad as she has never kept any secrets from him and I mean any secrets. And Dad and I? We are civil to each other. This is just a difficult time for me and my relationships. It's just a bitch.

At least Law School is going great. I'm excelling at all of my classes. My uncle already told me I have a job waiting for me when I pass the Bar. I'm so ready for it. I'm the top student in my Debate classes too. No one can win against me so now I just have to apply those skills in the courtroom. I know a courtroom is a much different place than a debate competition, as you are dealing with people's lives, but I feel that I'm heading in the right direction. I'm just counting down the days until I'm ready for my first case!

With Dec, it's bitter-sweet. I wish we could just come out of our "closet" and announce to everyone that we love each other. At least I know I love him. But sometimes, I don't know how he really feels about me anymore. Lately, I feel that he's distant, but maybe I'm reading too much into things. He can be a little reserved while I'm the more outgoing one. We haven't really spoken about it since that moving day a year

ago where he said he was claiming me. I'm still waiting for that to happen so that's been weighing heavily on my mind. I know that I want some concrete answers from him but I'm almost afraid to hear what he has to say. So what have I done? Just kind of pushed that to the back burner. I'm avoiding. That's not a good thing, not for someone like me. I love all the cards on the table and if the joker pops up, then shame on me.

The clubhouse is in full party mode. They are celebrating the prospects that have become members tonight. I'm happy for Earl and the other new guy, I can't keep their names straight. Everyone is in a good mood so I take a chance on grabbing a beer from Mack and head on over to where Dec and some of the guys are hanging out. I know Dec sees me but he turns away as I walk over to him. Now that is kind of strange. We have always been careful but this is not nice.

"Hey Syd, how's it going? How's Law School treating you?" City raises his bottle to me.

"Good City, thanks. Just make sure you guys stay out of trouble so you don't end up in my courtroom."

"Had enough of courts and jail to last the rest of my life," mumbled Taser.

Hearing a few of the guys agree, I move closer to Dec.

"Do you have a few seconds? I would love to talk to you about something," I asked of him.

"Sure," he answered. "Guys, I'll be right back."

They really didn't pay any attention to us when we walked to the food table. Turning towards him, I came right out with my question.

"So what's going on?" Holding onto my beer bottle tightly, I braced myself for his answer.

“Nothing is going on. Just watching out for us, that’s all.” He couldn’t even look at my eyes when he responded.

“I haven’t seen you in two weeks and even though we text, you always make a way for us to see each other. In other words, are you taking a step back, making decisions about us without filling me in?”

Hearing Dec take a deep breath, he looked down at me.

“I really don’t think this is the right place to have this discussion.” Looking around, he made sure no one was looking at us. He handed me a plate to make it look like we were getting some dinner together. “Grab some food, let’s enjoy the afternoon and I’ll come by tonight so we can talk about things, ok?”

Narrowing my eyes at him, I could smell bullshit a mile away.

“Why don’t you just take a plate of food and shove it up your ass Dec,” I hissed. With that, I threw the plate in the garbage and decided I was heading home. Walking away from him as calmly as I could, I found my Mama. Pleading a headache, I gave her a kiss goodbye with the promise I would stop by soon, and left as soon as I could get out of there. I caught Dec walking towards me but I made my move out the front door so I knew he couldn’t follow me without causing someone to take notice.

After putting on my motorcycle helmet, I jumped on top of my Harley named “Max” and tore out of the parking lot. The new prospects got out of the way at the last second as I blew right by them. Hearing them yell curses brought a smile to my face. I could be a bitch when I wanted to and what were they going to do? Tell my Daddy? Good way not to stay under the radar but I didn’t give a shit then. A year of loving Dec and

now he's getting cold feet being with me? I don't need this. The more miles my bike ate up, the angrier I got. I'm The Savage Order President's daughter, not some girl that sits home and cries when her boyfriend hurts her. Yeah, who am I kidding? Dec is breaking my heart, the only guy that has the ability to do that to me. Feeling a few tears flow down my face, I slowed down to wipe them away. Wouldn't be good to be blurry eyed on "Max" and end up hitting a tree.

Pulling into my parking area, I felt my cell phone go off. Not even caring who it was since I had a good feeling as to who was calling, I parked my bike and jumped off. Seeing the deli across the street, I decided that a half gallon of peanut butter chocolate ice cream would cure part of my broken heart or at least put me in a sugar coma so I wouldn't have to think about Dec and I.



## AT THE CLUBHOUSE

I knew I hurt Sydney by my short answers. I have a lot to think about, which includes my future with the club. This is the only family I have. I love Sydney more than my own life but I feel I'm at a crossroads with a decision. She graduates in one year and I know she will pass the bar with flying colors. She has a job all set.

I own the garage business with the club and that's just it. It's with the club. If I claim Sydney, I could lose everything. But now, I'm hanging by a thread of losing her. So maybe we can just take a step back and look at our lives. Really look at it and decide do we say fuck it all and be together? Take our chances so to speak. But I know if I lost the club and Sydney, I might as well take a bullet to my own head.

Walking over to the bar, I sit on the end and got lost in my thoughts.

Seeing Mack wipe down the bar in front of me, he looked right at me.

“What will it be?”

“Just a beer, I've already had a celebratory shot earlier.”

