



VALENTINE'S

Sue

ROYAL BASTARDS MC



USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MORGAN JANE MITCHELL

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ROYAL BASTARDS CODE

PROTECT: The club and your brothers come before anything else, and must be protected at all costs. **CLUB** is **FAMILY**.

RESPECT: Earn it & Give it. Respect club law. Respect the patch. Respect your brothers. Disrespect a member and there will be hell to pay.

HONOR: Being patched in is an honor, not a right. Your colors are sacred, not to be left alone, and **NEVER** let them touch the ground.

OL' LADIES: Never disrespect a member's or brother's Ol'Lady. **PERIOD**.

CHURCH is **MANDATORY**.

LOYALTY: Takes precedence over all, including well-being.

HONESTY: Never **LIE**, **CHEAT**, or **STEAL** from another member or the club.

TERRITORY: You are to respect your brother's property and follow their Chapter's club rules.

TRUST: Years to earn it...seconds to lose it.

NEVER RIDE OFF: Brothers do not abandon their family.

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About Valentine's Eve

From USA Today Bestselling Author Morgan Jane Mitchell comes the next installment in her Royal Bastards MC: Nashville, TN

Kingpin warned her it'd be better to lie. When she didn't take his advice, Eve's life spiraled out of control. Although, that's partly his fault. It does take two to tango, after all. But now Eve can have all she ever wanted, Hallow and a baby. All she has to do is lie. All Kingpin has to do is keep quiet. And ignore Eve being happy with another man. Besides, he already has a loving wife and twins on the way.

What could go wrong?

For some of the songs played in this novel visit [Spotify](#).

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Chapter 1

Eve

“I never intended for any of this to happen. They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Well. I had nothing but good intentions, and I’m in hell right now, torn between an angel and a devil. And I hardly know which is which anymore. All I know is that I’ve been given a second chance, a chance to have everything I want, or at least everything I wanted. I have a chance to turn back the clock. All I have to do is take the advice I should’ve taken in the beginning of this whole mess. Well, you remember, I was here talking to you...”

It all started when I was late, really late, like I don’t know how I missed that I was late last month, late. But my periods came like the wind. They were never regular. The fact had never mattered before in my life, in all my twenty-one years, not before I met Hallow and lost my virginity to the bastard.

I was allowed to call him that because technically he was a bastard, a member of the Royal Bastards MC, a biker club in Nashville, Tennessee. I tried not to think about how my deflowering happened, under threat of the biker’s President. That fact hadn’t bothered me at the time because I’d wanted Hallow so desperately. Come to think of it, any dick for that matter.

And I’d boned him habitually since.

Therefore, in all actuality I was on my second month of being late.

I was over the fucking moon.

Like I mentioned, Hallow and I had been at it like rabbits. We were already engaged, planning a wedding even though he had wanted to tie the knot right away. I wanted to wait. I’d be damned if I wasn’t going to have the wedding of my dreams. That took planning. I never planned on being pregnant during it.

I asked my best friend, Donette, “What do you think? You think I should tell him?”

Donette didn't answer since she was six feet under. Sitting by her gravestone in the lush greenness of Spring Hills Cemetery, a breeze tousled my hair, reminding me I survived what Donette did not.

I went on, “I know you really shouldn't tell anybody until you've given it some time. I'd hate for it not to stick. Will I be jinxing myself?”

Staring at the sky, I could only imagine what Donette would say. I was sure she'd tell me to wait to tell Hallow I was pregnant. If I actually was. She'd tell me to take a goddamn test already. And to not get my hopes up. That was something I didn't want to hear, Donette's specialty, telling me the truth. And, she'd be correct, as always. I shouldn't count my chickens before they hatch.

Most importantly, my best friend would be happy for me because I was finally living life. I'd made her that promise as she was put in this very ground. I'd always live to the fullest for her sake.

Sadness overtook me. I cried for a moment over the life Donette didn't get to live. As I arranged the fresh flowers I'd brought for her grave, I let her know, “I've been doing it, singing at Royal Road. Not all the way, but I'm working on it. For you.” I'd promised her that too, that I would no longer be a chicken shit, as she would call me, when it came to singing for a crowd.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” I chirped as I got up and dusted off my pants. “Dylan's in jail. Drugs, I've heard.” I snickered about her ex. “From whom? You won't believe it, but his brother's a prospect with the Royal Bastards MC named Bull. Dylan wanted to prospect, too, but next thing I heard he was in jail. You really dodged a bullet,” I added and instantly cried again because Donette had been shot.

I smiled sideways too. Donette would get a kick out of me sticking my foot in my mouth.

In tears, I hurried back to Fran's orange, El Camino. With Gran gone to the nursing home back in Flippin, Arkansas, I should've thought of the car as mine already, but I didn't. And I'd much rather be on the back of Hallow's Harley. As it was, I had an appointment at Royal Road.

The President of the Royal Bastards MC was bound and determined to help me earn my keep. In this world of bikers and outlaws and all manner of bad men, Kingpin was king. Though I had intimate knowledge that our Prez was the lesser of evils when it came to bad men in Nashville, like the men who killed my friend. Therefore, when Kingpin insisted I sing at Royal Road, that he could help me get over my stage fright, I felt obliged to agree.

Furthermore, I was keeping my promise to Donette.

Since Hallow had healed from the gunshot wounds that saved my life, my man, my biker was busy earning his keep. A paycheck with the Royal Bastards MC meant he was often gone on a run for the club. His absence left me with nothing but time on my hands. Originally, I'd come to Nashville from Arkansas to be a singer. Hit it big. Singing at the Honky Tonks on Broadway felt out of the question now. Especially since Noah Fond, the man who was responsible for not only Donette's death, but my old boss and others, basically ran Broadway. When the Royal Bastards bested him, he put a target on my back. Not to mention the Asphalt Gods thought I was a trader now. The only safe choice was for me to sing at Royal Road.

Hallow had said so himself.

All in all, it wasn't a bad choice. The biker's life centered around this club, after all, and I agreed to be his wife. Though most of the Ol' Ladies steered clear of Royal Road, preferring the Eagles' Nest, where all the families stayed, settled safely away from trouble. But I made the best of it. I even tolerated Kingpin and his training.

Amazingly enough, his unorthodox methods were working. I sang more at Royal Road than I ever did at Bootsies. There was just something about the biker president

that pissed me off to no end. I wasn't about to let him see me fail.

As usual, when I made it to the clubhouse, I avoided the first building that held the main attractions, the casino, stage, and bar. It was way too early for anyone to be there, anyhow. I strolled past the pile of ash that used to occupy Hallow's time only a week ago. Construction on the arena would begin soon, I knew from overhearing Kingpin's conversations. When it was up and running, Hallow could fight again, and I'd see more of him. That gave me some comfort as I missed him terribly.

Meeting Kingpin over at the Big House, the name of his grandiose private estate at Royal Road, I had a key to let myself in. Unlocking the door, I went straight for the staircase. Downstairs was set up like a hotel with an indoor pool, hot tub, and bar. To me it might as well have been a seedy bathhouse. I'd never partake in the biker's parties, not in a month of Sundays. Not even if Hallow begged me.

I'd been to one of their orgies and that was enough.

Speaking of orgies, waving, I smiled a greeting to Kingpin's two women who were coming down the steps. Two yawning zombies, Memphis and Junebug trudged down the stairs, practically ignoring my presence as usual. It's not just that the whores didn't like me, my coming over was second hat. They were all too used to seeing me bright and early. Not to mention upset at having to be long gone at this hour as Kingpin demanded.

As to why I wasn't their favorite, I glanced at the very reasonable engagement ring on my finger. I was practically Hallow's Ol' Lady. And Ol' Ladies didn't come to Royal Road, heaven forbid. Not as often as I did. They came for scheduled events, but they didn't work there. They wouldn't be caught dead performing as I did, alongside the strippers. The lot that married into this bunch of bikers had too much pride for that. The women at the Eagles' Nest thought they were tough and righteous, but most of them were kept women in my eyes. Mostly kept away from Royal Road. Never

planning to be a kept woman, I intended to contribute to my marriage.

Junebug didn't want things to change around Royal Road, ever, so my presence at the Big House jarred her. Memphis managed the sweetbutts, so didn't know how to treat the likes of me, someone who wasn't a whore for all the biker's pleasure. A woman valued by a member, by the president. A woman at Royal Road who had to be respected. One she couldn't rule around the clubhouse on a daily basis.

The audacity of me.

On the second floor, the President of the Royal Bastards waited for me. The head biker had half of his residence set up as what he simply called his music room. But it was anything but simple. A baby grand piano graced the entrance which was set up much like a living room. Further inside, all the equipment one could ever want was artfully displayed. Like the club house, it was fancy, high scale. The best part, a little recording studio hid in the back, complete with a vocal booth which I preferred. Apparently, Kingpin had been into music before he spent years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. He often explained, he only dabbled. It was his hobby. But the fact his twin brother used his name and story to become one of the most famous stars in Nashville wasn't lost on me.

The biker's eyes met mine only briefly before he quickly took me in. "Eve, you're practically glowing this afternoon."

Glowing? Like I'm pregnant. Good thing Hallow was gone or he'd know. I'd not be able to wait. On the other hand, Kingpin could see right through me. And he was always full of compliments.

I rolled my eyes. "Let's just get on with this."

"Feisty as ever I see, Angel." He winked.

"Lordalmighty. Don't call me that."

"Ain't it your name?" He knew better. He'd been calling me by my middle name since he'd found it out.

“I wish you’d put a shirt on.”

“What? Does all this distract you?” Kingpin gestured toward his tattoos and piercings with a sly grin.

In nothing but tight leather pants the biker looked like evil incarnate with his jewelry sticking out of him like he were a voodoo doll. Kingpin had earrings, a nose ring, his eyebrow pierced, bars in his nipples and one in his tongue. I’d heard he had his nether region pierced too.

Lordalmighty, I couldn’t imagine.

Chunky silver rings, practically satanic looking, adorned his fingers that were tipped in black. Since he didn’t have on any damn shoes, I saw he had matching black toenails. They matched his long dark hair and beard, like he’d gone to some goth salon.

It was as if Ozzy Osbourne and Marilyn Manson had a love child, and Alice Cooper had been his nanny, taught him eyeliner. But that wasn’t exactly fair. Kingpin’s eyes were lined better than mine ever were. You couldn’t exactly tell until you had to stare in his eyes.

Whatever it was, I didn’t like it. Not one bit. Where I was at least southern rock, if not all country, Kingpin was thrash, blood-sucking metal. The definition of a biker, like Judas Priest kind of biker, Prez was the original with leather and chains and spikes.

Oh my.

It wasn’t that I wholly disliked bikers. Oh heavens no. My father had been a notorious one, called Fighting Cock. Therefore, I spent my life defending the bunch, ridiculous names or not. And I was with Hallow, after all. But my biker wasn’t that kind of biker. Sure, he had his cut, leather chaps and biker boots with his jeans. Nevertheless, Hallow was hot in a more wholesome way. Though tough, an ex-cop and ex-detective, he’d remind me, and all, there was a goodness to my biker that shined through his rough exterior. Hallow still craved justice, to do right. That was one thing I loved about him.

Just one look at Kingpin and you could tell he was bad to the bone.

Instead of putting his shirt on, he lit a cigarette. Scrunching my nose, I touched my middle thinking of my late period. I couldn't complain or give myself away. Prez noticed everything. The man was quick. The last thing I needed was for this biker to have any more power over me.

Luckily, Prez hadn't noticed. In nothing but his leather pants, Kingpin was in deep concentration as he fiddled with the microphone.

"Crap, where's my manners? Get us a drink, will ya?" He spoke to the microphone, not me.

Blowing out air, I went to his drink cart and poured him some Dickel into his fancy glass. Not only did he have polished rings, but his glasses were also adorned in metal skulls. Sometimes I had a shot, to ease my nerves, too. I'd turned twenty-one in December so at least I legally could. I wouldn't be drinking that day. Too bad there was no water or anything without a proof, for that matter.

I handed Kingpin his drink while he was still setting up equipment. Taking it, his hand brushed mine. As if triggered by the touch, his eyes narrowed. He smiled sideways at me like he would eat me but not exactly in the bad way.

Suddenly, I felt parched.

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Chapter 2

Eve

I waited for it, but Kingpin didn't make a pass at me. Thankfully, it seemed we were past him reminding me if Hallow gave me up, the club would take me as a whore, and he'd be the first in line. I'd never have it anyways and argued with him until I was blue in the face. Sometimes, I felt he only stopped pestering me because he hated to waste time.

"Enough with the pleasantries," he declared.

Honestly, most of the time anymore, Prez was strictly business, or I would've stopped coming.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

I nodded, but he wasn't looking. "Yeah," I breathed.

Kingpin had some sort of theory that if I could sing in front of him, I could sing in front of a crowd. And for the most part, he'd been right. After all, he was the one I feared the most around this biker clubhouse and for good reason. Even more than Leviathan, the biker I was told would want to kill me all because of my father's ties to a rival gang, the Asphalt Gods' MC, Kingpin held all the cards.

With his drink in hand, Prez went to his piano. He might play, or he might just rest his chin on his hand and stare me down as I performed. I was expected to look at him too, keep eye contact, and sing to him. I wouldn't be allowed to look away as he undressed me with his eyes. Here all this time, I thought I needed to imagine the audience naked.

Silly me.

"If you could just find one person to focus on instead of the size of the crowd," he'd said, like he'd struck oil.

It'd been exactly what had worked for me before at Bootsies, on the rare occasion I did get up and sing. Little did he know, the eyes I made contact with were the flat painted eyes of our mechanical bull. Come to find out, getting comfortable singing in front of a scary biker like Kingpin did

make me more relaxed on stage. We'd been working for months like this. And it'd turned into more than just overcoming my nerves.

Kingpin knew a thing or two about music, so our practice sessions were actually good for me. He taught me how to warm up properly, work on my breath control and emote and enunciate. Kingpin told me that he and his brother both took professional lessons as children. We practiced scales and he taught me tongue drills. I'd simply sang in the church choir where they'd taught me none of this. Maybe if I'd joined the choir in school, it'd be a different story.

From the moment I stepped into the Big House, I felt I had so much to learn and someone who wanted to help me improve. Prez coached me when he wasn't just saying shit to make me angry. He'd learned when I was mad, I didn't care about the crowd. I'd never been able to rehearse like this before at home or at Gran's, even back in the church choir in Flipping, Arkansas. Plus, I had a real studio to train in.

I'd become mighty grateful for it all.

Kingpin let me pick the songs. Hell, he'd even hired a band for me. He didn't mind me practicing my own songs, either. Said I could sing whatever I thought appropriate at Royal Road. That really narrowed my choices, though. Nevertheless, he was giving me that responsibility. The biker thought I could eventually sing somewhere other than the clubhouse, but he wasn't talking about Broadway in Nashville. He filled my head with loftier dreams.

Kingpin and I were finding my vocal range. He'd decide to make me sing something I didn't think I could. Like something from an amazing vocalist, like Allison Krauss. I'd at least try it for him. "Sleep On", was a hard one for me.

At one point I faltered, I broke his stare and looked to the ceiling.

"That was flat." Kingpin didn't care one bit to tell me.

"I know," I complained.

"I'm losing my boner."

“You’re disgusting,” I spat. My hands shot to my hips.

Kingpin smiled at my reaction.

“I think I’m done for the day. I ain’t here to be your entertainment.”

“The crowd’s disgusting too. All those men’s eyes on you. Keep your shoulders back. You’re slumping.” As demeaning as it sounded, he was right. I had slumped over like a potato sack.

Kingpin’s stare left my eyes to travel down my body. His look made me want to cover up. But that was the point. I was supposed to ignore it and sing anyway. Kingpin reminded me I was selling a product. A beautiful noise, out of a beautiful body, he’d say. Again, gross, but he was right. But at least he was no longer coming over to pull my shoulders himself. We’d developed some boundaries. Putting my shoulders back, I pushed out my girls. I knew he noticed.

I ignored him.

And it worked.

For two hours I forgot all about everything, about Hallow’s absence, about being late. I was 100% focused on music. And yes, Kingman, irked the hell out of me during it, critiquing every note I made at times. Pissed me off at every turn. Hell, at this rate, I’d never have stage fright again. The man nitpicked at everything. How could I possibly fail on stage when I had to overcome the likes of him?

Prez left the piano, a sure sign we were finished.

“How was that?” I asked him eagerly before I caught myself. I never usually sought his approval.

Crossing the room, he paced, “I think you’re ready for a bigger crowd.”

My head went side to side as I continued to keep eye contact like before. I shook my head to break out of the hypnosis.

“You really think so?” I glanced at my feet.

“I do. This weekend,” Kingpin suggested, his voice excited.

So far, I’d never performed on the weekend. “I don’t know. I’m still a nervous wreck.”

“We’ll practice on stage tomorrow in front of the small crowd.”

A small crowd, that much I’d been doing. Shuddering my head automatically, I said, “I’ll think about it.”

Kingpin’s voice boomed. “You won’t think about it. This is the next step. You’ll never be ready if you keep waiting.”

“I don’t know.”

“Ain’t that the goal? Ain’t that the point of all this? You being able to perform?”

I had half a mind to ask him to promote Hallow to an officer if he wanted me to perform so badly. Shrugging my shoulders, I couldn’t muster the courage to bargain for my fiancé. I didn’t know if Kingpin really wanted me on stage or if this was just a favor to us as well. Because I agreed to this shit, Kingpin already took care of all Hallow’s medical bills, tying him even more to the club. Prez knew, more than anybody, the measly amount of money Hallow made as a member and nothing else.

He also knew that my fiancé was in hiding. He couldn’t just go get a regular job like everyone else. When Hallow came to the Nashville chapter, he had high hopes of becoming an officer immediately, especially with his background in law enforcement, but he quickly found out how much Kingpin didn’t trust the police. Not just that, Prez didn’t trust them because his no-good father had been a cop.

Kingpin took the misgivings written on my face as nerves about singing. “It’ll be okay. You’re going to be a star. Hell, you’ll be better than Dimple.” He spoke of our Elvis impersonator who was a member.

“I’d hope so.” Nothing against Dimple, but he was the fat, drug laden Elvis if anything.

“Could be better than Bubba.”

“Is that why you’re helping me, Kingpin? So, I can take down your brother, the great Beau Strick.”

Kingpin took a seat in the middle of his couch and put his feet up on the coffee table. He stretched both arms along the couch so I couldn’t take a seat. I wouldn’t sit beside him anyhow.

“Wouldn’t it be grand if you did?”

“Really? I don’t think I’ll be up against him at the CMA’s anytime soon.”

“No. But somebody has to keep the crowd coming around here with our fights paused. Besides, you need this. You’re getting paid. You’ll be able to afford that honeymoon that you want with that detective of yours.”

Prez rarely used Hallow’s name. And he did pay me well for my performances even though they were few and far between. I knew he had high hopes that I’d bring in a much larger crowd, and that I’d be able to perform almost every night soon. I wanted that too. Hallow and I needed the money that a full-time job brought, even though my fiancé didn’t seem to think so. And with me being late, we were about to need even more money. I didn’t know if this biker and high rolling crowd at Royal Road would want to come and see a pregnant lady belting out a tune. I’d have to act soon if I wanted to bargain and Prez to promote Hallow. Wringing my hands, I tried to work up the courage. My mouth opened and shut a few times.

Kingpin made a funny face. “If you’re worried about money, Eve, don’t worry. I can pay an advance.”

“No,” I said, quick. I didn’t need to owe him more than I did.

“Beau... speaking of Bubba. He wants to shoot his video here.”

“You’re going to allow that?” Everyone knew how much Kingpin hated his brother. And even normal guests weren’t allowed to film inside the clubhouse.

“You could sing during the after party. It pays better than I do. Plus, they’ll be industry people around,” he offered.

Instantly, I felt his kindness had to be a trick. “Maybe I’ll get discovered and can leave Royal Road for good,” I spat.

“Wouldn’t be the first time someone here hit it big and left. Just don’t forget us when you leave with my brother,” he joked. “We’ll clear the clubhouse out of course. Take down anything that would give away the location to the public. What do you think? With Bubba’s money we could rebuild the arena right away.”

“Why are you asking me?” I sounded almost as perplexed as I was.

“It’d bring your man home. I need him as a fighter, not in Texas. You’ve got to be getting lonely.”

“Keep your nose out of our business,” I sneered, but as far as I knew Hallow was cleaning up some loose ends in Arkansas.

“I’m just trying to make chicken salad out of chicken shit. I want you on stage, Eve. Not that I’d throw you out of my bed, but it’s quite crowded already.”

“Three too much for you?” I knew besides Memphis and Junebug, he dated a redheaded woman. Them being blonde, brunette, and ginger, he nearly had a whole set.

“I ain’t as young as I used to be,” Kingpin said, cracking his arms.

I closed my eyes, so I didn’t notice how nice his body was for his age. “When I met you, you were at an orgy.”

“Hosting. I didn’t partake. Only one of us got laid that night,” Kingpin said with a sneer. “At the Orgy,” he added to make sure I knew he had sex afterwards.

Thinking about how he demanded Hallow participate in the show, have sex with me to prove he wasn’t lying about our relationship, I stared daggers at him.

“You can’t deny you had every intention of losing your virginity that night,” he said as some sort of explanation.

“I’m sort of over all of that.” After all, I was engaged to Hallow.

“It was Hallow’s fault for lying to his President.”

“Is that an apology?” I rolled my eyes.

“No. It’s a fact. Your detective disrespected me, his President. He has no loyalty.”

“Are you serious? Like y’all are a loyal bunch.”

“Even with Hallow’s lies, this club saved his ass and yours. I did.”

Hallow made the choice to save me from the Royal Bastards MC. Yes, he lied to Kingpin to do it, and afterwards, Kingpin saved Hallow and I from certain death. But it felt much more complicated than that.

Before anything else could be said about the matter, Kingpin’s third woman appeared in the door frame, frowning as she often did when she saw me. It was my turn to have daggers shot at me.

I was no threat to Ginger.

“See you tomorrow, Eve. Mainstage at noon,” Kingpin said, shooing me out.

I left as fast as I could.

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Chapter 3

Eve

Blasting the radio, I drove home to an empty house at the Eagles' Nest, the place Kingpin rented out to Hallow and I. Stepping through the door, solitude greeted me.

"Honey, I'm home," I called out anyway.

Plugging up my phone, I couldn't even call Hallow. He was on that kind of job, he'd said. I'd have to wait for him to reach out to me. I thought about Kingpin saying he was in Texas but quickly dismissed it. Of course, I wouldn't know where Hallow was if I couldn't even contact him.

Reminding myself, I was all alone because Hallow was out winning our bread and butter, I made myself just that. White bread and Country Crock. I've been craving it. Maybe the weird hankerings had begun? But something else started. Suddenly, I couldn't eat. An excruciatingly unbearable sickness lurched in my stomach. I was gonna shit my pants and puke at the same time. I spent hours on the toilet. Thinking I ate something bad, I went over every meal I'd consumed in the last couple of days. I cursed my love of fast food as I did. With all the junk I'd crammed in my mouth I didn't know how I was still as thin as I was.