Placing the beer in front of me, Mack motioned with his own beer.

“So, how's it going with Syd?”

I stopped the beer halfway to my mouth.

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me.” Smiling at me, Mack leaned closer so no one could hear us.

“Listen, I’m not blind or stupid. I knew that girl liked you from the moment she laid eyes on you. Sydney is not the type of woman to let that go. She’s made of strength and loyalty: Strength from her Daddy and loyalty from her Mama. She knows what she wants and just goes for it. Now, what are you going to do about it?”

Laughing at Mack’s correct assessment, I took a swig of beer.

“Listen, I do love that woman, no doubt about it, but I’m at a crossroads in my life regarding her. I can handle the Prez but I can’t take a chance of losing my family here.”

“Who says that’s going to happen Ice? It’s not one person’s decision even if that one person is the Prez. He’s talking as a dad, and as a dad, no man is worthy of his little girl.” Seeing Mack shrug his shoulders with a Robert DeNiro type of smirk. He mimicked his voice to go with the look. “So you take a beat down. And your laughing side kick, too, since he’s been lying by omission. I would pay money to see Lightning get his ass handed to him.” Leaning close to me, Mack drives the point home. “Syd is worth it. Think about it. You don’t want the absolute best thing in your life to walk out of it.”

Knowing that Mack made absolute sense, I realized that I fucked up.

“She is so fucking pissed at me right now.”

Rapping his knuckles on the bar, Mack just chuckled. “Yeah, sucks to be you. She is going to make things so difficult and I don’t blame her. Think about what we talked about here. And if anyone asks if we talked about the both of

you, I will deny it. I can't handle being laid up for days. I'm definitely too old for that shit. Besides, who will be here to give you assholes free therapy?"

Laughing at Mack, I thanked him for his insight. I had a lot to think about including how to deal with a very pissed off sexy redhead.

## TWELVE

PULLING into Sydney's parking lot, I breathed a sigh of relief that "Max" was parked. No telling what she would do after she left the clubhouse. Shutting off my bike, I just sat there debating how I would even start a conversation with her. Of course, Sydney heard me pull in. She came right out on the top step looking down at me.

"Can we talk?" I started with the logical beginning.

It seemed to take a long time for Sydney to respond when it was only a few seconds. Seeing her nod her head, she turned and walked into her apartment. I guess it was a good thing that she didn't slam the door in my face. Ready to face the music, I made my way up the stairs into her apartment.

Closing the door softly behind me, I turned to look at the woman who owned my heart. Seeing her blue eyes shining with unshed tears tore me up.

"Oh God Syd. Please don't be upset. You're killing me here."

Hearing Sydney make a huffing sound, she crossed her arms across her waist.

"And you're not killing me? What the hell Dec? If this isn't what you wanted, then what the fuck are you here for?"

Where is the “I’m claiming you forever and ever?”

“I do want you Sydney, I’m just conflicted with all the shit, that’s all.”

“Well, I’m sorry for you Dec. I’m sorry that you don’t know what you want with me or have the balls to do anything about it. I’m sorry that you can’t make a decision that affects both of our lives, but I’m ready for that commitment. You knew that! I thought you were ready too!”

Walking closer to me, I see that a tear escapes her eye. As I reached her face to wipe it away, she stopped my hand. “If you can’t decide to make the commitment to me, no matter what the cost, then I feel that we should take a break. This is not an ultimatum Dec; this is for my own sanity.” Taking a deep breath, Sydney continued. “I love you Dec. You are my life, the one I can see growing old with, having babies with, having a wonderful life with. But I can’t be with someone that is only in when it works for him and hiding us from the MC. So until you know what you want, it’s best that we don’t see each other.”

Holding Sydney’s hand, I pull her close to me.

“Come on Syd, you don’t really mean this. You know that I love you, I just need some time to work things out, ok?” I felt like I was almost pleading with her, me, the VP of my club, desperate that I was losing the woman that is my life.

Holding her face in my hands, I dropped my lips onto hers, begging my way in to taste her sweetness. As my tongue sought out hers, I needed to know that I hadn’t totally lost her. This was a kiss full of desperation as I fought for her, fought for us. Hearing her whimper, I angled my head to deepen our kiss while gripping her sexy ass. Feeling her push against my

chest, I took a step back while still keeping my arms around her.

“You need to go Dec,” whispered Sydney.

Staring deep in her eyes, I saw some of the light go out of them. I was losing my girl. Not knowing what else to say, I moved away from her. Sydney was right. Until I knew what I wanted in my life, it wasn't fair to her. Looking at my beautiful girl, I cupped her face in my hand. Kissing her on her forehead, I walked past her and out her door.

Closing it, I leaned up against the wall. Hearing soft sobs coming from the other side of the door was like a knife through my heart. What the hell have I done to us?

As I heard Dec's bike drive off, it seemed so final. This was it. I felt an overwhelming sense of emptiness and desperation that I almost called his cell to bring him back to me. I would take what he was capable of giving me and then I realized, that wasn't me. I wasn't made like that. How could I be with someone who wasn't in it for the long haul? I had the same concerns as he did but from a different aspect with my future career. I was ready to have both without reservations but I guess that wasn't enough for Dec.

I can't believe I did this. I'm the one who made this decision for my own self-preservation. Could I live with it? I know there wouldn't be anyone else for me. In my mind, this was the best thing to do. So why does it feel so wrong? Hugging the pillow close to me, I closed my eyes to let the darkness take away the heartache I was feeling. Being away from each other will either bring us together or will make us go our own ways.

A few hours later

Hearing my cell phone ring from somewhere, I fumbled around in the dark and tried to find where my coffee table was. It must have been very late and I didn't have a light on in my apartment. Seeing the light shining on the phone, I saw that Lightning was calling me. My heart stopped as I knew this meant bad news.

“Lightning, what is it?”

Hearing dead air for a second, I got frantic.

“Lightning what...” He cut me off mid-sentence.

“Syd, there's been an accident.”

And my cell phone fell out of my hands.

# THIRTEEN

RUNNING DOWN THE HOSPITAL HALLWAY, my heart felt like it was going to jump out of my chest. I kept praying to please let him be okay. I can't lose him in my life.

I'm not ready for this! I tried to remember what my last words to him were just in case. God, that's an awful thought to have but with my analytical mind, what did I expect?

As I came around the corner, I saw the guys from the MC standing around in the waiting room. Everyone had the same grim look on their faces as they all stared back at me. In the corner of the room, I saw my Mama crying with Mack's arm around her. Oh God, please no.

"Mama." That was the only word I could speak as she stood up from her chair and pulled me into her arms. "What happened Mama?"

"Come and sit down." Guiding me to the chair next to the one that she vacated, we both sat facing each other. "Mack, can you get us some coffee? I think we are all looking at a long night here."

"Sure thing darlin'. Be right back. Text me if you get any updates."



Nodding her head at Mack, Mama turned her attention to me. Holding my hand, Mama took a deep breath. I couldn't wait to hear from her first. I had to ask.

“So, how is Daddy?”

Hearing Mama take a deep breath, she held on tight to my hands.

“Right now, your Daddy is in surgery. He sustained gunshot injuries to the chest area while riding back from the store for me.”

Seeing fresh tears cascade down Mama's cheeks, we just held each other tight. Gunshot! Who the hell would target him? As far as I knew, there wasn't any trouble with any group. The Serpent's would never do this but then again, I am not privy to “club business.”

Looking around the room, I noticed Dec, Dylan, Lightning and Taser were missing. When Mama saw me look around, she answered my unspoken question.

“Your brother, Ice, and the others went to look for the person or persons who did this. They have some leads but are not saying anything to me about it. But it wasn't any of the local MC's that targeted your father. In fact, Dec already made a call to the Serpent's MC President, Cobra, and they are on standby to assist. But Dec wants the club to handle this and not call in any favors just yet, unless they have to.” Wiping her face, she looked up before closing her eyes. “I can't lose him Sydney. Not yet.”

“Stop that Mama.” Wiping my own face, I reached down deep inside for the strength to get me through these next 24 hours. “Mama, you know Daddy is tough as hell. He's not

going anywhere yet.” Deciding to use my grandma’s saying, I blurted it out. “God don’t want him and the Devil can wait.”

Once I said those words, Mama started laughing through her tears.

“You are so right Sydney. My Mama said those exact words to your father when she met your Daddy. You had to see his face, all big and bad just out of the Marines and wearing the President’s patch. And here’s my little Mama standing right up to him. She basically said if he ever hurt me, she would give him a world of hurt. At times, we still laugh about that.” Smiling a bit at the memory, she shook her head. “Oh, make no mistake about it. He was definitely afraid of her alright.” Wiping the rest of the tears, she squared her shoulders back. “I know in my heart that he is going to be alright now. Ice has things under control with your brother and the others. I just hope no one else gets hurt or has any other problems.”

“Trust in Ice and Dylan Mama.”

Seeing Mack walking over to us, he handed us our coffees while the prospects who went with him passed out coffees to the other members that were waiting.

“Any other news?”

Shaking my head, “No, nothing yet Mack.”

So we just sat in the waiting room, each offering silent prayers from our heart that Daddy would pull through. An hour went by and then another.

Another hour went by

Then pings started going off around the room as each member’s cell phone received a text message.

*Done. No blow back. Concentrate on Thor now. Ice*

Mack nodded as he read the text. Turning his phone around, he showed Mama and me what Dec wrote. Knowing this wasn't something that would normally be shared with us, this was a different situation. Now that the danger has been eliminated, we can just focus on Daddy. We won't know who or how anything was handled but at least we don't have to look over our shoulders for any danger. My heart felt a surge of pride at knowing that Dec protected all of us. He was a damn good Vice-President, just not good with the both of us. Before I even had the chance of going down that road mentally, the doors opened to two surgeons walking towards us. They looked exhausted with sweat stains showing through their scrubs. Oh please Lord, let us receive good news.

What seemed like forever to get to us, they stood in front of Mama and me.

"Mrs. Graves, it was touch and go there for a bit but your husband is going to be fine."

With that news, the whole waiting room erupted with whoops and hollers. I just held onto Mama and she kept saying thank you to the surgeons and "thank you Jesus." Mack waved the guys to be silent so we could get information.

"We are still in a hospital for God's sake. Keep it down fellas."