Eventually, the pain subsided enough that I could fall asleep.

I woke up in an empty bed. Rolling over, I breathed in Hallow's pillow. Still smelled like him. I missed his warmth beside me. Without him, I was freezing even though I was wrapped up like a burrito. A floral comforter burrito. Sitting up, I noticed the red sauce. My panties were soaked with blood.

I'd started my period. All my hopes of being pregnant went out the window. Last night's sickness had been cramps, I thought until it happened again right away. A sharp pain shot through my pelvis. Thinking about the ER, I knew I didn't want a large bill. Frankly, I didn't have a doctor in Nashville. I

didn't know who to call. I'd not been to an OBGYN since living in Arkansas. Being young and healthy, I simply got my birth control online.

With all my worries, I called Royal Road to tell Kingpin I wouldn't be into practice.

Minni answered, "Who's this?" It was abrupt, but I doubted at eight in the morning anyone was awake at Royal Road.

"It's Eve. Can you give a message to Kingpin?"

"Too early for that. Kingpin wants everyone to use his direct line, anyhow." She gave me his number.

"Just tell him, I won't be in. Okay?"

I was aggravated for a moment because I preferred not to communicate with Kingpin that way. If I called him, he'd have my number.

"I'm heading home soon," Minni explained.

"Leave a note."

"Prez says no more notes."

I started to ask her to text him for me, but decided this was the least of my problems. Reluctantly, I put her on speaker and entered his number into my contacts.

"Is that all you need?" Minni asked.

One of the sweetbutts, she'd have to know where to go for women's problems. So, I asked her. "Preferably somewhere I can get in right away."

"For an abortion?"

"No, for a test. A checkup," I squeaked.

"Who's this for?"

"Me," I answered honestly. "Just need my yearly checkup," I lied, but sprinkled in the truth, "Ain't had one since I moved from Arkansas."

"Need a checkup right away. Right?" she inquired, sounding all too curious.

Fuck. “Minni, I need this kept between us.”

“You’re smashing the boss, ain’t you?”

“No,” I bellowed. I didn’t have time to dispel rumors at Royal Road. I shouldn’t have even asked her. “I’m engaged,” I reminded her.

“Prez doesn’t do favors for nothing,” Minni said, matter of factly. “Pretty soon he’ll expect you to pay up.”

“Seriously,” I whined. “You can’t tell anyone I asked.”

Before I could hang up on her, Minni gave me a recommendation, but I could tell by her voice she thought I was nothing but Kingpin’s whore.

None of that mattered because the dull pain lingered. I called and the women’s clinic scheduled me in right away to see a nurse practitioner. Driving myself there was out of the question. I thought about getting my neighbor Connie to drive me, but a member’s wife, she’d tell him, and he’d tell Hallow. I didn’t want to worry my fiancé when I could just be having bad cramps. I opened the app on my phone and requested an Uber.

Sitting in a hospital gown, my ass sticking to the thin paper meant to keep the padded table clean, I found out I’d been right. I was pregnant. A couple months so, at least. My world spun. Elation took over. Then worry. Still having cramps, I was bleeding. Something wasn’t right.

Then came the questions. How were my periods? Irregular to say the least. The door opened and my nurse was joined by a man, the actual doctor I found out as I took his clammy, hairy hand. They had all kinds of questions about my sex life. I’d only recently had one, Hallow being my first and last. But there was no time for me to be too embarrassed. Everyone around me had a nervous energy as they hurried along with my exams. Doing an ultrasound, they confirmed the worst. There was no heartbeat. Plus, I was farther along than they’d thought.

The tears were instant. Although the possibility had hung in the air, I hadn’t been prepared for the news. The nurse

tried to comfort me. They said I'd have a procedure to remove all the tissue. They were fixin' to scrape me out like a pumpkin. The good news was, they could do it today.

"Do you have anyone to call?" she asked. "To help you process the loss?"

Looking over at my purse that sat on my bundle of clothes, hiding my drawers. I knew my phone was inside. But I couldn't call Hallow. Not being able to contact him really stuck in my craw. A simple hello was all I needed, but I could put him in real danger.

"Do you need me to get your purse?" the nurse asked.

I nodded.

Saving face, I searched for my phone and found it. The nurse stepped out of the room. Staring at my phone, I didn't have anyone to call. I'd never get a hold of anyone in my family and if I did what would I say? Anyone at the club, I didn't want them to know my situation and tell Hallow.

Fuck, it was almost noon.

Thumbing through my contacts, I halfheartedly clicked on a name. I shot a text to Kingpin. "I can't come over and practice today."

He answered right away, "Who's this?"

"Lordalmighty. How many women do you see?"

"Eve? Eve Angel Newberry."

Fuck. He had my number and was probably entering my full name.

"You're not coming? What's wrong? Did Ginger scare you off?"

"No. I'm sick. Really sick. There's no way I can sing today."

"That's no good. What's wrong?"

At the words, I cried and thought about how I felt so alone.

When I didn't answer he answered, "I'll send Connie over with some chicken soup."

"Thx," I texted back.

And that was that.

The nurse returned asking if I had a ride home. Making sure my phone was on silent, I stuffed it back in my purse.

"My fiancé is out of town. I'll take an Uber home."

The D&C just made it all real again. I'd been pregnant and lost the baby before I ever knew it. After it was complete, I didn't take in all the instructions, everything they said. They had all my labs back. My doctor told me in no uncertain terms, I wasn't to try to get pregnant again. Not right away. Something was wrong with my blood work, with my thyroid.

Getting pregnant would cause a slew of complications for me. He droned on about how they could take care of it. Something about radiation. But I shouldn't get pregnant during that treatment either. He also said my blood pressure and my sugar were way too high. He said by the looks of me, that was triggered by the pregnancy. Whatever that meant. And in the end, they made an appointment for me to see an endocrinologist six months down the road to figure me out.

Trying to wrap my head around it, I left the doctor's office in a daze. In the car, I checked my phone to see if I had anything from Hallow. Nothing. He was still on a run. Confused, I read over the paperwork. I had a referral to a specialist that simply stated, "Infertility." I stared at the word until my eyes crossed.

Back at the house, Connie waited on my doorstep. She'd brought soup.

Before I got out of the sedan, I stuffed the paperwork in my purse so she wouldn't see it. Connie caught my elbow and helped me to the front door. "Girl, you look like roadkill. What on earth is wrong? Where have you been?"

"Just got back from the doctor. I have the flu." Sniffing for good measure, I took the bowl she offered. "You don't want to come in."

Connie stepped back, mumbling something about not wanting her grandbabies to get sick.

“I’ll call you,” she said as I locked myself inside.

I didn’t leave our house at the Eagles’ Nest all week. I texted Kingpin that I had the flu, and I wouldn’t be around. Never mind it was nearly April. Regardless, everyone seemed to buy it. The next time, Kingpin sent Alli to check on me. I guess Connie didn’t want my germs. Alli, on the other hand, didn’t care. I couldn’t get rid of her.

I never told her the truth, but I cried so much she figured it out.

“I won’t tell anyone,” she promised. “Hallow will be back soon and you can try again.”

As luck would have it, Hallow returned the next week. Since I had no flu symptoms, I simply explained I was on my period, a bad one. That I felt like shit. After all, I wasn’t supposed to have sex for two weeks. And that was just the beginning of me refusing Hallow.

Going forward, I kept what happened from him because I was scared of the worst part of it. The doctor acted like I shouldn’t get pregnant again. And talking like once I had treatment for whatever was wrong with me, I couldn’t get pregnant during that time either. I was to be seen for infertility. What if I could never have children? All Hallow talked about was wanting to have a baby with me. Here we were on track to get married and have our happily ever after. If I wasn’t able to give Hallow a family, I worried he wouldn’t feel the same about me.

I kept the secret allowing it to eat me away inside.

“Hallow, would you ever keep anything from me?” I asked him one night.

“Like what?”

“I don’t know. Something you feel is personal but also, I should know about.”

“You found out about the pig hunt, didn’t you?”

Pig hunt? “What are you talking about?”

Hallow had been caught. He explained he hadn't been on a run for the club when I was suffering a miscarriage. He was in Texas hunting wild hogs with Thorn and other members.

“I planned it before we got together,” he said as if that explained why he hadn't told me about it. Why he hid it. “You know I bought that Winchester.”

“Yes, I know you bought a two-thousand-dollar gun while I'm worried about paying bills.”

“It wasn't nearly that much. And you don't need to worry,” Hallow tried. “You don't need to be singing at the clubhouse, either.”

“I thought you were in Arkansas, and I couldn't contact you. That I would get you killed or something. And what do you expect me to do while you're hunting pigs?”

“We did have shit to do on the way, in Arkansas. I never said I was going solely on a run. I simply told you I was running with Thorn and Creek. I figured you realized.”

“Next thing I know you'll tell me you were with other women in Texas. Like I was supposed to figure that too.”

The biker's face dropped for a moment.

Fuck. “Spill it.”

“Okay, Eve. It was no big deal. I wasn't with anyone. I didn't touch a woman, but we went to a massage parlor, and I had a happy ending. But only a hand job, I swear.”

With that, Hallow and I had our first real fight that seemed to drag on for weeks. But our lives went on. We made up slowly. Hallow ran with his club, while I performed at Royal Road, for Kingpin. And yes, I planned a wedding. All the while, even though he had hurt me, I felt guilty. Like I was tricking Hallow into a life with me. Defective me. But I was also so angry at him that he hadn't been there for me. That while I was alone, suffering, he was having a happy ending.

Getting jerked off by a stranger. There was no way I could open up to him and tell him the truth.

Then all of a sudden, Kingpin met someone. We stopped practicing for a long while. I seemed to be flying solo, able to perform without him. Something I always wanted. Hallow and I saw each other when we could. Eventually, I was able to have sex with him, but it wasn't as regular as he wanted it. I chalked it up to wedding nerves. With such a big secret, and resentment, I found it hard to be intimate with my fiancé. I knew I needed to tell him the truth. But I couldn't bring myself to do it and fight again.

I lied by omission.

That's why I couldn't live with it. That's why I got cold feet about our wedding.

That's why I called my brother Hob the day before the wedding.

"I can't go through with it," I said to my younger brother. We hadn't talked often but the bond was there. I felt I could confide in him. "I wish I wasn't in this mess. I feel like I can't back out even if I wanted to."

"Come back to Arkansas. I'll protect you," he promised.

I had no idea that he was running with the Asphalt Gods MC. Last thing I knew, Hob was in college.

Then I heard the news that night.

Keeping traditions, Hallow and I weren't to see one another the night before the wedding. He was busy having a bachelor party outside of Royal Road that I didn't want to think about. I didn't even know where he was or what he was doing. Or who? I cursed those sorts of thoughts.

The ol' ladies at the Eagles' Nest put together a party for me, complete with strippers who I definitely did not want to touch. Though nice to look at, I'd not known where these handsome, muscly men had been. I was just happy not to be on Broadway in Nashville with a million other brides to be. The other ladies had a blast as they gave me a biker version of

a bachelorette party. It was raunchy as hell with dick shaped everything and really cheered me up.

I began rethinking running as the party progressed. The more I drank, the more confused I became. Especially when the women initiated me into their ol' ladies' club. When they first mentioned it, I thought they were going to beat me in. But no, I got to take a swing at all of them, one by one. If I landed a punch, I would be higher than that ol' lady I hit. If I hit one of them, she could try to hit me back.

Needless to say, I missed all my punches. I didn't want to mess up my face for my wedding. Which I felt was the point. Afterall, any of them could kick my ass. I was the low woman on the totem pole, and I knew it. Even so, I had a good time and felt more than included in the group. When the party ended, I rode back to Royal Road on the back of Connie's motorcycle. Off to spend the night in a separate room from Hallow.

That's when Opry let me know since he ran the business side of Royal Road.

I was staying over the clubhouse. He knocked on my door. "Slight change of plans tomorrow. Don't come out until the music starts a second time."

"Why on earth?" I asked, although I meant to run off.

"Since we already have the clubhouse set up, and everyone's going to be here, Kingpin's fixin to use the space. Before your wedding. Don't worry, after that, it's all about you and Hallow."

Thinking Opry was talking about some sort of club meeting, I asked about the music, genuinely curious. "What? Is Prez fixing to walk down the aisle?"

With a befuddled expression, Opry tilted his cowboy hat. "No, but I reckon, Sky's going to."

Lordalmighty.

"Kingpin's marrying a girl he's been with a little over a month, and it's got to be on my wedding day? The day I've been planning nearly eight months?"

Livid wasn't the word. I got so angry that I called Hob, called the whole thing off. I wouldn't run. But my brother wouldn't have it? He said he was coming to get me, and nothing could stop him. I didn't think him showing up would amount to a hill of beans. We'd have to hide the fact he was my brother from Leviathan but otherwise, I had every intention of walking down the aisle the next day.

Getting ready for our wedding, I knew I loved Hallow to pieces. I'd marry him first and then tell him about my infertility issues before the honeymoon. I reckoned that was as good a solution as any. But just as I was about to go on, Hob came roaring in with ten motorcycles, with the Asphalt Gods MC.

At the sight of him, wearing a cut from our enemy club, I had no choice but to leave Hallow at the altar. All to save my brother.

However, my biggest mistake was asking Kingpin to help me win Hallow back.

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Chapter 4

Eve

Kingpin shined a light on me in the dark dank, abandoned factory where I waited on him.

I had called Paisley to come pick me up. We formulated a plan to get Kingpin out to me, by giving him a note I'd written signed by Noah Fond, one of his biggest enemies. We wrote, Mr. Fond would kill his wife and child. That he should come alone. The whore added that last bit about his baby. I hadn't known, but she'd heard Sky was pregnant. That explained Kingpin's shotgun wedding.

"What the hell is this about? You really ran off?"

I'd been crying my eyes out, and he was blinding me. "I reckon."

Kingpin's jaw dropped. The biker handed me his bandana.

Hell, having spent the better part of the day on the back of a motorcycle and with all my tears, I must've looked a fright. I cleaned up as much as I could.

"Nice fucking note. Threatening my wife." Kingpin was fit to be tied.

"Lordalmighty. Would you've come for just little ol' me?"

"What's going on, here? We followed a slew of bikers out of Royal Road." Kingpin was angry but still surprised.

"Now don't fly off the handle. I wasn't kidnapped. I need you to break it to Hallow, softly. I still love him. I've really screwed up."

"What's going on? Talk to me." Kingpin shifted into the steadfast methods we used while I got over my stage fright. "Look at me," he demanded in his incredibly overbearing way.

Bracing myself, I did just that. I stared down this evil powerful man. I started to explain. Then I stopped. Hush my mouth, I couldn't tell my secret. It was just too personal for the likes of him.

Kingpin banged on the table scaring the Dickens out of me.

Jumping, I puffed air.

Prez leapt to his feet. He was going to leave.

“Wait, Kingpin. I need you. I'll explain,” I howled.

The man looked like he'd kill me at any moment. I was keeping him from his honeymoon.

“You're the only one who can help me,” I pleaded.

“Go on,” he gave in, but only a little. “Why ain't you in Arkansas?”

“I made Hob bring me back. Nashville's my home now. And I have a gig next week, with you, remember? Was supposed to be after my honeymoon.”

“Your brother just brought you back? You have any trouble getting him to bring you back?”

“It took some convincing,” I admitted.

“Spill it,” he demanded.

I summoned up the courage. “Once we got across the border, we stopped to talk about it. Hob overheard some of the bikers say they had plans for me. He didn't tell me what, but I can only guess. They weren't planning on throwing me a welcoming party.” Vulnerable, I took Prez's hand. “That's the other thing. My brother brought me back on his own. We escaped the Gods. He doesn't know if he can return to Arkansas. If he defects, will you protect him? I kind of promised him you would already.”

“Where is he now?” he asked.

“Hiding.” Hob was at my Gran's house. Not a safe place to be.

“How did you get all the way out here?” Kingpin was full of questions.

“Paisley picked me up and dropped me off.”

“Why ain’t you telling all this to Hallow?”

“Kingpin, I need you,” I all but whined into the dark surrounding us. “You’ve always helped me out. You’re the one who made me realize I could get over my stage fright when I was angry enough. You made me angry at you. You taught me to channel my disappointment into wrath. Direct that anger at my fears and overcome them. But the thought of losing Hallow is just too much to bear. I need you to help tell him. He’s going to be madder than a hornet in a coke can.”

Kingpin easily understood my situation. “Fuck, Eve. Just let him think someone took you. It’d be much easier than telling a man you ran away from him on your wedding day.”

“You don’t think he’ll understand?”

“You don’t think he’ll understand, or you’d tell him. A man’s ego is fragile. Hallow’s ego, that is. Let him think Noah Fond took you, and I rescued you, tonight. Easy.” Kingpin winked.

Hell’s bells. Was I holding his hand? I remedied that and wiped my hand on my britches. “Is that your advice? Lie. Lie to the man I love?”

“Yes. Always lie. No one wants to know the truth. The truth ruins everything.”

“No. I was wrong for not talking to Hallow in the first place. Besides, if we can’t make it through this, and if he doesn’t want to forgive me, be with me now, we’re not meant to be.”

“Meant to be?” He boomed, like he thought the notion was ridiculous. “Don’t go thinking you’re meant to be with anyone. That kind of thinking will turn you blind to true love.”

“Ain’t you calling the kettle black? Ain’t you meant to be with Sky?”

“No. I let myself love Sky. I chose to be with Sky.”

“What if she lies to you? Would you choose differently?”

“This ain’t about me.”

“Please, Kingpin. I just need you to do one thing, be my messenger.”

“What do you need me to say?” The biker was giving in.

“And protect my brother. Well, I guess three things. I also need you to carry me to the store.” I didn’t have a way home.

“I won’t take you home. Hallow’s not there. I can take you back to Royal Road, but Hallow’s not there, either.”

“Where is he?”

“He’s back from Arkansas but still looking for you.”

Poor Hallow. “Alone?”

“Nah. He’s got a crew with him.”

Of course, he did. Hallow thinks I’ve been kidnapped. He was going to be so mad when he found out otherwise and who could blame him? “Y’all wouldn’t let me leave if I wanted to,” I complained.

“That’s bullshit, Eve. You should know by the situation with your brother, the Gods sure as hell wouldn’t be taking you on a joy ride. They want to punish us by harming you. Your dad, Fighting Cock means nothing to them. Killer said so himself today. Before I shot him. If he dies, I’m going to have every God in the U.S. of A breathing down my throat.”

Fuck, Kingpin had been in Arkansas looking for me.

“Apparently, your brother who had to have been only a prospect didn’t mean shit either. Did their President know about this?”

“I don’t know. When I called Hob, I didn’t know he had anything to do with them. I thought he was still in college. He pulled the wool over my eyes.” I was pretty upset Hob hadn’t told me and put me in the situation of having to leave

my wedding to protect him. Although it had all been my fault in the first place.

“You want to leave Hallow and leave this club, that’s your choice. You’ll pay the cost. Remember, I made a deal with Leviathan for you. You’re safe here.”

“You’re still saying a biker in this club would actually kill me because of my dad if I hadn’t been with Hallow?” The suggestion still seemed absurd.

“Yes, you’d be an easy mark for Levi. Connected but not cared about enough to cause us any real trouble. But you’re one of us now. You belong not just to Hallow, but to the Royal Bastards MC here in Nashville if he decides he’s done with you. You want to leave. You have to go through me. You go off and do something crazy, defect to their club, I won’t be able to protect you.”

I followed Kingpin out to his motorcycle. The biker sat down on his Harley, and the engine roared. I stared at his back, at the logo on his cut that was much more worn than Hallow’s. I had reservations about riding with him, but what choice did I have? Climbing on the back, I gently placed my hands on his sides.

“You’re going to fall off if you don’t hold on,” he bellowed over the rumble. Then he took off like a rocket.

Quickly, I had to catch myself by wrapping my arms tightly around him. His long hair got in my face, and I spit it out. I hid behind him as the wind beat me from all sides. I’d been on too many motorcycles today that weren’t Hallow’s, first Hob’s and now Kingpin’s. The biker ignored the gate we all checked in at and took an alternate route through the property to pull up to the clubhouse.

A biker called, the guard, Gunn approached him complaining.

Kingpin cut his engine and barked back, “I just figure if the Gods can roll in here and kidnap someone, it’s my goddamn club.”

Gunn backed off, and Kingpin told me to go inside, that he'd find Hallow.

Going inside, I sat at the bar and poured my heart out to Paisley. After all she helped get Kingpin to me. She agreed I could stay in her room above the clubhouse. There I waited for Kingpin to tell Hallow the news. I cleaned up as best I could since my hair was windblown, and my running wedding makeup made me look like a scary clown. When I didn't hear back from Kingpin or hear from Hallow, I went to find Prez to see how things went. Down in the clubhouse I spotted Hallow right away.

My heart stopped at the sight of him. My biker spotted me across the room, too. Our eyes made contact before he tore his gaze from me. Fuck. I guess Kingpin hadn't told him.

I'd have to do it myself. I ran over to him. "Hallow, I can explain," I tried. I took his arm. Snarling, he wrenched it from me. His attention was on the women in front of him. Pretending I didn't exist, Hallow continued his conversation with the scantily clad women. I'd not seen them before, nothing unusual around here. In club gear, the two brunettes could be twins.

My hands on my hips, I listened to him charm them.

"I used to be a detective, so I think I can handle finding two holes in the dark," he said.

I wheezed.

The women giggled on cue, but both shot glances to me.

Hallow disregarded me completely.

I attempted to explain again. "Hallow, it's all a mistake. I didn't mean for any of this to happen. I love you. I had every intention of saying I do this morning."

"Prez told me." Like I didn't exist, my biker stepped away from me. Putting his arms around the twins' shoulders, he took both women with him as he walked away.

Heat rose under my collar, but my shock and anger turned to sorrow, regret. My worst fears confirmed, I went to the Big House in tears.

Luckily, I caught Kingpin at the top of the stairs. I tried to compose myself but braced myself for the news. I needed to hear what Hallow said.

“You’re back. How’d it go?”

Kingpin’s hand landed on my shoulder. Pity written all over his face, he said, “Hallow needs time to cool off, love.”

“That’s funny. He’s here acting like I’m chopped liver. Flirting with any hussy who will give him the time of day. It’s downright embarrassing. What did you say to him?”

“Only what you asked me to. The truth. I warned you.” Taking my elbow, he suddenly led me down the hall to his music room.

Feeling at home, I practically collapsed on the piano.

Kingpin started pacing as usual. “What’s going on? Hallow said, you’ve been acting funny. What’s this secret of yours?” He stroked his beard, studying me, as if he could figure it out if he looked hard enough.