As the room calmed down, the surgeons explained that the bullets barely missed his heart. One hit him in the lung and the other in the spleen. Doing extensive repairs, they were able to stop the bleeding. He did lose a lot of blood so they needed to transfuse him but he will make a full recovery. He will be in intensive care for a few days as they are also concerned about the concussion he sustained. If he didn't wear his helmet, this would have had a different ending altogether.

“He’s a very lucky man Mrs. Graves. Give him six to eight weeks to recover at home and he should be fine.”

Holding the doctor’s hand, Mama had the brightest smile on her face.

“Thank you so much, doctors. From all of us. When can I see him?”

“He is being moved to the ICU now, so when he’s all set, I’ll have the nurse come and get you. I’m sorry, but I can only have you in the room with him. Once he is moved to a private room, then he can have visitors, if he’s up to it.”

“Thank you again. I’ll be right here waiting for the nurse.”

As the doctors went back through the doors they came from, Mama and I just hugged each other with Mack surrounding us with his arms.

“Knew that bastard wasn’t ready to check out on us. This is damn good news.”

Kissing both of our cheeks, he motioned to the other members to head out.

“No sense scaring the shit out of the other people waiting here, right?”

“Thanks Mack. Will you text Dylan that his Daddy is going to be fine?”

“Already did Sarah.” Winking at my Mama, he walked over to the others as they gathered to leave.

“I always thought he had a thing for you Mama.”

Seeing her turn a little red in the cheeks, Mama just shook her head.

“No honey. Your Daddy is it for me; always has been and always will be. Stay with me for a bit until they come and get me. I just want to see with my own eyes that he is going to be okay and thank him for not leaving me.”

“No problem Mama.” And so we sat together for the next hour, each in our own thoughts. Of course, mine were all centered around Dec. Every time the waiting room doors opened, my heart would stop, thinking that Dec would walk through them but he never did.

Then the nurse came through them for my Mama.

“Mrs. Graves, you can go back to Room 7 now. Your husband is all set up in his room, but don’t be alarmed to see all of the wires and tubes everywhere. It’s just for tonight to monitor him and to drain any fluids that need to be eliminated.”

“Go Mama. Tell him I love him and I’ll ask Mack to wait for you. He can take you back home to get some rest, ok?”

Hugging me tight, I felt her head nod in acceptance.

“How are you getting home Syd?”

Mack stepped up and said he would take me home.

“I’ll run Syd home and then come back for you, ok?”

“Perfect Mack. Thank you for everything tonight.”

“Anything for the both of you.” Taking my hand, Mack led me from the room.

Walking outside, we stepped into the bright sunshine.

“Mack, how long have we been here?”

“Going on 8 hours now.”

Looking at the time, I knew I was missing one of my classes. I had the professor's email so made a mental note to email him once I took a long hot shower and offered a prayer of thanks for a good outcome.

After Mack helped me into his truck, he jogged around to the other side. Pulling himself up, he got the truck started and backed out of the parking space.

“What a night, right?” Mack caught himself yawning.

“So are you going to tell me what happened?”

Without missing a beat, Mack replied “Nope.”

“So, can you tell me if this is related to a group that I might cross paths with as an attorney.”

“Honey, they don't need an attorney where they are now.”

“Did you handle the police?”

“So many questions Counselor. Yes, of course. We are on good terms with them. Let's just say it's a mess that they didn't need on their plate and happy to know they don't have to handle.”

I didn't know how to ask the next question without coming off looking desperate for answers so I just asked it.

“Are the four guys OK?” I held my breath for that answer.

“Don't you mean is Dec OK?” Seeing Mack smirk as he stared straight ahead while making the turn onto my block. “Yeah, he is. Well, a little banged up maybe, but he will live to see another day. Now, stop asking me questions. I'm a clam.”

As he pulled his truck in front of my apartment, I opened the door and looked over at him.

“You’re his best friend Mack. My Daddy is one hell of a lucky man. A pain in the ass, but a very fortunate man.”

“No, I am Baby Girl. I am. Now go and we’ll see you soon. Get all A’s and make us proud.”

Jumping down from his truck, I noticed how choked up he got. Knowing he’s a proud man, I just blew him a kiss and shut his door.

Walking up my steps, my cell phone had a text that came through. Looking at it with tears in my eyes, I saw it was from Dec.

*Sweetness. We took care of things and are fine. Thinking of you, knowing how scared you are about your Dad. Everything is going to be ok, with him and us. I promise you this. Please just give us time. Love Always, D*

Being mentally drained, I could only respond with this.

*Ok*

And his response...

*XO*

**FOURTEEN**



## ***ONE YEAR BEFORE THE CLUBHOUSE PARTY***

HOLDING the framed letter that officially says I'm a lawyer is a dream come true! I'm overwhelmed actually. This means I'm ready to take on the world. All the sacrifices that I've made have all come down to this piece of paper that says I've made it! Standing in my own beautiful office at my Uncle Grayson's firm, I decided exactly where I'm hanging up my degree. Front and center, right behind my desk.

“Nice decorating Syd.” Spinning around, I see my uncle smiling from the door. My mother's brother, he has the same attractive face like Mama but that throws people off in the courtroom. They don't expect what's coming. The man is a viper for sure. That's why he is so successful and now I'm under his wing. I already have those traits; I just need to hone the skills some more. I'm ready to learn everything from him.

“Welcome aboard Syd. I already have some cases coming up that I want you to take over. Nothing too crazy. Easy wins to build up your reputation in the firm. But seriously, I have no doubt you are going to take Las Vegas by storm and create your own buzz,” he said as he walked to the door. Turning around, he remembered why he stopped by. “Oh by the way, there is a delivery for you out at the desk. Why don't you pick that up and then swing by for the folders on those cases? You need to be ready for court in a week.”

“Thank you, Uncle Grayson.” I motioned him to step inside the room as I don't want any prying eyes or ears to listen in on my conversation with him.

“I just want to say that I don’t want any special privileges around here. I want to prove to everyone that I’m on equal footing just like everyone else, ok?”

Uncle Grayson laughs at me.

“What makes you think you’re going to get special privileges? Wait until you see what cases I’m dropping in your lap.” Chuckling, he moved to the door. “You’re welcome!” he shouts as he walks down the hallway.

Damn, my uncle thinks he’s funny. Curious to see what’s at the front desk as well as the cases waiting for me, I leave my office to get the delivery first. Rounding the corner, my new assistant and paralegal, Kevin Stiles, is staring at the largest bouquet of red roses I’ve ever seen taking up the front desk.

“Well Ms. Graves, looks like these are for you. Wow, you must have some admirer.”

“Kevin, how many times today have I told you to call me Syd or Sydney. We are going to be working closely together. In fact, we are going to start on a few cases that have already been assigned to me.”

“Nothing like diving right in. Do you want me to carry these for you? Looks like the sender bought out the whole store.” Not waiting for my answer, Kevin grabbed the huge vase and struggled a bit as he walked past me. Grabbing the card from the arrangement as he walked by, I had a feeling who sent them to me. With slightly shaking hands, I opened the envelop and saw Dec’s handwriting.

*Sweetness, Congratulations Counselor. I knew you could do it. Let’s get together soon so we can celebrate. This staying*

*away from each other and from your family isn't working. I love you. D*

Holding the card to my chest, I knew I would have to make a decision soon about Dec and myself. After my father's near fatal shooting, I helped where I could but with all the college work and studying for the bar, I needed to just stay focused on my work. In fact, my father insisted that he was just fine with my mom watching over him. He wanted me to study and be a success. Funny coming from the man that didn't support me in my decision. I also didn't need Dec to derail my concentration though I missed him terribly. I missed what he did to my body and soul. Well, it seems that he hasn't given up on me or us, so that is a good thing, but I feel that I'm still at that crossroads, that life is ready to throw that curveball right into my heart. Sooner or later, a solid decision will have to be made and sometimes it's made without our consent.

### *Two Months Before the Clubhouse Party*

Looking at my full length mirror, I knew I looked my very best for Dec. I finally agreed to go out to dinner with him. The amazing roses and the sweet note was the beginning of the thaw in my heart to give him a chance. Then there was the conversation I had with Uncle Grayson earlier today. I have always been concerned about my family ties while working as a Defense Attorney and needed to air out my feelings with him. Going through our conversation, he made me realize that my concerns were just insecurities.

“Syd, while I understand your concerns, you are being hired for your skills as an attorney. Your family tree isn't a blip on anyone's radar. It's no one's business who your parents are,” he said as he sat on the edge of his desk. “And don't

forget, your Dad is my brother-in-law. Does this firm look like it's losing any business because of The Savage Order?"

Shaking my head, I started to realize how my concerns were just nothing.

"I always kept it from everyone throughout college and Law School. I didn't know how anyone would respond."

"Who gives a shit!" he laughed. Tipping his head to the side, he started shaking his finger at me. "Ok Syd, what's really going on? This sounds like it's about more than your Dad."

Staring at my uncle, I knew he was one person I could trust but needed to hear the words.

"Ok, I'll tell you but you can't talk to mom about this. She will be so upset and forget about my father. Don't even go there. It's about Declan."

"Anything said between these walls is in strictest confidence," said my uncle as he took a seat on the couch next to me. He might as well get comfortable for this story. And then I proceeded to unload my heart and my mind to my uncle. Seeing him nod his head at parts of the story and frown at other, not-so-nice, parts, I felt a thousand pounds lighter when I was finished.

"So do you want my take on this?" Shaking my head as I couldn't find the words. I was almost afraid of what he was going to say.

"Syd, don't waste any more time. Some people throw their entire lives away, wishing and hoping for the right person to come into their lives. But you have that person, your person, and that's Declan. And you are his person. It goes both ways. I feel if he knows you are on board to stand up to your father

and the club, that will give him the strength to do the same. Life is too short Syd. Sometimes we just have to grab it by the balls and hang on tight. And besides, he would be an absolute ass to let you walk away.”

Blinking my eyes as the daydream ended, I knew what I was going to do. My life was Declan “Ice” Brassard, whether he was on board or not.

There was just something different about Dec. He was definitely taking on more responsibility with the club, not that my Dad was giving up the President’s patch any time soon, but he’s been relying on Dec more and more. My brother has absolutely no interest in the President’s seat and though that disappointed Dad, he got used to the idea that maybe he needed to put all his efforts into shaping Dec for that position. That would be interesting; Dec as the President with me as his ole lady. Smiling at those thoughts while looking in the mirror, I decided to add a bit more mascara to make my blue eyes pop.