“Lordalmighty. You told him I was keeping a secret? No wonder he won’t speak to me.” I blamed Kingpin. It was much easier to be mad at him than Hallow who was acting like a fool.

“Hold it down. Sky’s sleeping,” his hushed voice became frantic. “You never said I should leave anything out. You wanted to tell him the truth. Remember?”

“Not about that. Not yet.” I tried to hold my voice down to not wake his ol’ lady. Kingpin’s wife was sleeping. The idea of what I’d lost, being Hallow’s ol’ lady, threw me into a tizzy. Distraught, I tried to hold it in. I wanted to throw something. Instead, I lifted my knees and hugged myself into a ball. “We were supposed to get married, Hallow and I, promising each other forever. Yeah, I have a secret, okay. Something I can’t bring myself to tell him,” I admitted.

“And?” Kingpin asked, approaching me.

“It’s none of your business,” I said automatically.

“Is it Hallow’s?”

He’d guessed right. “It’s probably something you should discuss with a future life partner, yes.”

“What? You can’t have kids or something?” He pretty much guessed it.

Feeling like I’d been hit by a truck, the truth, my throat burned. My face exploded in tears.

Before I knew it Kingpin had his arm around me, he stroked my hand consoling me. “Fuck, Eve. I didn’t know. I’m sorry.”

In such a state, I couldn’t refuse the comfort.

“It’s not the end of the world.”

His dismissal only made my anguish flourish. “Unless you wanna have a baby,” I wailed, releasing the true reason I was so distraught.

It hadn’t just been about Hallow. I’d been all alone. Hallow wasn’t there. I grieved alone. I managed the loss of the possibility alone. I’d not even made an appointment to figure myself out.

“Is that what Hallow wants?”

“He’s talked about it til the cows come home. Ever since the first time we met. You forget, we live over at the Eagles’ Nest. There are so many kids running around and Hallow keeps hinting. Everyone in the club keeps asking us when we’ll be getting pregnant. We said we would right away if the creek didn’t rise. I didn’t want to tell him about the high water,” I blathered out in between sobs.

“Is that what you want?” Kingpin asked.

It was what I wanted more than anything. Thinking of my dead mother and my lost time with her, I longed to be a mother myself. I collapsed against Kingpin’s chest, letting the

realization stab me in the gut. He caught me, his hand falling to my back.

“Marrying him without telling him. I was lying to him,” I cried, getting it all out.

Prez stole my chin and lifted my head. He stared at me like he often did but with so much empathy. “Listen here, love. Hallow’s a lucky man. You’re probably the prettiest girl in Nashville. One of the feistiest, for damned sure. And you happen to have the voice of an angel. Hallow doesn’t want you, we’ll do what we planned to anyway.”

Kingpin was determined to make me a star. Before Hallow and a baby, it was what I’d wanted more than anything, but the notion gave me little comfort.

He asked, “Are you sure you can’t get pregnant? How do you even know?”

The question sparked more tears. Snorting, I practically wiped my face on his chest. But I tried to explain the worst of it. “Because I’ve already lost our baby. My doctor said I shouldn’t even try again.”

Saying the horrible news aloud, I really lost it. Kingpin tried to soothe me as I wept into his arms.

He asked, “Does Hallow know?”

That was the worst part. I’d kept it from him. If I admitted that, I didn’t think I would survive the tears. I wouldn’t be able to pick myself off the floor. I resorted to Kingpin’s advice to dry my tears.

I lied. “Yeah, he knows that much.”

The lie settled me. It was between Hallow and I, anyhow, I told myself. My tears were drying, and I was beginning to realize the error of confessing my sins to the biggest sinner himself. I raised my head off his chest ready to detach myself.

“Where are you sleeping tonight?” Kingpin asked, ending our conversation.

“I’m over with Paisley,” I said, preparing to let him know I could manage my own way over.

Unexpectedly, Kingpin let go of me. I about tumbled to the floor. Catching myself, I saw why. Sky ran from the room. Naked as a jaybird, she had walked in on us in an embrace. Kingpin ran after her to explain. Mortified, I ran out of the room and down the stairs.

As I was leaving, I heard Kingpin shout, “Fuck, Sky. It’s not what it looks like.”

“Really? You’re half naked. Your pants are unzipped,” her voice came back.

Holy fuck. I didn’t mean to cause them any trouble.

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Chapter 5

Eve

Sobered by the fact my tears were causing a scene, I went back to Royal Road to set things right with Hallow. I'd tell him everything whether he wanted to hear it or not. My biker sat in the round corner booth, the one without a table like he was god damn Kingpin. Flanked by four strippers, Hallow looked like he was having the time of his fucking life.

I stood before him, not caring if tears streamed down my face. Speaking loudly, so he could hear me over the live band, I declared, "Hallow, this ends now. Come and let's talk this over."

"I don't want to hear your lies, Eve," he said, pulling one of the strippers to him. He kissed Cali right on the lips.

"How dare you?" I screeched, stomping my foot.

"I'm a single man, baby," Hallow said.

I about bowled over. Instead of staying and being humiliated further, I ran to Paisley's room above the clubhouse. I'd cried so hard over at the Big House. I couldn't believe I had more tears to shed. Hallow had called me a liar, and I'd lied to him. I deserved this. Self-pity consumed me until I didn't have any more tears.

"Paisley, is that you?" I heard a sound at the door.

Then came a knock, no someone was banging. Lordalmighty. "Hold your horses, I'm coming," I called out, thinking Paisley had locked herself out.

Opening the door, I got a shock. Hallow towered over me, his face mangled. He grabbed me, snatched me by the nightgown. Without a word, he bundled me up and took me across the room, and threw me on the bed with so much force that I bounced like a ball.

"What in the tarnation do you think you're doing?" I screamed in the midst of it. Then I propped myself up to get a good look at him.

Hallow scratched his face, making it bleed more like he relished the pain. “Eve, how could you do that to me? And then have the nerve to have fucking Kingpin come and tell me, of all people. You send that batshit crazy psycho. You can’t talk to me yourself? It’s a goddamn slap in the face to our relationship. Sending my fucking Prez to beat my ass. That motherfucking twig. He wanted me to come to you. Here I am. I could’ve been fucking two bitches tonight. At the same goddamn time. Yeah, I got my dick sucked already.”

I gasped, “Lordalmighty.”

“Yeah, you heard me. I’m not some pussy. You can’t just stand me up. Leave me at the altar and think that I’m gonna come crawling back to you. I’m going to get mine. I could have any woman in this joint. They be on their knees begging to suck my big dick.”

“Hallow, I sent Kingpin to explain. It’s all just a big misunderstanding, I promise. I didn’t wanna leave. I didn’t know what to do when Hob showed up with the Asphalt Gods MC. Y’all would’ve killed my brother.”

“Your brother wouldn’t have been here in the first place if you hadn’t called him. If you hadn’t planned to leave me. If you weren’t just pretending that you were going to marry me. Your big fucking wedding that was so important that you couldn’t marry me right away because you had to have it all, the friends, a bridesmaid at my club.”

“My best friend died, Hallow,” I shouted back.

It was no use explaining. He wasn’t listening. Drunk, he slurred, “You’ve made friends with everybody. We have a big wedding that we had to plan for months, and then you don’t even want to be there. And I know why.”

“Why? Kingpin tell you that, too?” Shit. He must’ve known I was lying about Hallow knowing about the miscarriage.

“Kingpin doesn’t have to tell me. I hear all the bikers here after you go to the Big House saying you’ve gone for your hot beef injection. You do whatever the fuck you’re

doing there with our Prez and all the sudden you have no problem getting up on stage and singing. You used to be this timid, sweet thing. And now you're clearly comfortable up on stage, even with the skanky hoes taking their clothes off right next to you. And you sing your heart out when you're singing with him. He's done something to you. Fucking you, probably. Turned you into one of his whores. Cause you sure as hell haven't been fucking me."

Hallow confused me. He still didn't know about my miscarriage. We'd not had sex many times since I'd lost a baby, no. Since I hadn't told him about it, I couldn't explain why I didn't want to make love to him lately. But him alleging I slept with Kingpin was a bridge too far.

Rage coursed through me. "How dare you accuse me of such a thing. I've been nothing but faithful to you, Hallow. I fucking spent months waiting on you hand and foot while you were a goddamn invalid recovering from gunshot wounds."

"Gunshot wounds from saving you."

I softened. "Yeah. And I'm mighty grateful and I love you. And I wanted to marry you. And I'm sorry I got cold feet. I get nervous. You know that. But I'm not a whore. How dare you? I can't believe you'd suggest I'd sleep with Kingpin. You know I never liked the man."

"That was before. The old Eve. You used to get panicky about him all the time, but you've changed. You're keeping something from me? Kingpin told me that much, that you have a secret. He didn't say what?"

"I don't have any sort of relationship with him," I swore.

"I have eyes, Eve. I see how you two are."

"Yeah, I give him a hard time. I'm tough with him. Because I have to be. You brought me into this world of bikers. Of outlaws and assholes. You brought me close to a man like that. I have to hold my own. If I didn't, he'd have power over me. I don't want Kingpin to walk all over me. I

did, however, let him help me get over my nerves, that's all. Plus, I'm singing at Royal Road to help with finances."

"Finances. Now you're saying I don't make enough money. Is that why Kingpin's appealing, he's rich? Before that girl he married showed up, you were spending an awful lot of time with him. Why else would you be so upset that he was going to marry her at our wedding?"

"Because I didn't want to share my day. I wanted a special day. With you."

"Well, you ruined that, didn't you?"

"Just like you're ruining us right now."

"Me?"

"Yeah. Out there acting too big for your britches, getting your dick sucked. I guess I should go fuck somebody, too. What's good for the goose is good for the gander."

"Over my dead body."

"We will just see about that. You know, Hallow. I was so sorry and all I wanted was you to forgive me. I wanted that day to have never happened. I wanted to erase my mistake from all of existence. All I wanted was to make things right with you. I would've done anything to make it up to you."

"Anything but tell me the goddamn truth. It's funny, you're the one keeping secrets, lying, and leaving me at our goddamn wedding, but you act like I'm the bad guy for being upset about it."

"Upset is one thing, but you've chosen whores over me. It's too late now. I thought I knew you. I didn't think for one second that you'd go out right away and be with somebody else. So, I promise you I will be with somebody else. Mark my words."

"The fuck you will."

Hallow came at me. His maimed face took on a dark expression. Clawing at my clothes, he planned to do the unthinkable. His hot breath was on my chest, I could smell whisky. He reeked of it.

“Hallow, I swear. If you don’t stop.” I was crying again. This time in utter shock and fear.

My tears only egged him on. Hallow ripped through my nightgown and underwear with speed and resolve. He undid his jeans. Cock in one hand, he held me down with another. He knew just the right spot. In the months and months, we’d been together we had sex a million times. Countless times. So, although the sensation was so familiar, usually so welcome, I got sick as snot when his cock touched me in the right spot. His hand wrapped around my throat as I started to scream. Putting all his weight on me, he clasped his hand over my open mouth.

I bit him, but he was too drunk to care. I couldn’t believe what he was about to do.

He removed his hand from my mouth. “You going to tell me what you’re keeping from me?”

“Or what? Going to rape me?”

“I’ll fuck you whenever I want.” His hand seized my hip. “You’re mine. And don’t go thinking anyone else would have you. You wear my brand.” He spoke of my Property of Hallow tattoo. “I’d kill anyone who even tried.”

“Then kill Kingpin if you think I’m fucking him.”

“You know damn well I can’t do that. But you’re going to tell me the truth.”

It was as good a time as any. With Hallow on the verge of doing the unthinkable, it no longer even mattered.

“I miscarried, okay. The doctor said trying again might very well kill me.”

Immediately, Hallow moved, taking his weight and his cock with him. I couldn’t believe I had to be thankful he hadn’t raped me. Backing up on the bed, I covered myself.

Trembling, I said, “I can’t have kids, okay. That’s why I got cold feet. I didn’t know how to tell you.”

The bastard tried to hug me. I hit him. I hit him over and over until he had to hold my hands back.

“Eve, you could’ve told me.”

“I’m glad I didn’t marry a rapist.”

“You didn’t ever say you were pregnant. Was it even mine?”

Another punch in the gut. “Fuck you, Hallow. I didn’t know until it was too late.”

Paisley came through the door.

“Leave,” I shouted at Hallow. “Paisley, help me. Call the fucking cops. Hallow’s here threatening me.”

“I’ll call Kingpin,” she said.

“No. I’m leaving,” Hallow said. “Eve. I can make this right. Forgive me.”

“Oh, I see you’re back to being reasonable now that we have a witness.”

Paisley picked up the lamp and threw it at his back.

It shattered all around us.

“Get the fuck out of here,” she screamed. Suddenly she’d pulled a gun, seemingly out of her ass. “Get the fuck away from her. Or I will blow a hole in your dick.”

Hallow left.

Sitting surrounded by broken glass, I cried for the longest time.

Paisley rubbed my back. I welcomed the comfort.

“What happened, honey?”

In between sobs, I told her the gist of it. “Hallow and I fought. And he took advantage of me. He almost. I’ll never forgive him. How could he do this to me?”

Paisley said, “Oh, honey. Just this morning you loved him to pieces. Wanted him to forgive you.”

“But I didn’t threaten to rape him.”

“But did he?” she asked like I was dense.

“Practically, “ I boomed, stunned Paisley had no sympathy for me even after having to threaten him with a deadly weapon.

“You were just fixin’ to marry the man. Kingpin just beat the shit out of him. And I heard Hallow was about to fuck two women tonight. Steph, that fuchsia haired bitch was here.”

“His ex?” That only made matters worse.

“Ain’t you lucky that he came and was going to fuck you instead. He’s a good guy, Hallow, not like the dangerous motherfuckers around here. Out of a bunch of very shitty bikers, he’s one of the good ones. I just have a feeling about him.”

“What am I going to do without Hallow? I guess I’m going to be staying here a little bit longer. Do you know if there are any empty rooms?”

“Why would you be staying here?”

“I don’t reckon I have much of a choice, yet. Besides, for now, it’s my bread and butter. I have a gig next week. After that, I don’t know.”

“I know your family is in Arkansas. Will you go there?”

“I don’t know if I can.”

I didn’t want to get into all that with Paisley. Her pussy wasn’t the only thing loose.

“Yeah. Word is you belong to the club, whether you’re with Hallow or not so. Good luck getting out of that.”

Fuck, she already knew.

She went on, “I really don’t see that he did too much wrong. I mean, yeah, it was an asshole move. But Hallow’s been up in you more times than you can count. I bet.”

Flabbergasted wasn’t the word. “I guess that’s why you’re a whore. Because you don’t care if someone rapes you.”

“But he didn’t rape you. Believe me, there’s a big difference between threatening and doing it.”

“It scared me all the same.”

“If you weren’t Hallow’s girl you wouldn’t last a week at Royal Road. You’re too sweet and innocent. Everyone knows it. Everyone can see what’s going on with you and Kingpin, too. But you’ll be back with Hallow in no time just so someone doesn’t take advantage of you. Good luck finding a place to sleep tonight and not be raped.”

Paisley kicked me out of her room.

In only a sheet, I went downstairs and locked myself in one of the rooms in the basement. I was determined to prove her wrong. I would survive without Hallow, and no man at Royal Road was going to mess with me.

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Chapter 6

Hallow

“I knew Eve shouldn’t be having anything to do with that rat,” I said to Thorn in between shots.

I sat at a booth with my old roommate. Out of everyone at Royal Road, Thorn understood me. Being ex-military, he was one bad motherfucker and kept to himself for the most part. Yet, we’d been through enough shit together to confide in one another when it was necessary. As usual, with it being late, the bar was loud enough we could talk openly, without anyone overhearing us.

“Brother. You mean to tell me you think Prez is dipping his ink in your well?” Thorn asked for clarification, before finishing his beer.

We’d gotten a pitcher. The biker didn’t often partake in anything stronger. I myself had everything stronger laid out before me. Paisley kept bringing over bottles, and I kept filling my shot glass. Since Eve left the morning of our wedding, I hadn’t cared to drink in moderation. I preferred to stay numb.

I said, “Why wouldn’t he be trying to fuck her? Why the hell does Kingpin wanna help Eve in the first place? He sure as fuck doesn’t want to help me.”

“Took me ages to become an officer. And shit, who cares about the Cleaner? But you just got here and think you deserve a promotion?” Thorn made a face that said he didn’t agree.

“With my background, yeah, I should be an officer already.” If Kingpin didn’t think an ex-detective would be a good asset to the club, he was a fool. “And I was in Charleston a long time before I got here.”

Thorn made a noise. “That’s white privilege for ya. Fuck, I did the job of a Cleaner a whole year before I got the title.”

“You can’t tell me Prez ain’t holding back on me because he wants Eve for himself. Look at what he did to my face all because I upset her. Because I didn’t take her back, and he caught me with another woman. What kind of twisted shit is that? Eve left me at the goddamn altar for fuck’s sake.”

Thorn shook his head at my words. “But Prez just got married. He didn’t have to.”

“Girl’s in the family way,” I replied, talking about Sky’s pregnancy.

“Doesn’t matter. Kingpin didn’t have to take her as an Ol’ Lady. I hate to burst your bubble, but if Kingpin wanted your girl, he’d have her and take your hide. He’d tan it and lay it down and fuck her on it.”

“I’d like to see him try.” I wasn’t above beating Kingpin’s ass. My slushed mind thought about putting a bullet in him. I’d have every member of the Royal Bastards after me then. I’d be on the run again. I’d take Eve and run.

“He’d send you away. He’d snake his way into her bed if he wanted her and you’d not be able to do a damn thing about it.”

Kingpin had sent me away, on runs. “Eve wouldn’t have him,” I said what I used to know so certainly.

“Wouldn’t she? He’s got money and power. He’s getting old, but still got looks enough, I suppose, from the way these women act.”

“Eve doesn’t care about money or power or looks.”

Giving me a sideways glance, Thorn didn’t buy it. “You sure?”

“Yes.” I thought I was anyhow.

“Then why are you worried, brother?”

Thorn made a lot of sense, yet Eve ran to Kingpin for help after she left me high and dry. Their relationship was more than I knew. I couldn’t get over it. The fact she told him about her miscarriage before she told me ate me up inside.

Thorn interrupted my internal debate. “Is there any truth to the rumors? You didn’t?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I said, honestly, wanting him to elaborate.

“Folks are saying you two had a fight last night. A bad fight. I wouldn’t hold it against you if it was true. She’s your property, after all.”

I hardly remembered a thing about last night. “Yeah, me and Eve had words. Yeah. I went and got my dick sucked. I don’t even remember which stripper. Eve wasn’t happy about that.”

I didn’t know why Thorn would hold fighting with my girl against me. Yeah, I had two whores lined up for the evening. But that never happened. I was getting it on with someone else, too, but Kingpin interrupted that and beat my ass.

What did Eve expect to happen after she left me like she did? She threw me out of Paisley’s room. I remembered that much. That wasn’t before she told me the real reason she wasn’t having sex with me lately was because she found out she couldn’t have kids. She lost our baby at some point. I didn’t even know when. What hurt the worst was that she didn’t think she could tell me. I didn’t give two fucks about her ever having a kid. To be honest, I didn’t think anybody should be bringing a kid into this world. Let alone into a world of outlaw bikers. That was something I kept from Eve. The woman clearly longed to be a mother.

When I’d said I wanted to have kids with her, I wasn’t exactly serious. I wasn’t ready to be a father. But I was ready to practice impregnating her. She was on birth control, for God’s sake. Right? Hell, I wasn’t sure of anything anymore. Since I’d healed from my gunshot wounds, I’d been on run after run. I didn’t have to take them all, but we needed the money. Kingpin had already paid all my hospital bills and forgave our rent when I was recovering. I didn’t need to be beholden to him further. But I couldn’t help thinking the fucker probably kept me away from Eve on purpose.

Because I was away so much, I hadn't been able to spend much time with Eve. And when Eve was not with me, she was with Kingpin, practicing her singing or performing for my brothers and for strangers. I knew the girl wanted to have a career but come on. The fact that she trusted Prez in any way, shape or form bugged the living hell out of me. A memory from our conversation last night surfaced. She said she was working with Kingpin for money. Like I didn't make enough. That sure as hell made me feel like less of a man.

Thorn asked, "You going to go back to her?"

"She says standing me up was some misunderstanding. After I've been humiliated in front of my brothers. After we rode to Arkansas to save her. I almost killed a man. How the hell am I supposed to take her back and keep my dignity?" I asked him.

"Do you think anyone here gives a fuck about your dignity? We don't. That's all you," Thorn said.

One of the sweetbutts came over.

Minni winked at me and grabbed my crotch. "I hear your vacancy lights on again."

"Not for long," I said.

Minni didn't come over here for me. She joined Thorn, and they made their excuses to leave. They headed to his room. Part of me longed to enjoy some easy pussy again. But last night, I'd been simply heartbroken and drunk. The truth was I'd take Eve back in a heartbeat. Especially after learning what brought on all this trouble.

Eve strutted into Royal Road that night like a peacock. More than her confidence, she'd made herself up like the star she wanted to be. She broke enough necks to keep a chiropractor in business. Just the sight of her in the tight dress had my dick a brick. I was more than ready to make up and take her home. After all, the woman was mine.

Coming up from behind her, I twirled her to face me. "You ready to make this right, Eve?"

"You, you don't come near me, not after last night."

“Hold on,” I said, because she was walking on, walking away from me.

Eve pointed her finger at me. “I told you last night.”

“Eve, I barely remember last night,” I admitted with a smirk.

“Well, I can’t forget it. You mean you don’t remember the whore who sucked your dick last night? Or the two whores you had lined up to fuck? Because you certainly crowed about that.”

“That was before I knew.” Before I knew about her miscarriage. About why she stood me up at the altar.

Eve only grew angrier as I mentioned what she’d confided in me. She crossed her arms. “But you don’t deny being with another woman?”

“I can’t deny it, Eve. What can I say? I was drunk.”

Eve made a face to let me know exactly what she thought about that. She looked at me like I was trash. “You notice I didn’t run out and be with another man.”

My smile disappeared. She wouldn’t.

“Not yet,” she added, full of piss and vinegar.

“You wouldn’t, and you better not.”

Tapping her foot, she studied her painted nails, like talking to me was beneath her. “Like I told you last night. What’s good for the goose is good for the gander.”

“You are mine, and I dare you,” I thundered. But it was a silly notion. Eve would not do that. My brothers wouldn’t either. “There’s not one man here who’d have anything to do with you with my property patch on you. Even one’s with a death wish because I’d make their deaths mighty painful.”

“You don’t own me, Hallow. And you have no respect for me after what you did to me last night. I see that now.”

“Eve, this is ridiculous. All this over a blow job.”

Eve opened wide and stuck out her tongue. “Tell me who’s dick you’re going to let me suck.”

“Eve,” I barked.

She closed her mouth, pouting. “Yes, it’s ridiculous that I’m upset about how you treated me and how you treated our relationship, but you were upset last night, and had every right. You think you had every right to do what you did to me. Scare me like you did. I never would have dreamed.”