Standing back to get a full view, I turned side to side. Shaking my hair so it fell down my back in perfect waves, I heard my doorbell ring. Feeling my heart race, it was time for major decisions to be made. Taking a deep breath, I walked over to the door. Seeing that it was Dec through the peephole, I opened the door to see the man that I would gladly pass up dinner for to just stay in with him.

“Wow,” whispered Dec. He took his time looking at me from top to bottom.

“You like what you see?” I asked teasingly.

“You look so beautiful Syd. I’ve missed you so much.”

“You look pretty handsome yourself Dec. Come on in”

“Sure, thanks.” Pulling his hand from behind his back, he handed me a bouquet of beautiful mixed flowers. “For you, Sweetness.”

Smelling several of them, I just smiled at him, loving him a little bit more if possible.

“Oh these are gorgeous Dec. Thank you so much.” Leaning close to him, I gave him a kiss on the cheek but one that lingered there a bit. Hearing Dec clear his throat, he made a motion to the door.

“Are you ready to go? I made reservations at your favorite Italian restaurant. You know, we didn’t have a proper celebration for you passing the Bar.

“That sounds lovely. Just let me just put these in water and we can go.”

I knew Dec never took his eyes off me as I walked to the kitchen. I could feel the sexual tension between us and just had a feeling how this night was going to end. Feeling twinges of desire, I would definitely be fine with calling out for a pizza instead. Reaching up on the top shelf to grab a vase, I felt a strong arm around my waist as Dec reached up to the shelf to help me. As he slowly lowered the vase to the counter, he pulled me closer to his body. Putting his face into my neck, I felt him nuzzle me right by my shoulder. Tipping my head back, Dec placed light kisses up my neck as he ended by lightly biting my ear lobe. I heard a whimper and realized it came from me. Seems that Dec has the same ideas as I did.

“God Syd, I’ve missed you so very much. I’ve missed this.” Cupping her face, Dec’s intense look spoke volumes to her. “It’s been too long Syd. But if this isn’t what you want, let me know.”

“Shut up and kiss me Dec. I’ve missed you too.”

Dec didn’t need another invitation to taste the lips of his Sweetness. As his mouth covered hers, his tongue sparked the rising flames of desire within her. Seducing her with his lips, Syd felt her body respond to his demands. Leaning against his strong chest to steady herself, she let her hand trail down the front of shirt, going down lower and lower until she cupped him through his jeans. Hearing him give a moan of pleasure as she tightened her hold on him, she hugged him closer to her body. It was obvious that Dec wanted her. Placing his mouth by her ear, she heard the words that she was hoping to hear.

“I want you Syd. No matter what happens. Tell me now Sweetness, because there is no going back from this.”

Pulling his face to hers, she whispered back.

“You are my life Dec. No turning back.” And that was all Dec needed to hear.

His mouth captured hers as the wave of desire washed over the both of them. Moving his lips down her neck, Dec reached behind her and slowly lowered the zipper of her dress while lightly caressing her back. It was as if all of her senses came alive. That’s what Dec did to her. Pulling the top of her dress down slowly, he couldn’t get enough of Syd’s beauty. Staring at her erect nipples through her sheer bra, he moved his mouth over one and lightly bit it like he remembered she liked it.

“Oh god Dec, please.”

“What about dinner reservations?” he whispered against her breast.

“Are you shitting me?” Sydney gave his cock a little squeeze.

“Yeah Sweetness, I know what you need and it’s not Italian.”

Picking Syd up, he carried her back to her bedroom. Placing her gently on the bed, he slowly unbuttoned his shirt while staring at her. As she went to completely take off her dress, he shook his head.

“Let me do that. I’ve waited a long time for this.”

Tossing his shirt on the chair, Sydney knelt forward on the bed and placed her hands on his chest. Exploring the dips and ridges on his chest and stomach made his muscles clench. He was just so beautiful, if she could use that word to describe him. She missed this; she missed him. Syd slowly opened his belt and began unbuttoning his jeans while never taking her eyes off of his. She wanted and needed to make this connection with him. As she slowly lowered his zipper, she lightly caressed him, causing him to harden more. Deciding to get the rest of the jeans off himself, Dec tossed them to the side.

As he turned back to Syd, she started to lift her dress over her head as Dec helped her get the rest of it off. Leaning over her with his strong arms on either side of her, his mouth took control of hers. Pushing her back among her pillows, he let his lips trail down her neck to her breast. Pulling the bra cup down, he sucked the nipple into his mouth while his hand caressed the other one. Moving his hand down the length of her body, he moved her panties to the side to caress her clit. Feeling how wet she was for him, he needed to taste her. Arching her body up for him, he kissed and licked her down her stomach, teasing her with little bites here and there. Hearing Syd moan his name got him harder than he’d ever been before with her. Putting his finger deep inside her, he felt



her walls clench him tight. Adding another finger, he placed his tongue on her clit and licked her, teasing and coaxing another tremor through her body.

Feeling her hands pull on his hair, he knew that she was getting close and he wanted her to come on his mouth. Sucking her clit in his mouth, Dec heard and felt Syd go over the edge.

“Oh my god Dec!”

Not stopping until the last tremor left her body, I removed my boxers as Syd reached for me.