“It’s in my nature,” I said, trying to explain. “It was only a sweetbutt. It didn’t mean anything.” That was something Eve would never understand. Something about being a biker I’d given up for her, easy pickings. Every man’s fantasy.

“It’s your nature to fuck another woman when you’re mad at me? Before even talking to me? And then, well, I can’t even say it.” She started to walk away.

I took hold of Eve’s upper arm. “Eve, you did this. You didn’t talk to me. You didn’t talk to me about my baby.”

“How dare you?” She heaved away. “Do not touch me.”

Eve trudged away from me, and I didn’t follow.

Fuck. I went to the bar and asked Paisley for some more whiskey.

“Ain’t you had enough?” she asked as she poured.

I threw it back and expected another.

Obliging, the whore inquired, “How are you holding up? Did I hit you with that lamp?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about, Paisley.” I vaguely remembered her throwing something.

“Gosh, you really were smashed, weren’t you? I don’t blame Eve for being so irate.”

“Eve will cool off. We’ll be back together in no time.” I lifted my shot to my lips.

“Sure, you will,” Paisley said, pouring another.

“Wait and see,” I said, full of confidence as Paisley led me across the bar, up to her room.

And like the first night, I found out Eve left me on our wedding day, I gave in to temptation. I’d given up the loose women at the club to be Eve’s man. I never minded it before, but it had been so long since Eve had had anything to do with me. Even though I understood why, I had needs. Yet, doing Paisley was more about Eve and getting back at her for hurting me. Revenge. And it was only a sweetbutt. That was something Eve would never understand.

But Paisley was right.

Soon, Eve sent Paisley over to the Eagles’ Nest to get her things.

“She’s really moving out?” I asked the whore.

“I guess so. I’m just running errands.”

I helped Paisley pack up every last thing of Eve’s. When Eve wasn’t singing, she slept at the clubhouse. Paisley wouldn’t say where. No doubt, Kingpin gave her a place.

The whore tried to cheer me up. “If Eve doesn’t want you, other women do. She’ll come back once she appreciates that fact. You know I’m always here for you.” She batted her fake eyelashes. My eyes traveled her body as I remembered having her before.

Paisley went straight for my pants. She grabbed my cock through my jeans.

I took Paisley to my bed.

From then on out, Eve wouldn’t have anything to do with me. She wouldn’t even speak to me. She barely looked my way. Every time I tried to get close to her, my brothers would surround her, the whores would surround her. It became clear everybody was on her side. The club protected her from me. Everyone kept me away from her. Eve acted like she hated me, so I assumed we must’ve had one big fight. I barely

remembered any of it other than the fact I'd found out that I was wrong about Eve's reasons for standing me up.

Days turned to weeks. On the outs with Prez, I hadn't been assigned one job. I'd hurt the King's precious star. Not only had he ruined my face, but he was also punishing me financially. I'd told Thorn the man wanted my woman to himself. With no responsibility around the club, I had nothing but time to get to know the sweetbutts again. Although my heart was broken, my pride took over. When I'd told Eve about my nature, I spoke of my arrogance. I would not grovel. Never. I wouldn't chase her.

I thought of Paisley's words. If Eve didn't want me, other women did. She'd come back once she appreciated that fact. Taking her advice, I fell into the familiar, partying with my brothers. With Eve long gone, I was mending my heart with whiskey. Women always came onto me and like old times, I was taking them up on their offers. After all, one of the perks of being a member was all the pussy at Royal Road. I had Paisley back over to the house more times than I could count. Fucking someone like her didn't mean anything.

After I tired of the likes of Paisley, Minni, Cali and Jelly bean, I fell into hanging out with my old friends. Not the officers who craved Kingpin's favor who shunned me or the sweetbutts who missed my dick, but members who didn't live at Royal Road, ones who only went there to party. And amongst them was my ex, Steph. Bad ass biker, bitch with short fuchsia hair who used to get my motor running like no one's business. No whore, she had wanted more than I had to give her, a relationship. I was with her when I met Eve. Hell, I'd probably still be with her if I didn't meet Eve.

We got along well, Steph and I. Where I used to be a cop, she came from a family of law enforcement. Therefore, she understood when I didn't want to open up about something. Unlike Eve, Steph got my pride. She respected my ways. Plus, the girl was tough, herself, not only emotionally. She'd played sports in high school. She hunted. Steph was physical in ways Eve was fragile. A wildcat in the sack, the woman could take a lot of abuse in the bedroom. Not only take

it, but she could also give it out. I drowned my sorrows between her thighs.

And the best part was when Eve saw me back with her, she really looked at me. Being with Stephanie, I got Eve's attention.

Thorne asked, "You really think you can win Eve back by making her jealous?"

"Eve won't have anything to do with me? What am I supposed to do? If I don't succeed at least I have a backup bitch."

"Brother, you are playing with fire," Thorn warned me.

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Chapter 7

Eve

My nightly performances at Royal Road were the only things keeping me sane. I channeled all my energy into singing. To mask my heartache, I put my all into my budding career. I even sang at Beau Strick's afterparty the week he shot his video at the clubhouse, alone. Kingpin had proposed a show of mostly duets for it, planning to sing with me. He had hoped it would spark his brother's interest in me as a vocal partner, but at the last minute, he pulled out. He said he needed time with his new wife.

I could understand, especially since my issues had interrupted their honeymoon, but I was in a much different situation. Hallow and I were splitsville. My heart had been ripped out of my chest. Instead of Hallow's Ol' Lady, I was his ex. Instead of the Eagles' Nest, I was living in the basement of a motorcycle club in what used to be the sex dungeon. Lower than even the whores who lived over Royal Road, I wasn't even supposed to be there. No one knew where I was staying. No one cared.

Well, no one knew where I stayed except Paisley. And to my dismay, Hallow had her bring me all my shit. I'd been kicked out of the very place I'd been singing to pay rent. What's worse, he asked her to get my engagement ring. I'd still been wearing the damn thing the whole time, hoping we'd get back together after we both cooled off. Grudgingly, I handed my ring over.

Paisley tried to comfort me, "Eve, they're plenty of men around here."

"I don't want anyone else. I'm mighty upset with Hallow, but I love him. If he wants his ring back, I guess it's really over." I fought back the tears, but my whole face frowned.

Paisley rubbed my back. "Don't let Hallow see how much this hurts you. He'll never come back if you beg him."

Stay strong.”

“If I could just talk to him. Maybe I should quit being so stubborn and just call him.”

Paisley frowned much like me.

“What?”

“I think Hallow got a new phone,” Paisley said. “He doesn’t want to hear from you. Eve, I’m sorry.”

Paisley was right. The biker avoided me at all costs. I didn’t know how much longer I could stay at the Royal Bastards’ clubhouse and watch him flirt with other women. Hallow was right that the other bikers wouldn’t have anything to do with me. Not that I wanted them to. I wasn’t about to be some whore like Paisley or the other sweetbutts. But all kinds of other men wanted me, men who came to Royal Road to spend their money, from losers to winners. However, none of them interested me in the slightest. As much as I had threatened to be with another man, I was still very much in love with only one, Hallow.

Too bad he turned out to be like all other bikers, a manwhore.

As I had my breakfast at the bar, I whined about my broken heart to Sweet Tea. One of the sweetbutts, she ran the kitchen in the morning. She set up the fabulous buffet Royal Road had for their overnight guests and all who lived here. Before noon, though, there wasn’t much to be had since not many would be up this early.

She reminded me of my old supervisor Celie who I rarely talked to after her ex-husband died, and I left Bootsies. Though I felt close to Celie, she would always think I had something going on with Grady when I hadn’t. Like Celie, Sweet Tea was a mother and liked to mother the club, anyone in the club. So, I found myself gravitating to her more and more. She had grandkids but was in her early forties. Her body didn’t look a day over twenty-five, but wisdom shone on her face.

“Honey, you need to get laid,” she said. “Let one of these men fuck that boy out of your mind.”

“Boy? Hallow’s older than me.” I was twenty-one. Hallow was almost thirty.

She said, “Hallow’s green, wet behind the ears. You don’t know what you’re missing with a more experienced lover.”

Lover? “I’m sure Hallow has plenty of experience,” I said, thinking of all the women he was with before me. All the women I’d heard he was with after too. That last bit threatened to make me lose my breakfast.

“I’m sure Hallow’s slangin, bangin, and clangin, on your kitty-odometer, but you don’t have much mileage, baby.”

“Lordalmighty,” I said, clutching invisible pearls. “I ain’t interested in having sex with someone else.”

Sweet Tea went on, “Getting your freak on is a sure-fire way to mend a broken heart. All men have a dick.”

“I don’t want just any dick. Hallow and I were more than that.”

“You can love anyone, sugar.”

Her words made no sense. My heart ached for one man. “I ain’t sure I will ever love anyone again.”

“Not looking like a mess, you won’t.”

Patting my hair, I knew I hadn’t been taking care of myself, but I looked alright.

“You need to be wearing less and going out more. Young thing like you don’t need to be tied down right away, no way. Take it from someone over thirty-five. You don’t have many hot girl summers left.”

“But Hallow,” I started.

“I’m sure Hallow rocked your country ass to sleep with his boyfriend dick, but honey child there’s all kinds of dick out there. When I got a broken heart, I need me some vacation dick.”

“Vacation dick?” I spit out my coffee.

“You need a dickin’ you need a few days to recover from. Only a few bikers here are serving up vacation dick. Thorn’s one of them.”

Lordalmighty. “I ain’t gonna fuck Thorn, Hallow’s bestie.” Thorn was as hot as most the bikers here, but he was the only officer Hallow was close to. Besides, Thorn had been with Donette. Had sex with that night before she died. No thank you.

“I ain’t saying you do. Thorn’s my go to.” Sweet Tea put her long nail to her lips, thinking. “No, he won’t do. Nah, he’s done married. Fuck, he wants to kill you.”

I didn’t want to think about Leviathan having vacation dick since that biker supposedly only let me live because I became part of this club. Fuck, I didn’t want to think about other dicks at all. “I don’t need anyone but Hallow.”

Interrupting us, Paisley let the cat out of the bag, “Hallow’s done moved on, honey.”

Her eyes wide, Sweet Tea grabbed a bus tub and left in a hurry. She wanted no part of whatever Paisley was about to say.

“What do you know?”

Paisley took Sweet Tea’s spot in front of me. She gave me a look that said I wasn’t ready for it.

I begged her to tell me. “Please.”

“What do you know?”

In exchange, she wanted me to tell her something. A secret. Paisley was the gossip queen around here. A hissy fit with a tail on it, she twirled her rainbow hair, waiting.

I racked my brain for something I could reveal that was clandestine enough but wouldn’t cause any real harm if it came out. Unlike the whore, I didn’t like drama or trouble.

“Rome’s single. No one knows yet,” I said, defeated.

The women around Royal Road swore our guitarist, a prospect, was a looker. I didn't see it. Resembling Harry Styles, he was nothing but a fresh-faced boy in my eyes. But a talented musician, the biker had sparked some major interest. Up until last week he'd been in a serious but long-distance relationship. It was privileged information just for the scene their breakup was likely to cause. His current single status was top secret because of all the vulturing going on. The single ladies sensed the end was near. They'd heard about the trouble him and his woman were having. They circled, waiting. Rome would have an avalanche of women hounding him for a date.

Paisley's thick eyebrows crawled into her colorful hair. The secret had done the trick. Cursing under my breath, I promised to apologize to Rome later.

The bartending whore spit it out, "Hallow's been taking women over to the Eagles' Nest."

"To my house?" I squeaked.

I knew Hallow had been with some of the sweetbutts. As sick as it made me, it wasn't anything he hadn't done before. Before we were together. Paisley had told me that much, and I'd been in pure hell. It was only meaningless sex, I told myself, so I didn't burn to a crisp. But this transported me to a whole new level of hell. Satan and I were about to have afternoon tea.

"Not your house anymore." Paisley hung her head, confirming it.

"Who?" I asked, but then stopped her. "No, I don't want to know." I held up my hands.

"For the best. I wasn't about to tell you their names."

"More than one, huh? My word. What a snake," I bellowed. I pushed my plate away. Bile rose in my throat as I was going to be sick and lose my biscuits and gravy. Biting my tongue, I tried my best not to cry. But I was dying inside. I banged on the bar.

"What's all the noise?" Kingpin asked as he locked his office.

“Can we talk?” I croaked.

“Sure, but out here.” He jutted his chin toward his office. “You don’t want to go in there,” he said, going to wash his hands behind the bar.

Was that blood? Getting to my knees on the stool, I leaned over the bar to see.

“Paisley, get lost.” When Kingpin spoke, people listened. The whore disappeared to the kitchen.

“You’re nosy today.” Kingpin gave me a look. Something had ruffled his feathers.

I sat back down. “What’s going on?” I asked him, unable to ignore his horrified face.

“Bullshit. Always some bullshit right on my doorstep,” he muttered, scrubbing his hands.

Our Prez looked more upset than I’d ever seen him. I splayed my fingers out urging him to go on and explain.

“Never mind. It’s club business,” he said, wound tighter than a clock. “You don’t want to know.”

It had to have been blood, and I didn’t want to know. Besides, asking about club business was as useless as a knitted condom.

Kingpin’s face settled. His voice flattened as if he had a switch. “Go on with it. What’s up?”

“I hear you’re leaving for a week with Sky. I guess that means our show will be postponed. Again.” I wasn’t exactly complaining.

“When’s it supposed to happen, again?” he asked as he dried his hands.

Of course, he didn’t remember. He’d been in his honeymoon phase, experiencing the marital bliss I’d missed out on. “You rescheduled it for tonight. But that’s alright. We’ve not really practiced in a month. And,” I started to tell him I was thinking of leaving Royal Road all together. I

wanted to tell him I didn't think I could get on stage with the news I just heard.

I'd not just been thinking of it. Hearing about Hallow sleeping with the sweetbutts, I wanted to run away for good. I'd been making plans, but this news of him taking women over to our house, settled it. How could I ever take Hallow back? I just wanted to go far away. Hide from the world. And that's if I was even allowed to. I thought of all the belonging to the club crap Kingpin had talked about before and hoped he was just pulling my leg. I knew he'd been determined to make me the star of his establishment, but with his new marriage, he had other fish to fry. Plus, Kingpin was going to be a father soon. I felt confident I could reason with him.

Kingpin was deep in thought. He never usually took so long. Something had shaken him. His hands were trembling. Regardless, his words were steady. "Plans have changed. Our trip to the cabin has been postponed for security reasons. The show goes on. I'm not about to let anyone think they've gotten to me."

I had no idea what Kingpin had going on. It didn't sound good. But we seriously weren't prepared to do a show we hadn't practiced for in over a month. I said as much. "Honestly, we can cancel it. I don't want to cause any more issues, either."

I knew Sky still wasn't happy with me. Who could blame her? I'd messed up their honeymoon asking Kingpin to help me fix things with Hallow. She'd walked in on me crying on her husband's shoulder. Not just his shoulder, in his naked arms. It sure looked worse than it was. That had been a mistake of my doing, so I didn't want to cause any more damage.

"This happens tonight, as planned," Kingpin said, his tone serious, letting me know there would be no more discussion. On a dime, he softened. "We'll wing in. You still got the set list, right?"

"I do."

“You’re doing amazing. I’ll just follow your lead.” He was about to walk off.

My words came out rushed. “That’s not what I’m worried about. I don’t want to upset Sky. I know she thought something happened between us that night. I didn’t mean for it to look that way.” This was the first opportunity I’d gotten to apologize to him. “I don’t want anyone here to think what they think.”

Kingpin stopped at the edge of the bar. He drummed his ring covered fingers on the wood. “What do they think?” he asked, like he really didn’t know. A sly grin appeared. He wanted me to say it.

“You know what they think.”

Everyone said Kingpin beat Hallow up because he’s secretly fucking me, that he’s in love with me. And there wasn’t an iota of truth to it. Did this fact amuse him? Sure, it did. Everything amused him. I made a noise.

He dropped the act. His lips flat, Kingpin bowed. He wasn’t dumb. He knew the rumors as much as anyone. He’d been fucking with me.

“You and I know it’s not true. And Sky’s fine, I think. She’s got to realize nothing’s going on here.”

“Right.”

“Then what’s the problem?”

“Can’t you do something to squash the rumors. Tell them all at Church or something that nothing has ever been going on between us.”

“You think they’ll believe me. Eve, you’re better off letting it go. Do you think all these bikers are staying away from you because of Hallow? Not with you and him split up. It causes as much trouble for me as it does you but the rumors work to your favor.”

Speechless. I’d not thought about it like that.

“You should thank Paisley,” he said.

“You think she’s behind it.”

“Paisley feeds off all the drama here. She creates a good deal of it too. But I’ve come to find she’s imaginative. She might even think this shit is real. You know she thinks she can see shit.”

Bobbing, I knew Paisley claimed to see auras and the like. Thought she was a witch or something.

Kingpin went on, “Anyway, there ain’t nothing we can say that will change their minds. Folks will come to their own conclusions. The club will see the truth in time. Everything comes out in the wash.”

“Are you sure there ain’t anything we can do?” I asked, racking my brain for a solution.

“You and I ain’t had a practice section all month. I don’t even think we’ve spoken, have we?”

“Not really. Not at any length.”

“Frankly, I miss it. Singing, that is. We’ll bring the house down tonight, Angel.” Kingpin winked at me as he left.

Exhaling, I groaned. The man treated everyone the same. The winks, calling them love, or in my case, Angel, but it was me everyone swore he was sweet on.

Chapter 8

Eve

That night as I got ready to sing with Kingpin, I wondered if Hallow would show. Making sure to look my best, I put on more makeup than usual. After all, I needed to be seen in the harsh lights. Then I cried and ruined it all. I had to paint my face again. Instead of being miserable, I decided to let a fury take over.

I had no idea what I would wear so I grabbed my wedding gown. I still had the stupid thing at Royal Road with me. I hadn't left the clubhouse since my falling out with Hallow. Because, I had nowhere else to go. I'd given up my life for the man and didn't have a pot to piss in. I planned to change all that. I'd been saving up. Tonight's performance would help.

Putting on my white lace wedding gown, I took the scissors and sliced into the skirt. Staring at the gash, I knew there was no going back. I made my wedding gown into a knee length dress for this performance. Paired with a light blue jean jacket and my cowboy boots, it was fucking perfect.

Fuck Hallow.

We had a packed house. I'd been singing to our largest crowd without any coaching for well over a month. So, I wasn't nervous about the folks that gathered before me as I adjusted my mic. But the jitters were there all the same since Hallow sat in the bar, watching me.

Bringing his guitar, Kingpin joined me on the stage. We'd be singing most of the songs together. Prez would show me up, for sure. He had just as much talent as his brother with a lot more passion and energy in his voice. More than that, he was completely comfortable doing anything he damn well pleased here at his own establishment. He was a great partner, though, knowing just when to inject some charm. So, we had a blast, with Loretta Lynn's and Conway Twitty's, "You're The Reason Our Kids Are Ugly".

It reminded me of how Wolf and his ex-wife would sing together at Bootsies. And during “Save A Horse (Ride a Cowboy)”, Kingpin had me do the part that would make more sense for him. I was Big and he was Rich. I could barely sing for laughing. Rome took care of the guitar solo like no one’s business. The rest of my band consisted of one fiddle player, Ember. A sweet girl, I hoped didn’t hang out at the club. I’d not seen her around when we weren’t playing. Then there was a drummer called Specks because of his ever-changing glasses. He used to play on Lower Broad. I’d seen him around. Couldn’t miss him. He’d become a prospect like Rome, but I suspected he was here for the men. A talented sweetbutt named Cali played bass, horns, and keyboard, depending. I’d seen her with Hallow before, so I had my reservations about her that I set aside every time we were on stage together. Dimple, filled in for the rest, like an Elvis shaped putty.

Our setlist was a glorious mix of old and new, country and not. Singing, “Make You Feel My Love”, I almost lost it. Thankfully, they weren’t all love songs. Changing over to Alan Jackson and Jimmy Buffet’s “It’s Five-o-clock Somewhere”, I could control myself. I didn’t quite care for the song, but it was a crowd favorite even at well past five. I’d have to suffer through some other favorites, “Give Me All Your Lovin’” and “Sweet Home Alabama.” If it wasn’t a duet, Kingpin played his guitar or the piano while I sang like during my cover of “Midnight Rider” by the Allman Brothers Band. Because of course we had to play music the bikers wanted to hear. I’d become accustomed to covering favorites at Bootsies, but one day I wanted to sing something of my own.

We’d switch back to something that affected me. Like Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper’s “Shallow”, but I had to concentrate so much on hitting those notes I couldn’t think of Hallow. I was no Lady Gaga, but Kingpin gave the fella a run for his money. Some of the selections seemed silly, like the Cure’s “Just Like Heaven”. But Kingpin insisted his brother would want to cover something similar, something from the eighties. Never mind the fiddle made the song completely different. As it was, the famous Beau Strick would not hear us since we hadn’t performed it when we planned.

Belting out our rendition of Noah Cyrus's "Dear August" kicked me in the gut. After all, August was Hallow's for real name, August Adam Hart. I'd picked the song just for that way back when Hallow and I were more than okay. When we were planning a wedding. Before I'd really listened to the damn thing. As I strummed and hummed, the song eerily echoed my current state. Lonely for well over a month, I'd had nothing but long sleepless nights. Without him, my world turned dark. I wondered if there was any way Hallow and I could get to the end of this. If we'd get our happily ever after. But more and more, it seemed like the road I traveled with him was ending.

I chanted the chorus looking at anyone but Hallow who'd crept closer and sat in a corner near the stage. My heart shattered into pieces at the sight of him. His face, still bruised and swollen, was a stark reminder of our battered bond. Kingpin's eyes stayed on me. His gaze was the only thing holding me up as he sang the other feller's part. I knew it was just part of our training, something I no longer needed. Kingpin sang to me, and I knew it was just all part of our act, but what would everyone else think? More importantly what would Hallow think? After that song, I made a cutting motion to our Prez.

He stepped in close, too close, placing his hands on my arms and leaning in so I could whisper in his ear.

"I'm doing the last song alone," I strained, hoping he wouldn't argue.

He didn't. "Take five."

As Dimple started in with Elvis's "Too Much", we took a much-needed break. I needed to dry my eyes. Kingpin went to his woman and his posse, drinking, and cracking beer bottles on one another. That wasn't as bad as it sounded. Royal Road wasn't just some dive bar. But the lush surroundings of the casino didn't matter when the President decided to celebrate. And after all, it was all part of the show. The patrons there came to see some action, in any case. It'd be cleaned up straight away so no one who mattered got hurt.

I rushed to the ladies' room, took care of business as quick as I could, washed my hands and began fixing my makeup. Sky's dark hair appeared in the mirror. If she were a snake, she'd have bit me. From the scowl she wore, she hadn't liked what she just witnessed. The girl didn't realize our performance was all an act. The chemistry Kingpin and I had on stage wasn't at all real. It was nothing but good show business meant to sell me as a serious vocalist.

"Oh, Sky. How are you, honey? How are you coming along?" I tried to be nice and defuse the situation.

"I'm doing great, spending a lot of time with my husband," she all but hissed.

Still tidying my face, I apologized, "Yeah, about that. You know nothing has ever gone on between me and our dear Ol' Prez, right? I am so sorry about that night. It was your honeymoon night, and I shouldn't have used Kingpin as a shoulder to cry on. I realize that now. You know what they say, hindsight is twenty-twenty and all. But at the time, I just didn't know where else to turn."

"Why? Why did you turn to him in the first place?" she asked, spitting venom.

Combating her anger with openness, I told her bluntly. "I gave up everything to be with Hallow. I gave up my family. I gave up my career and my friends in Nashville. It felt like Kingpin was all I had."

"You don't have any friends here?" she asked with fake pity.

"Yes, I do. At the Eagles' Nest, yes. Here at Royal Road, I couldn't rely on one of the whores. They'd fuck Hallow before they'd help me get him back. Paisley, she's the worst. I meant Kingpin was all I had who could get through to Hallow. On account of our deal, I was following the chain of command, sort of. Well, big mistake. You see how that worked out?" I was rambling, but I needed to defend myself.

"Yeah. Pretty bad. But Kingpin explained to me that he has absolutely no feelings for you. It's all good," she said.

“Well, bless his heart, I certainly don’t have those sorts of feelings for him either,” I said, frankly. I scrunched up my nose thinking of how people thought of me with that biker. “Honestly, and no offense, Kingpin’s not my type.”

“So, nothing’s ever happened between you two?”

Gulping, I held my breath. I couldn’t right out laugh at the very notion. After all, Kingpin was her man. I tried to keep my face straight as I told her the honest truth. “Oh, Sky. Heavens to Betsy. That biker, your husband, believe it or not, because I hardly do, has been real respectful of me. Professional. Sure, there was a time or two in the beginning I had to remind him I wasn’t one of his whores. That biker scared me, but he’s grown as much as I have. As in, I’ve overcome my stage fright, for the most part.”

“You still didn’t answer me.”

“Something so preposterous doesn’t deserve to be entertained. You know the bikers here just like to joke, right? They like to make their Prez out to be the big man. Because well, you know him. He thinks the sun comes up just to hear him crow. They want to say that he’s screwing everyone with two legs. But everybody knows Kingpin hasn’t laid eyes on another woman since you’ve been around. Now they want to say he’s in love with me because of what he did. Fiddlesticks. Nothing could be further from the truth. But I’ll tell you what, I’m glad he did it now.”

“What are you talking about? Who did what?”

“All I’m saying is the rumors ain’t true. And I’m glad Kingpin beat the shit out of Hallow.”

“Kingpin did that to him? When?”

“Yes, last month. I thought that was what you were in here going on about. Cheese and crackers, I messed up. Did you not already know Kingpin ruined that bastard’s face?”

“No, no, I knew,” Sky said, relieving my worries.

“Lordalmighty. I didn’t need Kingpin mad at me for spilling the beans.” I looked at my watch. “Gosh darn it, I’m

late. I'm supposed to go back on for an encore. I've got to run."

I made my way back to the stage. When I'd planned the next song, a bluesy cover of Nora Jones' "Come Away With Me", the song I sang to Hallow when he was in the hospital when we first met, I never intended for us to be broken up. And I'd had every intention of making up with Hallow by now. But how could I when he'd spent his nights in other women?

Dimple was ready at the piano. I knew he was better on the keys than Kingpin, but it's not how we had rehearsed it. Spotting Prez in the crowd, I smiled. Even bigger when I saw Sky with him. After our convo in the ladies' room, I knew everything was okay with them. I locked eyes with him as we usually did, for courage. As I sang, the whole club quieted, making me even more anxious.

I couldn't turn to Hallow. I would cry, but I felt the words coming from my throat from down deep. I wanted things how they used to be. I'd forgive Hallow for everything. I made up my mind. I'd make up with him right away. I'd been a fool to wait this long. He'd be mine again. That's when the thud sounded, a door slammed. My whole body about left the stage. Whipping my head, I noticed Hallow's absence right away. He had stormed out. I wavered, but only for a moment.

It didn't matter. All I wanted was to be Hallow's again. If I didn't want him with other women, all I'd have to do was say the word.

Chapter 9

Eve

The next night I paced in my dressing room. Wringing my hands, I worried Hallow might not even show up for tonight's show. Especially with the way he left out last night. Not wanting to wait any longer, I went to search the bar.

Hallow sat with his brother Thorn, their backs to me. Approaching them, I could smell the gasoline and the grease. They'd just come in off their motorcycles, but there was a hint of something else. Maybe Thorn wore aftershave. Hallow donned his cut of course, but otherwise, he was gussied up, wearing his nicest clothes. I should know, I'd laundered them and hung them up so they wouldn't wrinkle. I couldn't think too hard on it. I focused on my mission.

When his name fell from my lips, he spun to face me. "Eve," he fumed. "What's this?"

As handsome as ever, Hallow's nose was broken, crooked. It didn't matter. Although his face didn't look nearly as hurt up close, he'd be scarred in a few places.

Taking a breath, I asked as politely as I could, "Can we speak privately?"

Hallow shrugged but left his stool. I followed him through the bar and out. We stood on the porch out front where the row of motorcycles lived. The breeze hit me, chilling me to the bone. I'd not been out in the fresh air in weeks. I started to worry about my complexion. Suddenly feeling clammy, I touched my face.

Hallow wrenched his neck to look up and down the line of the bikes.

Wrapping my arms around myself, for warmth, I followed suit, wondering what he searched for. I spotted Hallow's Harley right away, noticing how clean it appeared. Sure, there was mud from tonight but otherwise it shined under the streetlights positioned on either side of the building.

Before I could put two and two together, I came out with it. “Hallow, I wish things between you and I could go back to how they were before.” I couldn’t say I left him at the altar.

“Before what Eve? Before you left me?” Just hearing his voice was nice, even if he was angry.

Letting my arms fall to my sides, I swallowed my pride. “Let’s not do this. I’m ready to bury the hatchet. I want you back.”

Hallow looked like I’d hit him, even stumbled back a hair. “You can’t be serious?”

“I am. I know you’ve gotten around too.” Rolling my eyes, I couldn’t believe I was willing to forgive all that, but that was how much I wanted him to return to me. “But I’m ready to talk. I want to make amends. I love you.” I reached out for his hand.

Before Hallow could speak, the roar of an engine interrupted us. Another hog joined the lineup. Hallow let go of my hand. The rider took off their helmet. At the sight of the purple hair, the horrible fact hit me. Hallow was back with Steph, his ex. The same biker bitch who threatened me the night I met him. The biker who swore he loved me was back with the woman he was with when we met. The woman he swore off for me. That’s why he’d examined the row of bikes. That’s why his Harley was immaculate. That’s why he’d dressed up. Inhaling, I smelled the cologne on him.

Fuck.

No whore, no sweetbutt, Steph was a lady biker, dressed in head-to-toe leather. She’d be a member if they let her. Taking his arm, she was his date, a proper one. Purple haired cunt flaunted it in front of me, hanging on him like a child.

I didn’t let it faze me. “Hallow and I need a minute,” I said to her as calmly as I could.

“Anything you have to say to Hallow you can say to me.” Steph sneered, her big hoop earrings swaying.

“Hallow?” I expected him to tell her to give us a minute, but he shocked me.

He took her side. “Yeah, anything you have to say, you can say in front of my woman.”

His woman? I stumbled now. Steading myself, I studied his green eyes, looking for something. Anything. “You know what I was asking.”

Hallow didn’t even glance my way, as he announced, “The answer is no, Eve. Anyway, you won’t be able to forgive all I’ve done, and I’m with Stephanie, now.”

Gulping, I went on, “You sure?”

He wouldn’t meet my gaze. My biker, who clearly wasn’t my biker anymore, bobbed his head.

Stephanie chuckled.

Fuck her. But I was determined. I reached for his arm again. Clutching his wrist, I pleaded with him, “Please, Hallow. There’s nothing in the world that I want more than to turn back the clock. Be yours again.”

“Too late bitch,” Steph said, as Hallow yanked away from me.

I lunged at her, and she shoved me off. Losing my balance, I fell to the ground on my ass. Hallow didn’t move an inch to help me. As I climbed to my feet, they were walking into Royal Road together. I shouted after them. “Please Hallow,” I begged him.

Hallow gazed over his shoulder back at me. His eyes were hollow, empty when he viewed me. “It’s too late, Eve. I’ve moved on.”

His apathy shot and killed me, but I would not die. I bounded into Royal Road after them. Crashing into the dark, neon smoke, I bumped into Riff. Our Road Captain steadied me. I knew I had to look wild by his expression of concern. Seething, I stole his beer and resumed my pace. Catching up to Hallow and his date, I smashed the glass over her purple head.

Then I grabbed her by the big hoop. I tore the gaudy earring right out of her ear.

Not at all flustered, Steph turned and punched me in the gut. Fuck. My insides caved. I dropped to my knees. The bitch lingered over me. Raising her foot, she planned to kick me in the face. Just in time, Riff stopped her. Hallow's brothers ganged up on them and banished them to a corner.

Cali, working as a barmaid, was on the floor. She helped me to my feet. "I'm alright," I said as multitudes tried to comfort me. But I wasn't alright. Hallow had humiliated me.

Even Memphis, who by all accounts hated me, met me backstage with a bottle of whiskey and a glass. "I figure you need this. You don't have to go on."

"I'm going on." I took a couple of shots first.

I started with Brandie Carlile's "Broken Horses". Using my anger to strap out a powerful set, I tried to ignore the fact, Hallow and Steph stayed for the show. Of course, they did. Searching through the crowd, I saw Kingpin sat on his throne staring out into space. Not looking at me, he was no help.

I was on my own.

Singing, "So What", was cathartic. Unrelated, I thought about chopping my hair off and dying it pink. But I wouldn't because I'd look too much like Hallow's new woman. And since this was Nashville, I had to turn to Country. I started, Carrie Underwoods, "Cry Pretty." I was on the verge of tears. Starting "Nothing Compares to You", the band followed, but unlike Sinéad or the original, Prince, we had a fiddle. I made it about halfway through before I decided I was gonna have a come apart. I stopped short.

The band played on until they realized I wasn't singing.

"Rome, can you take over?" I asked, dropping the mic.

My face flushed as the crowd quieted. Since our Prez was in the audience, I tried to make a graceful exit. At least

Rome would keep the show going. He didn't miss a beat and rocked into some Black Crow's, "Twice as Hard."

Grabbing the bottle of Jack Daniels, I hopped off the stage. I stopped by Kingpin's throne. At any rate, I tried to. Women surrounded him, and I couldn't get close enough to let him know I wouldn't be singing the rest of the night. Maybe ever again. So, I searched for Opry's cowboy hat and saw it floating over at the bar. After all, he managed this place.

I spoke to everyone at the bar, not just Opry. "I'm sorry, y'all. I just can't while Hallow's here with Steph."

Opry took me to the side. "I don't blame you. Not after what Hallow did." I guess Opry saw what happened between us tonight. Everyone had.

Wobbling my head, I was totally embarrassed. I sucked in my lips. I would not cry again. "Yeah. What an asshole."

"I promise you, we don't approve. We have a code. He'll be punished."

Punished for embarrassing me? Or maybe for letting Stephanie try to kill me? I guess I was technically part of the club with or without Hallow. Hallow had made that deal for me. And I didn't want to talk about Hallow. That's why I ran off stage so I could go cry in peace.

"I tried to let Prez know," I said.

Opry confessed, "Kingpin's in a bad way himself."

I looked over at the pile of women surrounding him. Nothing unusual. "How so?"

"He's broken things off with Sky."

"Goodness gracious. Just last night they were right as rain."

Opry went on, "You didn't hear it from me. But apparently, she's been lying to him."

My mouth gaped until I declared, "I'll be dipped and rolled in crackers."

"Yeah, stupid girl. Prez should've known," Opry said.

I wondered how much more he knew since he was banging Sky's cousin Leo. I didn't have to ask. He came out with it. "He saw a video of her with another man."

Holy fuck. "She was with someone else while they were together?"

"Apparently."

"Well, gather at the river." I knew how Kingpin must feel anyway since Hallow had just dealt me the final blow.

Opry took off his hat and wiped his forehead. "Yeah. It beats all you've ever stepped in. I don't think Prez's even going to notice your absence."

Cradling the bottle of whisky, I slinked to the basement to lock myself in the room down there.

Sobbing sporadically, I didn't go back to drinking right away. I tried other self-care methods. First, I removed my caked on makeup since I'd made a mess of it. Then I took a nice long hot bath and didn't leave it until the water turned cold. I became a wrinkly prune. Moisturizing and putting on my nicest nighty, I tried not to think of Hallow and Steph. About them together. A whore was one thing. Steph was a relationship.

Slipping on my gown, I let the silk give me the hug I needed. Blowing out my hair, I relished the warmth returning to my skin. It'd been so long since I'd had any comfort. Studying myself in the mirror, I cursed all the ways I wasn't. Where Steph was tone and fit, a rock, I was soft and thin, too thin as I barely ate anymore.

As I brushed and flossed, I noticed my complexion was shot to hell. No tan to speak of, I looked like a ghost of the woman I'd been. Leaving the bathroom, I vowed to get out in the sunshine tomorrow, recharge. I couldn't let my sorrow overtake me. A deep depression hovered over me like a cloud. At any minute it could rain down on me, sinking me into the muddy hopelessness. Determined not to get drenched in misery, I had to keep my wits about me. Distraction was what I needed. I had most of my possessions from our place at the

Eagles' Nest, so I found a book I'd been wanting to read. A mystery, not a romance. That's when I poured the first glass of whiskey.

It led to another.

I was a quarter through the book and into the bottle when a knock came at the door. Feeling so good and so bad at the same time, I didn't think about covering up before I answered it.

To my utter shock, the biker leaned on my door frame in only his leather pants.

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Chapter 10

Eve

Good heavenly days. Just one look at him, and I knew how he felt. I felt it too. Betrayed. Abandoned. Broken. No amount of escape or alcohol could help it. Disheveled, his long hair swept back behind his ears. One whiff of him, and I could tell he'd been drinking, but he wasn't stumbling drunk. His eyeliner smudged in the corners of his eyes. The big bad biker President had been crying at some point.

“Kingpin, what are you doing down here?”

“I heard about what that prick Hallow did to you, love,” he said, his brow pinched.

Blowing out a breath, I didn't want to talk about what happened tonight.

“Are you okay?” he asked, full of concern for me when I knew how he had to be hurting, too.

“Yeah, I'm finer than a frog's hair.” I stepped aside, letting him in. I closed the door, so we could talk about it in private.

The door clicked shut. Kingpin stared at me like he always did, like he'd eat me up. Only this time his gaze penetrated my body, causing a primal response, an answer deep in my belly and between my legs.

Lord have mercy.

My chest heaved at the significance of my hearty response. It was only then when I realized I was in my tiny red satin gown, hardly covering my ass. Bought for my honeymoon, the slip had a big matching bow on the front. I must've looked like a floozy, but I was to be a present for my husband. My tits were practically out. I moved to wrap my arms around them, but Kingpin was quicker.

Treating me like I was addressed to him, he sprang on me. He took me into his bare, tattooed arms. His large, strong arms, I decided as his muscles danced against my skin. And

not just that, before I could argue, his lips stole mine. Tasting whisky and cigarettes, I objected, but only for a moment. That moment promptly vanished and was replaced by an unquenchable thirst.

Whisky and cigarettes was just what I needed.

As I submitted, his kiss only became more intoxicating. His tongue piercing invaded my mouth. The bar swirled against my tongue. My hands went into his glorious long hair. Kingpin groaned in my mouth as he kissed me with the fever of not just a lover scorn, but a man determined to mend my broken heart. My fear and dislike of him fell away effortlessly because the sentiments weren't truly there anymore. I kissed him back, thinking of the way he always regarded me. The way he believed in me. All the ways he cared for me became clearer in my mind as I let him devour me.

My body also thought kindly of him as Kingpin ran his ring covered hands up my thighs under the silk. Squeezing my ass, he drew me against the big bulge in his leather pants. I knew it well. You couldn't miss the sight of it. Though it never appealed to me before, I'd been very aware of it. I found myself wanting him like the urge had always been there, floating just under the surface. So much so, that I had to deny it before. Because disclosing those wishes would acknowledge truths about myself that I wasn't ready to own up to. I was too good of a girl to want a man such as this. Kingpin was more than just a bad man. He was one of the worst.

However.

My libido was tired from its unknown fight.

My cowardly walls fell.

My stomach twisted at the thought of succumbing to his powerful will.

Kingpin lifted me effortlessly, so I could wrap my legs around him. His immense erection hit even better now. I squirmed against it, needing so much more. His kiss never faltered, only screamed, he felt the same as he walked us to the

wall. Pressing me against it, his hands were free to roam. Thankfully, they went straight to his belt. He unbuckled it, undid his pants, and he slid my panties to one side. We were finally flesh to flesh. Tingles covered my flesh at the very thought of where we were headed.

Kingpin wasted no time. I chewed his lips as he pierced me in one potent thrust.

Holy fuck.

My eyes watered. This time not from sadness. The biker's dick had been just what I needed. Better than a shot of Jack Daniels any day. Kingpin's big dick filled an emptiness, packed it to the brink and then some. The ring in the end of his cock wasn't bad either. I marveled at the fire it helped build within me.

Kingpin froze.

Impaled on his big dick, the magnitude of it all threatened to murder me. I'd let the President of the Royal Bastards MC penetrate me. And the biker wasn't finished.

Neither was I.

There was no going back.

Kingpin broke our kiss and started down my neck. His kisses were so tender as he delayed the inevitable. The biker's breath cooled the wet spots he'd created.

He spoke against my skin. "I can't believe you're okay with this, with me."

He echoed my own thoughts. I couldn't believe how I yearned for him to move within me.

I finished his sentence, but I couldn't complete the sentence either. That I was okay with him fucking me.

I sputtered out, "With you buttering my biscuit?"

At that, Kingpin gave me what I craved. I tasted his desire as he became the driving force behind my ecstasy. I whimpered as his cock hit deeper within me. Our efforts was rhythmic. As he skidded in and out, we had great chemistry

like we were jamming out a tune. So much so, I had to stop my noises entirely.

I tried my best to be quiet as he jammed his cock into me over and over. Biting my lip, I tried not to love it like I did. My ass thudding on the wall behind us made the same tempo my groans had, pulling me back in, under the spell. Our bodies thumped in melody. I let go. I gave in to the biker President and his amazing cock.

In the midst of it, Kingpin ripped my nighty over my head and flung it away. I'd not been wearing a bra to bed of course. The biker took a moment to run his black eyes over my naked skin. His gaze went over my breasts like an eager caress. He'd seen me naked before when we first met. I recognized the look from so many times before. Kingpin had been actually imagining me naked all this time.

His dick snug inside me, he walked us to the bed and laid me down. His mouth fell to my tits, my nipples one by one. I jerked as his tongue ring did things I'd never felt before. My fingers crept into his hair. I trembled as he sucked each one. As he bit, I yanked his hair. Tit in his mouth or not, Kingpin growled as I did. He hauled his dick out of me. I felt its loss tremendously. I wasn't finished. Not because it hadn't been enough, but because I was holding back to have more of him.

Stepping back, Kingpin smiled like the devil. Hooking a finger in my panties, he grazed my clit before dragging them off completely. His smile got even bigger when he had me completely naked. I found myself aroused by him just looking at my pussy. He liked what he saw. Taking his thumbs, he spread me out. Kingpin really enjoyed the view. His gaze penetrated me. I always felt he could see right through me.

It felt good to be wanted again.

The biker fell to his knees like my pussy was a god. He took his time teasing me with his breath. His tongue snaked out, bringing his ring with it. All this time Kingpin stared me down like he'd eat me and now he was doing just that. If I'd known how good it would be, I would've begged him to. He

ate my pussy like it was his first meal after being stranded on a desert island. His tongue ring wiggled against my clit so wickedly. I clutched his hair so I could thrust up and fuck his face.

Fuck.

My clit in his teeth, Kingpin growled again. The sexy sound almost pushed me over the edge. Abruptly, he stood and brought my legs to his chest, my ankles to his shoulder. His flesh met mine again as he lined his dick up in between the lips of my pussy. He held onto my calves as he tried to stuff a foot long into a regular bun. All the while he watched his dick disappear more and more with each shove. Not being able to take it, the cock or the pleasure, an incoherent cry escaped me.

Kingpin let go, let my legs spread wide as he leaned over me. A sexy, wild beast, his eyes went primal as he bit his lip. A mischievous look in his eyes, the smile playing at the corners of his lips, let me know he'd been holding back. I was in for it. He was really about to let me have it. Just recognizing that fact should've prepared me, but I wasn't ready for the pounding I was about to receive.

Lordalmighty. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Holy Ghost and St. Nick. I could recite the twelve reindeer, cursing and it wouldn't be enough. Not in a million years.

Every stroke did me in more. I grunted like an animal with each jut of his hips. Kingpins groaned in response as his dick utterly wrecked my pussy. Knowing I'd have to recover from this, I thought about the talk of vacation dick. Kingpin had vacation dick, alright. It destroyed all of my defenses. All of them. I came like a blubbering mess feeling it in all the right places, down to my toes.

And yes, even in my pounding chest.

Kingpin gave me a moment to recover, but he didn't slip out of me. Brushing the hair off my shoulder, the biker's hooded eyes said he thought I hung the moon. Kissing that shoulder, he was enthralled. As if I were a rag doll, he turned us so I was on top. Clutching my thighs, he didn't want me to leave his dick. There was a desperate, vulnerable yet wild look

to him. I'd hit the finish line, but he was still running his marathon. The aftershocks of an amazing orgasm coursing through me, I decided he deserved one of his own. It was time to show him, he wasn't the only one who was good in the sack. This wasn't a competition, but suddenly, I wanted to show him I could do more than sing. My hands flat on his chest, I moved my hips, using his stiff dick for my pleasure. I bounced on his cock like I was on a pogo stick.

Kingpin's dark eyes turned pitch black as his stare hardened. It worried me until I saw what he stared at. Fuck, Hallow's Property Patch.

In an instant, Kingpin had flipped us and was fucking me missionary style. His hands wrapped around my neck. Unexpectedly, I wanted nothing more than to submit to his whims. All and any of them. Even if he was going to choke me. I licked my lips as the deliciously wicked urge overtook me.

"Eve, are you okay?" Kingpin asked.