“Not this time Sweetness.”

Dec moved slowly inside her while kissing Syd in time with his movements. Holding her face between his hands, he kissed her cheeks, her forehead, showing her his love for her. Wrapping her legs around his waist, he made love to her the best way he knew how. Words of love were shared between moans of pleasure. Rocking himself into her, he felt Syd tighten around his cock. As he moved faster within her, she pushed her head back into her pillow and let out a breathy moan. Kissing her throat, Dec chased his own release with hers as they slowly came back to earth. Laying on top of her, he wiped the tears that spilled from her eyes.

“Are you okay, Sweetness?”

The blue eyes that Dec loved so much, sparkled with happiness.

“Yes, baby. I love you, Dec.”

“I love you more, Sweetness.”

**FIFTEEN**

## ***PRESENT DAY: CLUBHOUSE PARTY***

“I WANT A KISS.” Declan stared right into Syd’s eyes with his demand.

“Are you crazy? Do you want to do this now, with the whole MC? Why don’t we wait and maybe talk to my Dad and Mama alone? I don’t know if I’m ready to lose you.”

“It’s time Sweetness. You are worth the risk.” Leaning towards Syd, he kissed her on the cheek. Holding her face in his hands, he kissed her full on her lips. After he was done, Dec gave her a wink and went to stand next to Thor. Feeling the heat of Thor’s stare, Dec looked over at him.

“What the fuck was that?” yelled Thor.

“What do you think that was? I’m claiming Syd.” Ice stared right back at Thor. He refused to back down from his President, the father of his future wife. Time to stake his claim, even if he got the shit kicked out of him. She was worth it.

Before Thor could even reply, Cobra, the President of the Serpent’s MC, stood up next to Thor with Python by his side.

“A toast please: To Syd for saving one of our own. To Mamba: don’t fuck up again. And to The Savage Order: to new beginnings.”

Hearing the yells of agreement from the guys, Syd caught the burning need coming from Ice’s eyes as he met hers. Syd’s heart skipped a few beats.

“To new beginnings, holy shit,” whispered Syd.

Hearing her father's voice rise above all the others, Syd braced herself for the storm that was going to erupt.

"I asked you Ice, what the hell was that?"

The clubhouse got quiet real fast. All were looking at Thor and Ice as they stood face to face with each other. In a loud, firm voice, Ice made his intentions known.

"I said I'm claiming Syd."

Feeling my mother's presence beside me, I looked over at her. Seeing her smile, she took my hand in hers.

"I just knew it. I had hoped you would both be together. And secretly, I know your Daddy is happy about this too."

Talk about a shock and awe moment, well, this was it.

"You could have fooled me. Listen to Dad's reaction! If he's happy about this, then why the hell does it look like he's going to kill Dec?"

"It just has to be this way my baby. Don't worry, this will all be fine."

"How can this be fine? Taser will beat the hell out of him with Dad. And poor Lightning. I feel sorry for him too."

"What about Lightning?" Seeing my Mama catch up quickly, she just rolled her eyes. "Ok, this might get out of hand now."

"Do you think?" Watching what was taking place in front of me was a shit ton of testosterone facing each other with a visiting MC witnessing the take down.

Seeing Taser step up next to Dad, Lightning went to take his place next to Ice.

Eyeballing Lightning, Thor stared him down.

“What the fuck are you standing here for?” Thor demanded an answer until he realized that Lightning knew what was going on all this time.

“You have got to be kidding me! You have been lying by omission? How long has this been going on Lightning?”

“Umm, does it really matter?” said Lightning as spread his arms out to everyone in the room. “Shouldn’t we all be happy that these kids found true love.”

“Shut up Lightning, your jokes aren’t needed here right now. You’re not doing me any favors,” hissed Ice.

Python, Mamba and Cobra from the Serpent’s MC, all stood together, watching what was going on.

“Well, look at this, dinner and a show,” chuckled Python. A few other members from both sides chuckled at his remark.

“Shut the hell up Python,” replied Cobra. “We are guests here and this is serious business for Thor.”

As Thor took a step towards Ice, he had one more question for him.

“How many years has this been going on?”

Without batting an eye, Ice replied in a strong voice.

“Three years.” Hearing a gasp echo around the room, Ice added quickly. “I love your daughter and she loves me. I’m claiming her as my ole lady. No regrets no matter what happens here and now.”

Feeling Thor’s big fist slam into his face almost knocked him to his knees. Thor definitely got his strength back after the shooting. Fuck that hurt, he thought as he felt his eye start to swell shut. Ice knew he had to let the President have one good hit but that was all he was going to give him. He was going to

be President one day and needed to be strong in front of the other members.

Seeing another fist fly towards him, Ice blocked it and pushed Thor back. Looking quickly over at Lightning, Ice saw him doubled over and on one knee after Taser hit him.

Shouting over to Lightning, he asked if was okay. Just nodding his head, Lightning waved Ice away.

“Yeah fucker, you owe me.”