The gravity of it all hit me. Not only was the MC President fucking me. I let him and I was like a pig in shit. What's worse, I wanted more. I wanted all of him. I wanted him to punish me for it. Not for wanting him. I knew he had his hands on my neck because of the damn tattoo, Hallow's patch. That's what he was punishing me for. And yet, it wasn't truly a punishment. It was dessert. My eyes watered as he squeezed, but I managed, "Oh, Kingpin. We can't tell anyone about this."

"I won't tell if you promise you won't," Kingpin grunted.

"I won't. I promise," I said, my voice urging him to go through with it.

His thumbs pressing against my windpipe, he fucked me hard, with all his damn might. His vacation dick became two-week cruise. His dick about broke me in half. All the while he had me by the neck, cutting off my air supply. All of my fear of the man returned as he held me by the throat. Somehow remembering the dread he struck in me before only

made my pussy juicier. I about passed out, but my orgasm was even better this time. Better than any ever before.

When I came, Kingpin let go of my neck. He came at the same time as I coughed up a lung. He tried to pull his dick out in time and ended up spilling his seed all over my crotch.

“Fuck,” he complained about that. Taking the sheet, he wiped me like he could stop the sperm from swimming.

Breathing heavy, I fought to catch my breath. “Oh, I can hardly move,” I complained, holding my vagina.

Kingpin’s face twisted in worry. He looked exactly like Hallow should’ve looked tonight when I fell. When Steph about kicked my lights out.

“Eve, did I hurt you?” he asked like he actually cared.

My head swung back and forth. “Lordalmighty. No. Not in a bad way. That’s not why I’m upset.”

“Fuck, we shouldn’t have,” he said, automatically, like he came to the awful realization just then.

“No one can know,” I cried, echoing his sentiment.

Kingpin swooped me into his arms, pulling me against his naked chest. “Who’s going to know? I sure as hell won’t tell a soul.”

The biker tried to comfort me, placing kisses on my forehead. That only made matters worse. Taking all the comfort he offered, I pressed my naked body against his. I cried myself to sleep in his caring arms.

When I woke up, I was sore, down there. And my neck. Closing my eyes, I remembered the evening vividly. My eyes popped open when I realized it was Kingpin who gave me such great sex. Had I been dreaming? No. I saw him sneaking out the door.

“Kingpin, you’re leaving already?” I wanted time to talk about what happened.

He held up his hands. “Guilty.” Everything was always funny to him.

I rubbed my aching neck. “About last night,” I started.

“It’s okay. I remember. I won’t tell anyone.”

I sat up, barely able to. “I feel plumb awful.”

“Why? Are you hurt? Did I hurt your neck?” Kingpin ran his eyes all over me, genuinely concerned.

In the morning light I tried to not let him caring affect me like it had last night.

“I’m worn slap out, but it’s not that. I feel like a whore. I mean you’re married. I don’t want to be a homewrecker. But I’d just seen Hallow with Steph, his ex.” I tried to explain myself, my willingness.

Kingpin’s gaze steadied me. “That purple haired girl who rides? You didn’t wreck a thing. Sky and I are taking a break.”

“What happened?” I asked.

I’d heard a little of it. I’d known they’d broken up. Last night, buzzed and heartbroken when he came to me, I hadn’t thought about his marriage one bit.

“It doesn’t matter. I’m glad I could be some revenge sex for you too.” Kingpin didn’t break our intense stare.

The things we weren’t saying hung in the air. I didn’t know how to. “It’s not like that either, Kingpin. I don’t know what this was. It’s complicated. For me anyhow. I don’t know how you feel.”

“Don’t worry Eve, this never happened.”

I nodded my head quickly realizing maybe Kingpin didn’t feel the same. “Right. You’re right. You’re always right.”

He left. And though nothing had been there before it sure felt different now. I loved Hallow, regrettably, but I wanted Kingpin, as in, I wouldn’t throw him out of my bed if Hallow wasn’t there. Not to mention, it’d felt like more than sex. But how would I know? One thing I surely didn’t know was how to proceed.

The next day when I overheard Sky talking to Paisley and Leo about their breakup. I knew I had to be careful.

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Chapter 11

Kingpin

I only made one mistake.

But Fuck. Sky had lied to me. I'd just seen video proof of my Ol' Lady's lie, her betrayal as she agreed to get close to me for the Music City Syndicate. I even saw the gut wrenching 4k proof of her fucking Ralph Getty after she fucked me. I had just learned the woman I married planned to betray me. She fooled me. Played the goddamn king to countless, ruthless men. And the kicker, her baby might not be mine. The mob sent their bloody threat. A stinking pig's fetus. They'd take the child if it turned out to be Ralph's.

Drunk and high, I avoided the whores who offered me solace that night. But lo and behold, I stumbled onto Eve, into her welcoming arms and warm, tight pussy. Eve, the Angel who I'd been certain I didn't have any feelings for, though everyone around me swore I did. Belonging to an underling, Eve had been off limits, sort of. Besides, the girl hated me. Feared me so much we used that fear to cure her stage fright. Our previous times together took on a whole new meaning as I speared her onto my cock.

Had everyone else at the club seen something I'd not?

Then I saw Eve after that fateful night, the night I first found her in the basement. The night I took off my wedding ring.

Friday night she was to sing at Royal Road. I'd already kicked my Ol' Lady, Sky out of my life, telling her she'd be moving out of the Big House a couple of days ago. She'd been coming to the club and taunting me since. Flirting with other men, she showed me she was just who I thought she was. The girl who'd sleep with Ralph Getty of the goddamn mob before coming on to me. Sky had lured me in, and I'd fallen for it.

Therefore, when Eve showed up, my mind had been elsewhere, on the fact Sky continued to make a damn sucker of me.

The pretty blonde knocked on my open office door and said, “I don’t think I can go on.”

My eyes narrowed. “Huh?”

Eve mangled her hands together like she always did when she was anxious. “I can’t sing tonight.”

Holy hell. I thought the girl might tell me she couldn’t keep quiet about what had happened between us the other night.

“Shut the door,” I instructed her.

I sat behind my desk so she couldn’t see the raging hard on I’d instantly gotten thinking of our time together.

Eve leaned against the closed door. “Sorry. Opry said to let you know.”

“Why not? Why can’t you sing tonight?” I asked, harshly, almost pounding my fist on my desk.

I’d worked so hard coaching her, and we’d had an exceptional performance earlier in the week. Not the one in the bedroom, but the one on stage before this unfortunate business with Sky lying to me and the aftermath.

“I just can’t.” Eve tugged at the scarf covering her neck.

“Is this about the bruises?” I sucked in my bottom lip.

“This scarf is hideous and yes, everyone knows about my bruises. And about Hallow. What he did to me. I’m mortified.” She wrenched the scarf off, revealing her colorful neck.

Fuck. I’d done that to her, and she’d loved every fucking second of it.

“At least they think he put them here,” Eve said, knowingly.

“Eve,” I warned at the mention of her talking about what we’d done.

My erection knocked against my leather pants, begging to come out. Not only were her bruises teasing me, reminding me of choking her while fucking her and her getting off so hard, Eve had revealed her subtle cleavage. Knowing what her tits tasted like, they called to me. I stood, though it was hard to. But I fought the urge to go to her and have her against the wall again.

“I ain’t going to tell anyone.” She stroked her neck. “It’s between us.” Her fingers carelessly ended up in her bosom for a moment as she went on, “I don’t know what you think of me now. I ain’t the type of girl that does something like that usually. I want to be mad at you, but I was in a bad place myself.”

I noticed her engagement ring was as gone as mine. Had it been gone the other night? I hadn’t cared or looked.

“You don’t need to worry about what I think,” I said.

She didn’t want to know what I thought. I thought about fucking her again.

“This business with Hallow. What he did to you.” I tried to focus on my anger at him, so I didn’t lose my control with her.

“Everyone says you’re going to kick him out or worse.”

“What do you want me to do?”

She dipped her head and lifted a shoulder. “Don’t. I think you already hurt him pretty bad.”

“I did. I’d do it again. He deserves much worse.” Anger rose in me just thinking of it.

“I agree, partly, but I can’t be the reason for him getting kicked out.”

“I can’t make any promises.” I wanted to kill him for hurting her. I wanted to hurt her myself but only to get her off.

“He’s back with his ex.” Eve pulled in her lips until they disappeared. Her eyes watered and she reached up to wipe one.

An urge settled in my loins.

Glancing down, she went on, “Not sure what that means for me. You said I can’t leave the Royal Bastards MC. I ain’t Hallow’s anymore. Not sure what that makes me now, a club whore?” Her chuckle faded to a frown, “I don’t know what to do about his damn tattoo.”

Eve’s sadness broke my heart again. But more than that, she was free, and I wanted to cut my mark into her. Take her for myself. I found myself in front of her, clutching the wall on either side of her.

“Eve, I won’t let anything happen to you. I promise.”

I’d gotten so close my beard grazed her nose.

She didn’t pull away. Her brown eyes fluttered as she looked up at me. Her chest heaved between us. Fuck. What was she doing? Did she want me as much as I wanted her? I struggled not to press my erection against her body.

“Kingpin,” she complained. Eve’s dainty hands landed on my chest to push me away.

I didn’t move an inch.

Inhaling, I smelled more than her sweet aroma, I smelled whisky. “You’ve been drinking?”

“So have you.”

She could smell a half bottle of bourbon on my breath, too.

“Not as much as the other night,” I admitted.

“We agreed that was a mistake. I ain’t going to be treated like a whore.”

I bent and my mouth went to her soft, blonde hair, her ear. I whispered, “You’ll never be a whore as long as I’m around. But you do have to stay here at Royal Road. For your own protection.”

“I can leave. I can go into hiding with my brother, Hob. No one will find us.”

My hand dropped to the small of her back. “Fuck that. Don’t leave me,” I said, before I caught myself.

Eve sucked in a breath like she felt the panic behind my words. She didn’t move her hands from me, but she wasn’t pushing anymore. We were almost in an embrace.

I changed the subject. “Bring Hob here if he’s in danger. You already promised him I’d protect him. Remember?”

“Where will I go? I can’t stay in the basement hiding from the weirdos down there. I don’t feel safe now that Hallow’s been seen out with other women.” Eve trembled.

I thought of Goliath’s place. “You can stay in one of the houses out back until you make your way. So, I... the club can protect you. You can bring your brother here. Safer at Royal Road for him, too.”

“I don’t want to live with Hob. We were never really close. If he wasn’t my brother, I’d not have any love for the guy.”

“He can take a room upstairs, of course. You can live alone.”

Her eyes squinting, she studied my face hanging over hers. “Why are you doing this for me?”

“I told you the club would protect you if Hallow won’t. If you stay here, it’d be easier for you to perform, anyway,” I reasoned, although I wouldn’t give her a choice.

“I do need the money since I’m apparently single now. Are you doing this because of the other night? I don’t expect you to help me because....” She couldn’t say what we’d done.

My forehead touched hers. “What did we do, Eve?”

Her lips pursed into a pucker.

“Say it.”

She rolled her eyes. “I reckon, you fucked me.”

“I wasn’t the only one doing the fucking, Eve. But no, I did more than that. Say what you said I was doing to you that

night.”

She looked away, sideways. “Oh, you buttered my biscuit.”

That’s what I wanted to hear.

My lips dropped to hers, and I devoured her honied mouth. Eve responded. Instantly, she reached up and snatched my long hair. Fuck. It was the other night all over again. Without breaking our kiss, I took her by the ass and got her to my desk. She spread her thighs wide, allowing me to step in close. Eve was wearing a white lace skirt, allowing me to press my dick that strained in my pants right up against her wet panties.

Was this really happening again?

My hand went to feel the fabric between her legs. It was soaked with her desire for me. Directly, I unbuckled my belt, unbuttoned, and unzipped myself. Then taking my cock and my thumb, I moved her wet panties and was inside her warm cave before I knew what hit me.

I drew back from her kiss only a little to watch her reaction.

Eve gulped when I’d filled her to the brink again so quickly.

“I thought you said I wasn’t a whore,” she yelped.

“You’re not.” My hand went up her thigh, taking her clothes with it to her property patch. I dug my black nails in her tattooed flesh. “But my dick’s in your pussy, making you mine all the same.”

“Oh, Kingpin. I don’t know about this. Sky was here in the club tonight.”

“I sent her home. She’s moving out for good. And call me Beau.”

“But you’re married, and there’s no way...”

I didn’t let her finish to know whether she was going to say there was no way she’d be with me.

“It doesn’t matter. Your pussy is mine now.” I shut her up with a kiss and my dick as I scratched at Hallow’s name.

She writhed in pain as I scraped my nails across the tattoo, trying to tear off his mark.

Taking her hips, I yanked her forward further onto my shaft. Her arms around my neck, she broke our kiss and leaned her neck back. My face buried in her cleavage as I pounded her wet cunt. She cried out, and I put my hand over her mouth.

The music out in Royal Road thumped the walls. We could hear Dimple who’d taken over for her singing, “Mississippi Queen”, and her guitarist, Rome shredding his guitar. However, I didn’t want to take any chances. The bar sat just outside my office door. Boy, how I wish we were locked in my throne room where she could be as loud as she wanted.

I abruptly stopped and let go of her mouth.

“Next time you see me, don’t wear any panties, you hear. Or I’ll set your ass on fire again.”

“Again?” she asked, falling right into my trap.

Lugging my dick out of her, I took her scarf off her shoulders and tied it around her mouth. Tied it on the back of her head, gagging her. Turning her, I pushed her down face first on my desk. I bent her over my desk. I yanked her panties up into her ass crack like a thong. One hand went to her back to hold her down as the other reared back to slap her ass.

She flinched.

My hold on her only grew.

“When you come to me, you need to be ready to take this dick,” I said as I punished her.

Eve couldn’t speak but was so tense. Caressing her cheeks, I ran my fingers down the crack of her ass. I stuck two digits between her folds, tickled her clit and felt her pussy moisten right in the palm of my hand.

She relaxed. I rewarded her by plugging her and stroking her textured walls.

“Good girl.” I pulled my fingers out and up to my lips. I sucked them into my mouth.

Fuck, her pussy tasted divine.

Repeat.

I lit her ass a flame, spanking her and then rewarding her.

Eve hollered out into the scarf. My dick pulsated with every twitch of her body and muffled sound. Her muted screams spurred me on until her ass was bright red.

I turned her over and whispered in her ear. “I’ll untie your mouth, but I’m going to gag you with this dick instead.” I took my cock into my hands, stroking her pussy juices onto it. “I’m going to plunge this all the way down your pipes. Lay back, lean your head back,” I instructed her.

Batting her wide eyes, Eve didn’t fight it. Her head hung back over the desk, her chin up. I went around the desk and loosened the gag. Her sweet mouth opened and waited for my dick. The head slid between her soft lips, past her teeth.

“Make me come down your throat, and I’ll make you come next.”

Eve’s mouth took a hold of my dick like a Hoover. Fuck. I let her suck me a while, but still I wanted to deep throat her. I wanted to make her gag on my big dick. I took a hold of her bruised throat as I worked my long shaft past her tongue and down further. I was careful, but she couldn’t move if she wanted to. The fact more than turned me on. Sweet, Eve swallowing my cock.

I didn’t want to hurt her beautiful voice. Her pussy couldn’t take all of me, but her throat sure did, for a single second at least before I released her and gave her a mouth full of hot cum. Eve swallowed all but a bit of it that escaped from the corner of her mouth. I scooped it up with my finger and held it to her lips. With a smirk, Eve stuck out her tongue as I fed it to her. My thumbs wiped her lips just spreading it.

Fuck. Eve looked so deliciously sexy eating my jizz. Just watching her submit to me had me ready to go again.

When she set up, her hair was wild. I put it back behind her ears. "I'm going to come in you now," I said. Recalling our conversations before I felt it was safe to, but I asked. "Is that alright?"

"Again," she answered, her voice hoarse from having my dick in her throat.

I bit my lip. "Again. In your pussy this time. Would you like that?"

Eve nodded. She was worked up and wanted her own orgasm.

Taking Eve's hands, I led her to my leather couch. I sat and dragged her on to her knees on top of me. But I didn't get inside her right away. I undressed her until she wore nothing but her cowboy boots. I still wore all my clothes as I feasted on her flawless skin. With my eyes first. Eve was all softness and purity, not a mark on her but my bruise. Her property patch had a bloody welp on it. With my mouth I covered every inch of her until my mouth landed between her thighs. I drank from her again like I did the other night. I loved eating pussy, and Eve's pussy turned me on the most. Besides her softer than soft flesh, it was how she stole my hair and tried to shove my head inside her.

By the time I'd edged my dick into her, she'd come already, but I expected her to again, for me.

And I wanted to blow my wad inside her sweet cunt. Eve wrapped her legs around me as she widened for my cock. I hovered over her on the couch.

"Beg me to come in you, Eve," I demanded.

"Why? I said you could."

"I'm all about consent. No. I want to hear how bad you want it."

"Come in me, Kingpin. Please."

"Not good enough. Tell Beau to come in his pussy."

"You want me to call you, Beau. I thought you hated that name."

“I’m taking it back. But just for us.” I winked at her.

“Come in your pussy, Beau.”

“Your pussy’s mine now. Say it.”

“Yes. My pussy belongs to you, Beau. Please. Now. Do it.”

“Do what, baby?”

“Butter my biscuit, Beau.”

We kissed like we were ravenous as our bodies melded into one wild being. I had to slap my hand over her mouth again as she came, screaming.

“I want you in my bed next time,” I told her.

My dick burst inside her, erupting its warmth and goo. I felt it surround me as I pumped a few more times. When we were finished, I didn’t pull out.

Holding myself over her, I told her, “I want you.”

“Again?” she asked.

I’d meant I wanted her, period, not just having sex again, but I hesitated to explain.

“We can’t go again. This has to stop.” She pounded her fists on my chest. “You’re married. And I ain’t a whore. I just can’t help it.”

Eve started crying again.

“You’re having a baby,” she said. “With Sky.”

She cried harder.

“Why can’t we go back to just being friends?”

“We can’t,” I said. “We were never friends.” Then I had to know. “Do you still love Hallow?”

“Of course,” she said, breaking my heart.

“We won’t do this again. This was a mistake,” I said, my pride speaking, but my dick was still in her. I’d said she was mine. But her heart belonged to another man.

“You’re right, Beau.” Her hand caressed my beard. Eve looked disappointed for a moment. She was lying. She was just as torn as I was. What did she want from me?

From then on out, I tried my best to avoid Eve altogether as to not fuck her again.

I told Pagan to set her up in Goliath’s place.

“Giving her one of the officer’s houses?” he questioned me.

“It’s the only way I could convince her to let this stuff with Hallow go. As in her not telling the authorities,” I lied.

“What are we going to do to him? I mean, I saw what you did to him. You’d think that was your girl he hurt.”

“With the fights on hold, Eve’s been the only one around here bringing in the crowd lately. No one here spends money, no one eats, Pagan. You want to go back to running drugs for the mob?”

“Hell, no.”

“I’d rather us earn our dirty money ourselves so that way we can keep it all.”

“Gonna do anything else to Hallow?”

“Eve says not to.”

“Damn. Okay. Maybe they’ll get back together.”

His words changed my mind about leaving Hallow be. “Put him in the barn for me, though. I ain’t finished with him.”

After a stiff drink, I grabbed my whip off the wall.

Out in the barn, Goliath sat in a human sized cage. He wasn’t speaking to us. Having been in the slammer with him, I knew it’d take time to make him talk. I hadn’t even tried to beat it out of him yet. We’d keep him fed and watered until he was ready to spill what him and Junebug had been up to with Ralph Getty.

Shirtless, Hallow hung by his arms between two chains. By the look of him, Pagan had opened the wounds on

his face. Probably while trying to string the big guy up.

“What’s this about now?” Hallow asked, drunk as can be.

I finished my smoke.

“About what you done to Eve. I ought to end you. I still might.”

“I didn’t do anything to her.”

“You raped her.”

“When?”

“Last month?”

Hallow looked confused. “Fuck. Did I? I was drunk, man. I really don’t remember what happened, but I don’t think I raped my fiancée.”

“You don’t even know?”

“Girl’s always been willing even if I forced myself on her. Last time I saw her like that, in bed, we were still engaged. The very night you did this to my face. After it. Yeah, you told me to go to her. I did. I went to her, and we had it out.”

“You admit it, then?”

“My heart’s broken, man. You wouldn’t understand. Maybe I did. It’s fuzzy. Is that why she wasn’t speaking to me? I thought it was because I was with some other women that night.”

“I ain’t here to help.”

“Why do you even care? Women are raped here all the time. What makes Eve so special?”

Eve was special, but I wouldn’t explain myself. I let out the whip and cracked it. “You’re on probation until your back is healed.”

“Go ahead. I’m so high, I won’t even feel it.”

“But I’ll enjoy flogging you, pig. And don’t worry. You’ll feel it tomorrow when we leave you out here to sober

up.”

“You’re only doing this because you’re in love with Eve like everyone says.”

Without another word, I went behind him. As I attacked his back, I knew I was in love with her. But I couldn’t have her. I made Hallow feel my enormous pain. Feel my loss. Whatever Eve and I had going on was killing her, and I wouldn’t hurt her.

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Chapter 12

Eve

I'd never planned for it to happen, let alone happen twice. Afterwards, I moved into Goliath's old place at Royal Road, just like Kingpin suggested.

Both times my heart had been freshly broken. My heart and my body yearned for love. Kingpin more than satisfied both those needs. Because, it hadn't felt like only sex. But how the hell would I know? I'd only ever had sex with one man, Hallow. On the other hand, I wasn't void of sense. How could my times with Kingpin feel like just sex with the passion between us? Everyone in the club had been saying we were in love when in my mind, in truth we clearly were not. Had the outside looking in seen something we could not? Maybe they had because my reaction with Kingpin had been much more than physical. And with the words pouring from him the last time, I knew Kingpin felt something much more as well.

However, like me, Kingpin had been hurt.

As much as my heart hurt because of Hallow, it longed for the comfort Kingpin had provided. Not only did my insides ache for him to take me once more, I thought of him scratching Hallow's property patch and creamed my panties. The biker Prez who once scared me to death and disgusted me like no other set up camp in my mind right alongside the other biker I loved.

I chalked my confusion up to me being so distraught about the loss of my fiancé and being so familiar with Kingpin. I'd run to Kingpin in my time of need. Not to mention the fact Hallow and I had been having trouble intimately because of my miscarriage that he hadn't even known about. Of course, sharing such personal details with Kingpin would make me vulnerable to him. And Hallow had been gone so I spent a lot of time with our Prez. I'd overcome my fear of him, found him to be a practical, kind and generous man, sometimes, but never thought I'd fall under his spell.

Not in a million years.

But then, there was just something about the head biker that drew me to him, like a moth to a flame. I knew it was dangerous. I knew it was wrong, even if he said Sky and him were on the outs. His wife carried his child. The worst part was that he'd left his two whores for the girl. Kingpin had fallen in love and married. He was going to be a father.

I didn't want to give in, but Kingpin's raw and unfiltered passion threatened to drag me back to him. At two am, I found myself crawling out of bed, freshening up and heading to the clubhouse. One of the late-night dance parties where a DJ played nightcore edits was going on. The sped up songs caused me to bob as I walked. I bumped into Ember from the band.

"What are you doing here?" I asked her, marveling at how different she looked. When she played, she dressed like any other biker chic in jeans and boots, but tonight she had on a dress that showed off her best features, her slim physique. Her normally curly hair cascaded down her back, straight as a stick. Instead of her normal beer, she had a girly cocktail in her hand.

"Looking for a man, what else?"

"Me too," I said, looking for Kingpin. So far, I hadn't spotted him. But I couldn't take my eyes off her. "You look nice."

Squinting down at her outfit, she straightened the fabric. "There are more than bikers here, ya know. Gotta show 'em you clean up good." She spoke of the wealthy men who came to Royal Road for the women, gambling, and to make backroom deals. Deals hidden from the eyes of the mob and the man who owned them. "It's slim pickings tonight, though. Younger crowd here. Some tech guys. Look, you can tell because they don't wear suits." She pointed out a guy who dressed like any pothead, telling me he'd been in Forbes magazine on some list.

Pondering becoming a gold digger myself, I tried to pay attention for a second. But my thoughts quickly turned to

Kingpin and to Hallow.

Rocking up to my tiptoes, I searched the crowd. “Any bikers still around?”

“Not many. The ones who are, are working. A few officers, too.” She pointed out Thorn, Cousin, and Horror. “Don’t worry. I’ve not seen Hallow or his crew.”

She talked about his friends, members who worked at Dawg’s garage. He’d not had much to do with them since he met me on account of Steph. That bitch was kin to them, somehow.

Ember went on, “There are plenty of prospects. Rome is here.” Her eyes twinkled at the mention of him. Then Ember regarded me with a chuckle. “What are you wearing?”

“Oh, this?” I glanced down. I’d thrown on my Jack Daniels’ shirt from Bootsies. Not the one that I wore to work. The oversized one I used to sleep in that would cover my ass. In my hasty pursuit, I only had on the black leggings I’d gone to bed in. “I’m just here for a midnight snack.” I’d had a hankering for something, though it wasn’t food.

“Living here now?” Ember asked.

“Temporarily, yes.”

As I answered her, we spotted Rome with Cali, a sweetbutt. We gave each other a knowing glance.

Ember deflated. “Fuck him.”

“So, you’re not looking for some rich guy?”

“No. Rome’s been giving me all the signals. I thought.” Ember’s finger wiped at the corner of her eye. “I’m an idiot.”

Touching her shoulder, I said, “No. Men are stupid. All of them.”

“You say you’re living here? That’s great. Means you don’t have to drive home.”

I was confused until she took my hand and dragged me to the bar. Minni and a new girl were slinging drinks, complaining about the early morning shift.

“We’re a fucking 7-11 now, I guess. Open all damn night since Kingpin’s on the rag.”

Ember ordered me a drink that looked just like hers. Pink with a little flamingo to garnish. I didn’t catch the name over the thumping music, but it was delicious, nonetheless. I finished the sugary liquid in no time as she dished about Rome. Ember was smitten. I held my tongue about his baby face. Rome and Ember made a good match. Yet, it seemed she had the same issue as I did. Rome was drowning his sorrows in the sweetbutts.

Ember ordered us another round. Tequila. I tasted it this time.

“Here I am going on about Rome when you’re clearly hurting.”

I had to fight confessing to her who I actually came to Royal Road to find. That’s when I spotted the biker talking to a woman who was dressed to the nines. She looked smitten with him. Then fuck, I recognized her. It was fucking Felicia. It wasn’t out of the ordinary to see a celebrity around here. After all, this was Nashville and Royal Road was exclusive, but Felicia was more famous than God.

Ember declared, “Fuck men. Fuck Rome and fuck Hallow.”

I raised my glass, thinking fuck Kingpin.

“Come on.” Ember took me out to dance.

I let the music take me. Ignoring all the men, Ember and I found solace in each other as we boogied. Thankfully, this DJ played more than nightcore. The dance had become cardio, and I needed a cool down. However, the more I drank, the more I opened up to the potential partners surrounding me. Dancing partners.

A tall drink of water who reminded me of Hallow without the leather, held out his hand. I let him twirl and dip me. We swayed. I ate up the attention as this handsome man leaned into my neck. Smelling of expensive cologne, wearing slacks and a suit jacket, he was nothing like the bikers around

here. I imagined leaving with him and never coming back. But I didn't even know his name. And my teeth were swimming. I'd lost Ember, too. She'd been swept away in the sea of dancers.

Every once and a while, I bobbed up and saw Kingpin watching me from a corner booth. Felicia left him. He sat alone. I continued to dance. But whirling, I fell against leather. Whiskey and cigarettes invaded my nose.

"Maxwell, get lost," Kingpin yapped at my handsome partner.

"Maxwell," I repeated the name and reached for the man as he slipped away.

Next thing I knew, Kingpin sat me at his booth. "What are you doing? I thought you loved Hallow."

"I do. Can't a girl have a good time? On her day off? Hallow can. You can."

"You think watching you get close to Maxwell Jacobs is a good time? In your freaking pajamas?"

"I don't know him."

"He's a VIP. You don't want to know him." Kingpin stared me down.

I stared back. There were practically two of him.

His remark about my clothes finally hit me. "And I live here. I was fucking sleeping. And you were having a good time with Felicia." I dragged out her name. "Fucking Felicia. The Felicia."

Kingpin laughed. "I don't think so." He lit a cigarette.

Drunk, I found I didn't mind it. Reaching across the table, I took his smoke. Placing it to my lips, I let it dangle before taking a puff. Coughing, I handed it back to him. "You don't think so. You men just think with your dicks."

"Felicia used to be married to my brother Bubba. And Felicia and Bubba's kid, my nephew, I just found out he's actually mine. My kid. I'm a father. And my dad just died. He

was a shit dad and I'm a shit dad too. It's been a rough week. But yeah, right now, rescuing you from the likes of Maxwell, I was thinking with my dick."

Even with my head swimming I understood Kingpin had a lot going on. I reached for his hand, but he closed it into a fist. I stared at his many rings, remembering how they felt as he caressed my skin. However, he clearly didn't want me to touch him. Closing my eyes, I put my hands in my lap. I took the rejection to heart.

Kingpin spoke. "If you've come looking for a certain biker. He's indisposed. Unavailable tonight."

I didn't know if he was talking about him or Hallow. "I came looking for a certain biker," I slurred my words. "But I'm an idiot for thinking he wanted me."

"And you're drunk. And I want to take you to my bed."

Lightening zipped up my spine. Kingpin wanted me. Well, of course. He was thinking with his dick.

"But I can't. I won't." Kingpin tossed cold water on me.

"Because I'm drunk?" I asked, my head spinning.

"Fuck, no. I don't care if you're drunk. Because you love someone else. And I'm still married. But."

"But?"

"I won't be for long."

He was saying he would be getting a divorce. Shit. And I was single. The possibility of being with Kingpin officially struck me. His face said it all. Holy fuck.

"There's no way," I said immediately. "No way. Not in a million years."

Kingpin looked away. Taking a drag off his cigarette, he studied the crowd. Looking everywhere but at me, he said, "Eve, you need to go home."

Somehow, I got back to Goliath's place, because I woke up beside the toilet. Vowing to never drink like that

again, I swore off alcohol altogether.

The next night, as I performed, my head pounded. Sky came into Royal Road looking like a lost puppy. I'd heard she'd lied to Kingpin. She embarrassed him. I could relate and knew how she must feel. I knew Hallow's pride was one thing that kept him from mending our fences. As much as I'd loved my intimate times with Kingpin, I wasn't ready to jump in and date the President of this MC.

Hallow would truly lose his shit if that happened. He'd probably try to fight Kingpin and get himself killed. And fuck. What if I changed my mind about Kingpin? A relationship with him couldn't be entered into lightly. I might never get out. Maybe Kingpin was just rebound sex. I thought of how Sweet Tea said you could love anyone. If I had a choice, I didn't want to love Kingpin. It was just Hallow was gone.

From then on out, I made myself scarce. Other than my gigs, I avoided the clubhouse. Maybe Kingpin would come to his senses and take Sky back. Make my choice easier. Because as much as I felt for the MC president, we could never be together.

Not in a million years.

And then the unthinkable happened. One of the crazy women Kingpin gave up for his wife, Junebug, about killed poor Sky. It was the talk of the club. The whore took her to the woods and cut her up. It was like something out of a horror movie. Of course, Kingpin was with his wife at the hospital. Sky survived but only barely. Fortunately, her baby survived too. Her twins come to find out.

So, again, not in a million years.

Chapter 13

Eve

Kingpin had been gone forever taking care of his Ol' Lady in the hospital. That's how bad she suffered. I knew more than ever they'd be back together after that. And I felt plumb horrible. Even though no one knew about us, I felt like I wore a scarlet letter. I still went through with my performances at Royal Road but otherwise kept away. Besides, Hallow and I were still broken up. He dated Steph. That was an embarrassment unto itself. I'd rather not see them.

However, I was learning to live again. I was all alone before Hallow, and I could do it again. Eve was the best company I could ask for. I didn't need a man to make me happy. I'd made fast friends with Ember and left Royal Road to hang out with her plenty. We got our nails did, went shopping and did brunch, all things I'd never been into before. But I was learning to pamper myself. I'd grown up so poor, I never allowed myself to enjoy the finer things.

I met Ember every Sunday on Broadway. Just being in the honky tonks again lifted my spirits. I didn't worry about Noah Fond finding me there in the broad daylight. I blended in with the crowd surrounded by music. It's not like I was taking a job there again. Ember let me take her motorcycle out, too, since she rode. Rome showed up sometimes with his friends, bikers in the club. I wasn't looking for another man, but they kept their distance anyway. I was still someone's property.

Connie came to the clubhouse just to see me, so I grudgingly sat at the bar with her one night. Much older than Hallow and I, her and her husband Dawg had become our buddies over at the Eagles' Nest. Dawg wasn't at Royal Road often. He ran a successful business off site, but he was still a member all the same. As in, he paid his dues, wore his cut and rode on local runs, mostly for show and for fun. He had all the perks of belonging to this dangerous gang with none of the hassle. I knew because Connie bragged about this constantly.

As annoying as that was, I loved her, and Connie genuinely cared for me, as well.

Therefore, when she talked about what Hallow was up to, she wasn't just trying to hurt me like some of the other women around here. "Can you believe he's back with his ex? Seen Stephanie over at your place."

"It's not my place, evidently, although I had been paying more than my share for nearly a year. And no, I can't believe it. I thought he loved me. I guess I was wrong." Stirring the sugar into my iced tea, I held in my tears.

"How long can somebody stay mad?" Connie wondered aloud.

"Are you talking about me?" I twisted on the stool to face her.

"No, I ain't. I'm talking about Hallow."

I tried to temper my tone. I didn't want to yell at Connie. "What does he have to be mad at?"

She touched my knee, a sure sign she was about to tell me some hard truths. Leaning in, she said, "Well, honey. Bless your soul. You did leave him on y'all's wedding day."

"Believe me, I know. But that's a drop in the bucket compared to what he did to me."

Connie swirled her straight whiskey. She could drink a man under the table. "What he almost did to you. It never happened." Being the only person who knew about that night other than Paisley, she spoke of him almost raping me, threatening to.

"But it almost did."

"Doesn't count unless it's horseshoes, girl."

"Whatever, that's not even what I'm mad about. I threw myself at Hallow's feet, and he stepped over me for trash, for her, for Steph."

"You mean to tell me you don't still love him?" Connie's eyebrows raised as she waited, knowing the answer.

“Of course, I still love him. But he can’t keep his dick in his pants. How am I supposed to take him back, let alone get him back when he can’t go one day without his dick in somebody else. You said yourself, Steph is over at my house. He’s moved on.”

It had been going on so long, Hallow with other women, I’d become quite apathetic to it. I loved Hallow. But more than anything, I loved how we used to be. When Hallow was mine, and he wasn’t fucking every woman at Royal Road or just one who wasn’t me.

Connie gave me a sidelong glance. “Stephanie ain’t here tonight.”

“You’re not suggesting I throw myself at him, again? How many times should I?”

“It’s either that or be lonely.” My friend said under her breath before she sipped on her straw.

“I don’t have to be lonely. I choose to be lonely,” I said and downed my tea. “I’m pretty happy on my own.”

Connie, of course, knew nothing about my romps with Kingpin. No one could know. Not that it amounted to a hill of beans. No matter the emotions those times moved in me, Kingpin was taken. After getting close to that biker and about ruining his relationship, I wasn’t about to go out with anyone else. Not until I was over Hallow and in my right mind.

Connie stayed to watch my show. I sang Miley Cyrus’s “Flowers” just for her. Not for Hallow, because I was okay on my own, finally.

That night when I stepped off stage Hallow stood in front of me, handsome as ever.

“Eve, can we talk?” he asked, standing in my way. Like he wouldn’t let me refuse.

Tapping my foot, I crossed my arms. I gave him a mean glare. Hallow hadn’t spoken to me in months. All he’d done was rub women in my face.

“I hear you’re still with Steph.”

Hallow swept his hand through his hair. His face was nice and healed. I couldn't see a single scar in the neon lights. Blinking his green eyes, he hesitated to answer. "Yeah, I guess we are back on for now."

Hearing it from his lips, my stomach knotted. I felt sick. "For now. What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means I'd give her up for you."

My heart fluttered in my chest. If I said yes would everything go back to normal? But I wasn't exactly thrilled. "And that's supposed to entice me back into your arms?"

Hallow became defensive. "Connie said you wanted to come back to me."

I hadn't said that. Was that the only reason he came to me? "Connie says Steph's been over at the house."

"She can move out."

"She moved in?" I all but screamed. "You two are living together? I practically paid for that house." Holy fuck. To think only moments ago, I was about ready to fall back into Hallow's arms.

"You're not paying anymore. You're living out here in one of the officer houses like Kingpin's whores."

"I ain't a whore, let alone Kingpin's whore. That ain't why he's letting me stay there. He's letting me stay there because I have nowhere else to live because apparently Stephanie is living in our house. I belong to the club, remember. That's the deal you decided for me."

"Eve, come back to me," Hallow said, mechanically. There wasn't an ounce of passion in his voice.

"How about you try breaking it off with Stephanie before you ask me to come back."

His passion reared its head as anger. "Why should I give her up if you're not coming back?"

"Are you fucking serious?" The audacity.

“I’d give her up in a heartbeat for you. Just say you’ll come back to me. That’s all you have to do. Quit being fucking stubborn.”

“I already tried that, and you wouldn’t, remember?” I’d thrown myself at him even after I knew he was fucking Stephanie of all people.

“Eve, I was in a bad place with what you did to me,” Hallow said, bringing up me leaving him on our wedding day.

“With what I did to you? You can’t forgive me, but I’m supposed to forgive you?”

“You started all this,” Hallow said like that mattered.

“And I apologized. I explained. I begged. And you chose her.”

“I already made that choice before you came around. You took your damn time. And I had to make sure the grass wasn’t greener.”

“Greener? You had to make sure you weren’t missing out? You shouldn’t be with her in the first place if you want to be with me.” I pushed past him.

Hallow stopped me, grabbed me by the arm, hard.

I hit him on his chest. “You notice I ain’t with anybody.”

“And you won’t be with anybody. Not with my brand on you.” Hallow let me go with a harsh toss.

I almost fell. The fucker didn’t care. “We’ll see about that, won’t we?”

“Any biker here stupid enough to have sex with you, will feel my wrath.” Hallow said, loud enough for everyone to hear.

But I was quiet as a mouse as I told him, “Some biker already has.”

Hallow looked like he might fall over from shock. Then he looked like he didn’t believe me.

Quietly as I could, I said, “I told you I would be with someone else. You didn’t listen.”

Hallow’s hands came out of nowhere, becoming a vice as he tried to drag me away with him.

“Get your hands off me. Take me anywhere, and I’ll kill you,” I cried out, causing a scene.

“Hey asshole, leave her alone.” My guitarist, Rome seized Hallow from behind.

The biker came to a dead stop and swatted Rome off like a fly. “How about you stay the fuck out of our business?” Hallow’s hands left me, and his fist reared back threatening young, smooth-faced Rome.

Puffing out his chest, Rome stepped between us. He was barely taller than me. Hallow towered over him, but Rome didn’t waver. “Any man in here would be lucky to have Eve. You’re drunk and you need to leave her the fuck alone.”

Hallow swung and a bar fight started. Not just Rome and Hallow but others joined in just for the hell of it, like they seem to. Bottles flew. Glass shattered. Dunking, I had to leave poor Rome to it. Somehow, Connie found me. She led me out of the bar.

Safely outside, I announced, “Hallow’s nothing but an asshole. I don’t know how I didn’t realize it before. How dare he say he’s not gonna leave Steph unless I agree to be with him?”

Connie said, “That’s a biker for you. He’s waiting for you to cave. You have to give something up, honey. You’ve hurt his pride. He wants you to come crawling back to him. Just say you’ll go back. That’s all he wants.”

“I’ve already done it. It didn’t work.”

“Do it again.”

“The fuck, I will,” I spat and left Connie where she stood.

It didn’t matter how much I loved Hallow, I wasn’t gonna let him treat me that way.

Back at Goliath's place, I ran to the bathroom to dry my eyes. On the way over, I bawled so hard, I thought my eyes would flow out. My head thumped an ache. I opened the medicine cabinet to grab some pain reliever. My tears gushed so I couldn't even see. I felt for the bottle of Tylenol I knew was there, knocking everything into the sink. I reached over and snatched a wad of toilet paper to dry my eyes. Heaving breaths, I tried to calm down. But when I still didn't see the medicine I needed, I raged again. Opening all the drawers and cabinets, I searched in haste. Like the bar fight, I went to war on the tiny room, flinging everything everywhere. Crying harder, I trashed the bathroom until I collapsed on the floor.

"Fuck. Where is the fucking Tylenol," I shouted out in the echoey room. Then I remembered I was out. I threw the bottle away last week. I meant to get more.

Placing everything back into the cabinets, I tried to clear my mind of Hallow. Not only was he breaking my heart, again, he was driving me crazy. Picking up a box of tampons to put back in the cabinet, I realized I was probably just premenstrual. I laughed at myself and my ability to forget all about my time of the month until it was too late. No wonder why I felt like I could kill Hallow. Taking out my phone, I opened my app that tracked my flow. Not only did I track my menstruation, after what had happened before, I noted all the times I had sex. Of course, this month was absolutely empty. No sex. Another reason I felt horrible.

Scrolling back, I didn't see a period right away, not this month in September. A good sign because my crazy could just be PMS. But there also wasn't a period last month in August. Worrisome. Panic creped. However with my irregularity, it wasn't too unusual for me to skip and not notice.

Flipping back farther, I saw the last time I had sex and the time before, only days prior in July. Those times had not been with Hallow. Staring at them, I remembered them all too well, so I didn't have to mark them with a K, for Kingpin, but I had. And before them sat my last period in late June. I had to go back before that period to see a time I had sex with Hallow.

Sometime way before our botched wedding day. Fuck, had we really not had sex in that long before we were to marry?

I'd had two periods since I had sex with Hallow and none since Kingpin.

Nevertheless, that didn't mean I was pregnant. Before I miscarried, I skipped all the time. Afterwards, I took my birth control religiously. Not only because I was told I shouldn't get pregnant, but I reckoned it would keep me regular. I thought of leaving Royal Road that night to buy a pregnancy test. But I was too scared someone at the club would see me. Also, I didn't want to know. The gravity of it all wasn't lost on me. I had a restless night tossing and turning thinking of the worst. Every discomfort reminded me of what happened before as well. I was riddled with loss, regret, and apprehension.

The next morning, I woke up checking my panties for blood. Straightway, before my morning coffee, I called and made an appointment with my new doctor. They couldn't get me in for an appointment right away, but they scheduled one. I took precautions while I waited. As in, I didn't drink any alcohol, something I'd been doing anyhow. And I made sure to eat, something I hadn't been doing in my new singlehood.

In the meantime, I prayed that either I'd start or that I wouldn't lose a pregnancy, confusing the creator. And I didn't dare tell a soul, not Connie, not Ember. I went on about my business at the club, just doing business, playing my gigs and collecting my pay from Opry. Going home to be alone. Crying about everything.

By the end of the month, I sat on the tall table in the doctor's office waiting. I remembered texting Kingpin last time I was there. I thought of texting him again but knew I couldn't. He'd been in the hospital nonstop as his Ol' Lady recovered. And what would he say? When Dr. Jarvis and his nurse, Melanie, confirmed it, I was indeed pregnant again, they said so cautiously.

To me, it wasn't exactly unwelcome news. My hand over my middle I asked "Will it even stick? Will I lose this one too?" This time it wasn't Hallow's baby. I carried the child of

the MC president. The man who still hadn't returned from his wives' bedside.

As they assured me, I had a better chance this time because I'd be getting proper prenatal care, I noticed their restraint. However, I wasn't as far along as before when I miscarried. I felt there was a real risk of losing it. Conversely, they did tell me I had a choice, even in Tennessee. Pregnancy would put my life at risk, after all, according to them even if I didn't quite understand all the particulars. I was no doctor. But I knew what having a choice meant. I understood it being someone else's. I felt a woman had that right. But there was no way in hell it could be my choice, even under the circumstances. Was there? I blamed my upbringing for my knee jerk refusal. I told them I'd think it all over, but I doubted I'd give it much thought at all.

"Talk it over with dad," the nurse suggested, talking about the father of the child.

Sure, the baby was Kingpin's, but it was also mine. Though I agreed, I knew I wouldn't be telling him.

Not ever.

My appointment with a specialist was moved up now that I was pregnant. I left the doctor's office with a list of all kinds of shit I could not eat or risk getting sick. Basically, I was being treated like a diabetic. I had to watch my sugar at all costs. They wrote me a prescription for prenatal vitamins and a medicine to control my blood pressure, one safe for the baby. Here I thought being thin meant I was healthy. Driving to the pharmacy, I debated even going back to Royal Road at all.

Nevertheless, the reality was, I didn't have anywhere else to go. I needed to think about Hob as well. Not only did the club protect me, Kingpin protected my brother per our agreement. Hob was staying over the bar. With my brother secretly living at Royal Road under an alias, pretending to be a proper prospect but prospecting all the same, Kingpin was protecting him like I'd asked. Hob was our secret. I'd have to get Kingpin to agree to me leaving, so he'd continue to protect my brother from the Asphalt Gods MC. And I needed a job.

Singing at the clubhouse earned me a good check. I didn't have to pay rent. I figured I could stay as long as I wasn't showing and save as much money as I could before I left. It'd give me time to come up with a plan.

I'd forgotten all about morning sickness until it took me out.