Not being prepared for another attack, Thor pushed into Ice as members got out of way. As they went crashing on top of one of the tables, the table gave way into pieces as their combined weight was too much for it to hold. When they landed on the ground, Ice wasted no time getting a few hits to Thor’s face before he was hit and hit hard. It gave Ice some satisfaction that Thor would have a black eye after this fight. At least it wasn’t totally a one-sided beat down. Noticing blood on Thor’s knuckles as he pulled his fist back, Ice knew that blood came from him and not Thor. Bracing himself that this would be a knockout punch, he heard Sydney crying for her Dad to please stop. Thor stopped when he saw his daughter run over to them. With tears running down her face, she pleaded again with her Dad to stop hitting him. Cradling Ice’s head in her lap, Syd yelled at her father.

“Please Daddy stop. Don’t kill the father of my child.”

At those words, everyone stopped.

Dec smiled through his bloodied lips.

“Really Sweetness? You’re having my baby?”

Seeing her smile through her tears, Syd just shook her head yes. Looking at her Dad, she saw a shocked look come over his face.

“You are going to be a Grandfather now, so please stop this. You know he’s a good man Daddy, and my choice for life.”

Sarah ran across the room and touched her husband’s bruised face.

“This is great news Zach. Enough now. Our baby is going to have a baby.”

Lightning was coughing as he stood up.

“Congrats Ice. You’re going to be a Dad. Way to go man.”

Thor reached down and grabbed Ice up from the floor. Pulling him into a bear hug, he whispered into his ear.

“You know I had to do this but I’m happy it’s you. Take care of my Baby Girl or this is going to seem like Disney Land with what I’ll do to you, do you hear me?”

“Yes sir,” replied Ice.

Wrapping his arms around Syd, he pulled her close.

“I’m sorry that I had to do this Baby Girl. Ice knew that the punishment fit the crime.”

Laughing at her Dad, Syd loved that he used legalese with her.

“Yes, Daddy, he knew. And that was what almost ended our relationship too. Dec loves you and the MC he calls his family.” Poking at her father’s chest, Syd wanted to drive her point home. “And if you think about it, it’s really all your fault that this happened, as you put him on babysitting watch.”

Smirking at his daughter, Thor gave away his big secret.

“What makes you think this wasn’t my plan all along?” Winking at his daughter, he wrapped his arm around Sarah as

they made the rounds of the room.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” remarked Syd as she watched her father walk away.

“What’s wrong Sweetness?”

Shaking her head, Syd repeated what her father said. Throwing his head back while laughing, Ice believed that Thor had this planned the whole time.

“I wouldn’t put it past him at all.”

“Hey congrats man,” said Dylan as he walked over to the both of them. Turning to the whole group, he raised his beer. “Attention everyone. I’d like to make a toast to the future member of The Savage Order, to my future brother-in-law and a new ole lady in the club, my sister Syd.”

While the clubhouse cheered and celebrated the good news, Ice pulled Syd into his arms and hugged her tight. Every sacrifice they’d made brought them to this moment. The close calls they had these past three years would only make them stronger. To think that a little girl or little boy would be running around the clubhouse, made Ice smile. It’s a time of change, but for the better. Hearing continued shouts of congratulations, Ice knew right then and there that this was their family and now extended family with The Serpents MC.

“You know this is just the beginning Syd. With a new generation starting with us, we are in for a wild ride with a baby on the way.”

“Maybe we will have the first female member of The Savage Order?”

“Not happening Sweetness.”



Raising her lips to his, Sydney gently kissed him where his lip wasn't busted.

“Are you ok, Dec?”

“I am now Sweetness, I am now.”

The End.

For Now....

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in New Jersey, Ginni found her love of writing romance stories a few years ago. With a bit of intrigue, scandal, conflict and love, she enjoys creating these sweet and sexy stories that her readers can identify with. Ginni attributes her young years of reading Harlequin romance books for putting her on the path she is on now.

Her book “Unlawful Love” was one of the stories featured in the “Locked Up/Lawyered Up” Anthology Series through TNT/NYC. Teaming up with Amazon Best Selling Author Barbara Nolan, both writers supplied “crossover” stories which are now published standalone novels.

Her Christmas story, “Believe and It Will Happen,” was a part of another Anthology Series “Mistletoe Over Manhattan” that made the Amazon Best Seller Anthology list in Australia and Canada.

While working full-time as a Senior Agent at Wilhelmina Models in NYC, Ginni juggles her writing time in the evenings and weekends. She resides in New Jersey with her husband and adorable Basset Hound, loves motorcycle riding, Cape May and 80’s hard rock.

You can get book signing and book release information on her website:

[www.Ginniconquest.com](http://www.Ginniconquest.com)

[www.facebook.com/sweetandsexyromance1/](https://www.facebook.com/sweetandsexyromance1/)



# **ALSO BY GINNI CONQUEST**

Books available on Amazon:

Unlawful Love

A Love in Name Only

A Love Forever (the sequel to A Love in Name Only)

Love Never Fails

Desire's Way

Second Chance for Love

Love Knows No Bounds (Book 8 in the Falls Village Collection)

Crime of the Heart

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This was my first MC Romance writing journey. It's actually my favorite genre to read. You should see what's stored on my Kindle! When Barbara Nolan first asked me to partner with her on the "Locked Up/Lawyered Up" Anthology, I was hesitant for about a second. I love the bad-ass, tatted up, alpha males with muscles, but knew I could also have a strong woman character stand up to Ice. It was a lot of fun to move away from what I normally write but still kept a little sweetness in the story. I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. More to come....XO gc