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Chapter 14

Kingpin

Eve moved to one of the officer's houses as I suggested. Even though I started to Goliath's old place more than once, I always turned back. I didn't seek her out. I couldn't. Eve made it a point to leave the clubhouse if I was around, just proving my point.

She loved Hallow. Her words rang through my head, "Not in a million years." Obviously, we were a mistake. Again. I had an out. I could right a wrong. The wrong of having Eve two times.

Besides, I was married to Sky, the liar. A liar was what I deserved. Not Eve. Sky made sure to remind me she was as ruthless as me, showing up at Royal Road nightly to make more of a fool of me. Yet, I wanted her. Especially as I avoided Eve. I longed to have the fantasy of her. My Sky, as she was before, before I knew of her lies. Furthermore, she was mine, technically. My wife. My Ol' Lady. She loved me unlike the other woman I'd banished from my mind.

Soon, I made up my mind. If I couldn't have Eve, I would have Sky again. I'd grieved our perfect love long enough. Nothing was perfect, but it could be right again, someday. When I'd almost given into my Ol' Lady. When I decided we'd work things out somehow, Sky would be mine, but our relationship wouldn't be the same, the unimaginable happened.

My Ol' Lady almost lost her life on account of me. A woman I'd scorned took her hatred of me out on my bride. Not only that, Sky also almost lost our baby. I begged a God I didn't worship to give me another chance. Guilt consumed me, erasing my bitterness toward her, almost completely.

Waiting for Sky to recover, I exiled Eve even further from my mind. I focused on my future with Sky. We had a second chance. I planned to make the most of it. Maddie Mae and I made amends on account of her daughter as well. Almost

losing her was the kick in the ass we both needed. I promised to be the husband Sky deserved. She promised to be the mother Sky needed. I found out my wife wasn't just having my baby, she was having my twins, removing any fears that her babies weren't mine. After all, me and my stupid brother were twins.

All the while, the singer haunted my nights, in my dreams. And when I woke in the middle of the night in a pool of sweat, she was all I could think of as well.

With Sky trapped in the hospital, I could've run to Eve's bed on so many occasions. I fought the fleshly urges for Sky alone. I fought for months. Practically living at the hospital made it much easier to avoid the temptations of Royal Road altogether. Therefore, with my wife finally home to the Big House, pregnant with my twins and us happy, I should've never ended up on Eve's doorstep.

After hearing the news, I left Church on a mission to get answers. I banged on her door louder than the police with a battering ram. Eve opened up in a panic. When she saw me, her expression became even more alarmed.

"Hell fire and damnation! What are you doing here?" Eve scolded me.

The fear written on her face only turned me on, but it quickly faded. Her fear, not the hard on. I'd missed her pissed off glare. Her blonde wavy hair wrenched into a messy bun, exposed her long porcelain neck. Pristinely free of blemishes, it had healed nicely. Of course, it had. It'd been months since I had her. Months since I choked her to a mind-blowing orgasm. Yoga pants and an oversized Jackie's Heroes' t-shirt covered the rest of her skin, but she still draped her arms around herself as if to hide.

I, on the other hand, had gone to Church sans shirt, pulling on only my cut and leather pants like I often did. I figured if I had them, I might as well show off my tats and piercings. Eve's eyes fluttered over the crow etched across my chest.

“What is this about, you not singing on Halloween?” I asked her, point blank.

“Kingpin. You ain’t supposed to be here,” she said in such an accusatory tone, it would easily give our past away. Eve wore her emotions on her sleeve and was too honest for her own good. It was one reason I had to avoid her at all costs.

But she was right. I shouldn’t be there. Glancing behind me, I made sure no one saw me standing on her porch.

“What’s wrong? You got the vapors?” Was she just nervous again?

“No.”

“Boys say this has been going on for a month now. You not performing.” I wanted answers.

Closing her eyes, Eve took a mouthful of air. I watched her chest rise and fall a bit too closely and realized she was hugging herself because she didn’t have on a bra. My dick responded more than it had to the sight of her.

Fuck. Why did she do this to me? I let my anger out on her. “What do you think I pay you for?”

“You can stop paying me,” Eve bit back.

“You can’t stop singing on account of me. What will everyone think?”

Eve yipped, “It’s not all about you. Or about you and me. I’d have to feel better to die.”

“Take something then. The show has to go on. A singer has to go on. We have Royal Bastards coming from all over for Halloween, and I promised them greatness.”

Eve rolled her brown eyes.

“Is this about Hallow?” I asked. I heard he’d gone back to his ex-girlfriend for good. Eve was single. She’d not been seen with another man for months. God was playing a sick joke on me. All I had wanted was Sky to live. He’d given me that much. She lived, but Eve was all alone and right under my nose.

The woman scowled. Turning her back to me, she stepped into the house and said, "I'm sure you've heard that he's still with Steph. It doesn't bother me none. Like I said. I'm all stoved up. I can't sing."

I followed her in, shutting the door behind me.

Big mistake.

Nibbling my lip, I went to her and wrapped my arms around her from behind. Grabbing her unshackled titties, I said into her hair, "You feel fine to me."

Protesting, Eve turned in my arms. "Holler fire and save the matches," she exclaimed.

I chuckled at her southern quip. I'd not heard anyone say that since my grandmother.

The angel struggled against me. I wouldn't let her go, not for a king's ransom. I had her tiny body smashed against mine, just like in my dreams. She smelled so good, sweet as always. Unrestrained, I bent to kiss her neck. It'd been so long since we, or even, since I. Sky and I had not been given the go ahead yet. Nothing was wrong with her in that department, but doctors didn't think her sutures would hold if she was moved too much. Therefore, Eve had been the last woman I'd been with. And those times were all I could think of. My dick remembered them and begged to be unleashed.

I was sure Eve could feel my stiff rod pressed against her.

"Kingpin, we can't," she murmured, reaching up and feeling my hair that was no longer there.

I'd shaved my head. Kissing up to her ear, I confessed, "I cut it so I wouldn't think of you yanking it and come in my pants."

The thought of her snatching my hair had almost brought me back to her many a time. As I declared my struggles, guilt consumed me. I'd let Sky think I cut my locks for her like I should've done since they had to shave her head to get to her wounds. Eve was right. I was a jerk. More than that, I was a bad man. Evil. Remorse threatened to stop me.

Yet, I bore it all. “It’s the only way I’ve been able to stay away from you,” I growled in her ear.

“My stars and garters,” Eve whined, but she didn’t push me away. She trembled at my touch. Her hands teased my buzz cut as my lips chewed her earlobe. I reached down her pants, wiggling my fingers into her wet underwear. I touched her hot nub. Eve gulped like she could finally breathe again.

Had she missed me this much too?

“What did I tell you about wearing panties around me?” I grunted out as I dipped my fingers inside her moist center.

I thought of the alternate universe where Eve wasn’t in love with Hallow and Sky had never been hurt because of me. One where I could have Eve’s pussy when it pleased me. Like I had any woman I pleased back when I was simply the badass President of the Royal Bastards MC, and not Sky’s Ol’ Man, and a soon to be father to her twins. I thought of how I never had to make a choice between Memphis and Junebug. Both women bent to my will. If only Sky and Eve would do the same.

But Memphis and Junebug were also with other men. They were free to do what they pleased as well.

“Tell me you’ve not been with another man,” I hissed. “Not since.” The thought of Eve with another enraged me.

Eve didn’t answer, turning my rage into heartache.

Rubbing her clit with my thumb, I asked, “Hallow’s still seeing his ex that butch purple haired biker bitch?”

“Yes,” Eve said, like she wasn’t pleased at all.

Stupid motherfucker.

I fucked Eve with three fingers as the woman clung to my neck. Eve cried out as I pleased her.

“Is there another man?” I needed to know like I needed to breathe.

“Got to beat them off with a stick now that Hallow’s abandoned me,” Eve blew out.

“Who?” I asked, raging through my teeth. I’d have to warn my bikers not to touch her or I’d kill them.

Eve creaked as I fucked her harder. “Kingpin, if I wanted another man, I’d have my pick of the litter.”

“Tell me, Angel,” I snarled. “Have you been with another biker, any other man?”

“I’ve not,” she moaned into my ear. “Not since you.”

Of course, she wouldn’t. Not sweet, innocent Eve with her angelic voice and smoking body. She would never give herself up so easily. I ached to kiss her honied mouth, to whip out my dick and break her in two.

“Tell me you won’t be with another,” I demanded. “Tell me you’ll fuck yourself before you let another man have my pussy.”

“Kingpin,” Eve started, her voice quaking.

“Not even Hallow,” I demanded even more as I stroked the walls of her slick pussy.

“Kingpin,” Eve cried out, her orgasm imminent.

“That’s not my name,” I told her. “Say it, love.”

“Beau,” she whimpered.

My soul melted.

“I want you,” I said as I drew my fingers from her. I licked them in front of her like I wanted to lick her sugary pussy. “I’ll have you.”

Trembling, she had finished.

I wasn’t finished. But it was daylight. I couldn’t take my time like I wanted to.

“I want inside my pussy. Right here, right now,” I roared.

My hand went to my pants, to my zipper. I took out my massive erection and stroked it.

Eve gawked. Her mouth fell open as she stared at me like she was starving.

“Get naked and climb me like a tree, love.”

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Chapter 15

Kingpin

Like a horn dog, Eve drew her t-shirt over her head, revealing massive titties. Fuck. I hadn't noticed how big and plump they were before. But I remembered how soft they felt in the palm of my hands. I wanted to squeeze them, yank the pink tips, but I didn't have the time. Squeezing my dick, I knew I couldn't be here much longer. Did we even lock the door? We hadn't.

Sneaking should be exciting, but I wasn't excited about it at all. I was here by pure compulsion. Staying away had caused an ache in me, a dull pain that never ceased. I needed some relief to live another day.

Eve wiggled her pants off, undies and all. She stood naked before me. Her snatch, harry and natural, she wasn't prepared for this. She had no intention of bedding another man. The fact only turned me on more. Beautiful, all but that nasty Property of Hallow tattoo. My earlier mutilation of it hadn't done nearly enough. I wanted to burn it off her body. The thought of her screaming while I did, almost made me come right then and there.

"Come here," I commanded.

I couldn't move. If I did, I'd take Eve to the bedroom and take all damn day and night. That wouldn't do. We'd be found out. Someone would be hurt more than she already hurt. I wouldn't think of her. The fact froze me in place. But I had to have Eve. I'd gone too long.

Sweet Eve took one step toward me. Lunging forward, I took a hold of her, lifting her body up to straddle my waist like the very first time I had her. She locked her silky legs around my middle. Tiny hands clutched the back of my neck as she held on. Reaching up, I let down her long hair. Honey locks flowing made her a vision to behold. This angel was mine for the taking just like before. A gift I didn't know I longed for. Glaring down at two huge white orbs adorned in

perky pink, I went under us and positioned my dick against the soft flesh of her wet and waiting pussy. It had been months since I'd gotten my dick even a little bit wet. The sensation was maddening.

“Ride me, Eve. Fuck me like you've been waiting for this dick.”

With sultry, hooded eyes, Eve blinked a few times. I stared into her brown eyes, trying to give her courage. Her pale pink lips parted as she panted. Conflicted, she didn't know if she would go through with this. We'd come this far to the brink. I needed her, needed her so badly. She craved me too. Just like before, I was in awe of her wanting me. Giving into me so freely like a whore, but Eve was no whore. There was something much more between us. Something unspoken and deep. We'd not had a moment to even explore it. But it was there all the same.

“You're mine, Angel. No matter what, you'll always be mine,” I said to her, but it was a promise to the universe.

With that, I caught her sweet lips in mine and there was no going back. Eve let her weight take her on a ride down my shaft. Slithering into her hot juicy sleeve felt better than anything on earth. Our kiss waned as heavy breathing commenced. Our eyes connected again. Taking her hips in both hands, I fucked her right where I stood. With each thrust I only went deeper as Eve trotted on my dick like a cowgirl. Our faces fucked just as hard. Hers, flushed and overwhelmed and mine, determined to mark my territory, again. Our bodies jerked, finding their quick climax together.

Eve hollered out loudly as she came, like she was unable to before, intensifying my orgasm. The sensation took me to my knees. I clutched Eve to me just in time so she wouldn't hit the floor. Immobilized inside her, I exploded within her. I kissed her shoulder as she shivered with the aftershock of her release.

Eve moved to get off me, but I held her hips.

“Don't go,” I barked.

“We’re going to hell in a handbasket,” Eve muttered and started weeping. Just like the other times.

I wouldn’t let her go. My dick buried inside her, I let her cry against my shoulder. Rubbing her back, I let her tears penetrate my defenses. Kissing her cheek, I felt my dark heart break. I wasn’t only hurting Sky with my rash actions.

Raising her chin, I needed to look into her pretty brown eyes. They were wet and full of regret. “Eve, I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Then let me go,” she howled.

Did she mean off my lap or to let her go entirely?

“This was a mistake,” I said, not just mimicking her like I had before, but decidedly, not wanting to cause anyone any anguish. “I’m so sorry.”

Like broken from a spell, Eve hopped off my dick and began dressing in a hurry. “I’d say. Sorry son of a bitch. You and Sky just got back. What in the world were you thinking?”

Standing, I stuffed my dick away and zipped my pants. “Don’t blame yourself, Eve. I can’t resist you. It’s my fault. It’s my mistake. It won’t happen again.”

“Right,” Eve said. “You’re married and you’re having twins. You love Sky. And after what happened to her.” Eve wailed, her tears coming hot and hard again.

Eve echoed my own guilt. But I was the lowly snake. I tempted her. She didn’t want this.

“We will just have to keep away from each other. Not see each other privately like this ever again,” I said, trying to mean it.

Eve swiped her hands across her cheeks, slapping the tears away. “I guess it’d be better for everyone if I just left Royal Road altogether. That way you can be with Sky and have no enticement. Hallow can be with anyone he wishes, too. I won’t be a bother to anyone.”

“You’re still hung up on Hallow?” I asked, the fact killing me.

“You’re one to talk. I’m just a mistake. You have a woman. A wife. An Ol’ Lady.”

“Eve, you’re not going anywhere.” The thought of her leaving tore me up inside.

“What if everyone finds out about us?” She spoke of the obvious complications, making all of them rise to the surface of my mind.

“How would they?” Or was there something else? “What are you implying?” It didn’t sound like a threat.

“Nothing. But I can guarantee you this won’t stay hidden forever, and it won’t be my doing.”

What the hell was going on? I had to get to the bottom of it, but I also had to get out of there. Like yesterday. I said, “Maybe it would be better if you leave Royal Road, Eve.” Maybe I could see her if she lived somewhere else, too, and no one would be the wiser. Fuck.

“But what about my brother?”

“If it was to happen, if you were to leave, I’d still protect him. I’ll have to think on it.” Fuck, I’d just promised not to see her again and here I was making plans to stow her away so I could sneak off to her arms and her pussy. “We’ll talk about this later, okay?”

Sniffing, Eve nodded.

I showed myself to the door like the place was on fire.

Even though I stayed away from her for the next two weeks, I never expected Eve to leave Royal Road after Halloween. That was the last time I saw her, across the big tent as we waited for the star of the show. That star should’ve been Eve, but as it was, the girl claimed to be sick. I knew it was only guilt churning her stomach. Maybe heartache. I felt the same sickness as I longed to be with her.

As it was, a spy would grace our stage under the big tent.

Leviathan had fallen for an ex-circus performer, Maren, who was none other than a member of the Asphalt

Gods MC sent to take me down. My enforcer thought I was a sucker, and I didn't realize this. He was playing her and me to get the revenge he'd always wanted. But Eve's brother Hob told me about Maren right away. The only thing foolish was letting it go on so long, thinking I had everything under control.

When Levi accepted the danger himself, my officer didn't come to me like he should. The monster of a man actually thought Memphis and his brothers would keep the knowledge of the peril we might be in from their President. His careless actions threatened all our lives.

Knowing any minute the shit could hit the fan, I had Sky, pregnant with our twins on my lap, safely in my arms. Dressed in black angel wings, Eve sulked in a corner with Connie, Dawg's Ol' Lady. Hallow came with Steph, clearly rubbing her in Eve's face. I couldn't tell if Eve was upset about me or Hallow. But the girl wore agony as if it were her costume.

It killed me to cause her any sorrow.

Just as it killed me to hurt Sky.

I decided to take care of two birds with one stone. I'd not had sex with Sky since the first time I'd been with Eve. After her injuries, I couldn't, even as I promised myself, not to mention her, I would stay with her. But we'd finally gotten the go ahead from her doctors. It was safe to proceed. Yet, torn between two women, I'd been putting off making those promises to Sky with my body. And my Ol' Lady hadn't felt ready either. I left the Halloween Party determined to change all that.

As I did, I confessed to my sins and made promises to never make mistakes again.

I never intended to. As much as it pained me, I would give Eve up for good.

Sky seemed to forgive me.

All was well.

And then all hell broke loose. I rose from my bed and bride to fight. Just like we feared, the Asphalt Gods MC ambushed our Halloween bash. We fought like Hell, and the Royal Bastards MC survived to ride another day.

Most of us survived anyway. Two brothers perished, Cue Ball and our beloved, Buzzard. Jelly Bean, one of our strippers also met her end. Unlike the others she was young, a shame. Many were injured, including bikers from other chapters, including myself. Not too bad. The worst of it, I'd been shot in the foot, my pinkie toe blown clean off.

Putting Riff in charge of accounting for all the members and their injuries, I had him check on Eve first. I explained she was all alone, meaning she had no man to protect her.

“If she’s hurt bring her to me right away,” I ordered.

Riff brought back the list. Eve was named unharmed. Therefore, I knew she survived the raid unscathed. I was out in the barn the next morning when she came looking for me. Pagan said she came to the clubhouse to inquire about my wellbeing. He talked to her and told her I was alright. I took care of the business of our traitor, sent Levi on a mission to find that bitch Maren who caused all this trouble. I was sure Levi longed for her head as much as I did. And if he didn't we'd take his.

We took a few prisoners from the Gods as well. It took time to make them talk. Besting me wasn't their only mission, they were looking for Hob and Eve on orders to kill as well. After we had our information and all was clear, I spent a couple nights at the hospital getting patched up. When I got back to Royal Road I collapsed for days. I wasn't as young as I used to be.

Determined to ignore her, I hadn't noticed at first. But when Eve didn't show up at Cue Ball and Buzzard's funeral, I sent Pagan to check on her. Biker came back empty handed. As soon as I got the chance, I went to Goliath's old place to search myself. Eve was nowhere to be found. I even tried her phone. There was no answer.

I shot her a text. “Eve. Where are you? You’re in danger.”

Waiting for a reply, I read her other texts, quick back and forths from back when we saw each other regularly. Back when she came to the Big House to my study to work with me. She never replied.

The girl had all but vanished.

After the funerals, I sent Pagan to search her Gran’s house up north. I left on my hog and rode around Broadway, cruising the parking garages looking for her car. I’d thought she’d gotten another job and left. But I didn’t see her piece of shit El Camino anywhere.

When I got back, I interrogated her brother about her whereabouts. That was before I threw him out, breaking my promise to Eve. He claimed no knowledge of her location or plans. Throwing him out I was protecting him from our club anyhow. He couldn’t stay at Royal Road anymore since my brothers found he’d been a member of the Asphalt Gods MC, whether he’d been part of the raid or not. I had no reason to believe he had been. After all they’d been looking to kill him. Nevertheless, my men thought it was careless of me, so I did right by them.

Next, I questioned Hallow. All this mess between Eve and I could finally be settled if they got back together. I thought when he found out she’d left, he’d come to his senses.

I broke the news to him carefully. “We know she survived the raid, but she’s gone now.”

“I ain’t spoke to her.” He didn’t seem to care that she was missing. It had to be a lie.

“Don’t you want to find her?” I thought if anyone would, it’d be him. “I have no real evidence she left willingly. The Gods could have her.”

“Didn’t we already chase Eve?” he reminded me. “How’d that turn out for me?”

“You know she’s in danger, right?” I tried to keep my voice calm so as to not show the level of my concern. I hid my

panic. Hallow used to be a goddamn detective. I could use his goddamn help.

“Prez. I’ve moved on,” Hallow claimed.

I had doubted that until now. “You don’t want to find her? Eve, the angel you lied to me about and was about to marry. The woman you bargained with me for.”

“I’m happy with Steph,” Hallow said, his face a block of steel.

Pretending to believe him, I sent him on a run back to Charleston, WV to help Murder solve a mystery there. If he was lying, if he knew where Eve was, he’d stray and go find her. I’d have someone follow him. And if he wasn’t lying, and he really didn’t care, getting Hallow away from Royal Road would free Steph to move on herself. I didn’t foresee that bitch waiting for any man. When Hallow came back, he’d be free to be with Eve again, if we ever found her. Eve would be happy.

It was a good a plan as any.

Though I felt hollow inside, I couldn’t make a big deal of Eve’s disappearance. Our enemies couldn’t find out. I had to keep it quiet. Fresh off our battle, I didn’t know what the Asphalt Gods MC would do if they got wind of it and found her first.

With Hallow gone, I called a special Church with just a few of the officers, Horror, Cousin, and Thorn. I let them know we were looking for Eve on the down low. The lowest rungs on the ladder, when it came to officers, at least. They wouldn’t call attention to her absence as they looked for her. I couldn’t send my VP out to question people. And those closest to me couldn’t even know I cared that Eve was gone.

Through my channels, I inquired and decided the Asphalt Gods MC didn’t take her. They’d let me know if they had, wanting something for her in return. I hoped anyway. In case she stayed in Nashville, I made a point to ride out myself to search every few days. It cut into my time with Sky, but it was necessary.

I hated to admit it, but she wasn't healing, not mentally. The girl had gone mental. We fought like cats and dogs over every minute I didn't spend with her. She even stabbed me one night. Fuck. I'd missed my Harley. My freedom. Royal Road had become a prison of my own making. The wind no longer whipped my hair as it was all gone, but soothed my temper. Therefore, instead of minding the clubhouse, I decided to start getting my hands dirty again. Pagan thought we were breaking the Prime Directive or something. He thought I shouldn't put myself in danger. But I found any excuse I could to be away. Any excuse to put my life at risk. I dived even more into club business and that was saying something.

It was a long two months until Horror came to me with an address. The night of our Christmas party. Pagan and I had just broken Satan out of the nursing home for it. Sky waited for me at the bar with our ugly sweaters for the contest. She'd be having our twins in a couple of months. Even with her previous suffering all was going well with her health. My time away had let her heart mend, too. Grow fonder. With Eve gone, I was able to focus on my marriage when I was around. I'd kept my promise to Sky. No other women. That was easy with Eve gone, too.

Therefore, when Horror took me aside, I didn't know how to take the news.

"This time it's her," he said in my ear. He pushed a wad of paper into my hand.

We went to my office for privacy.

Horror swore it was true. "I saw it with my own eyes. She works there, going by the name Angel Hart. She's using Hallow's real last name as if they went through with the marriage. We'll find where she's living soon."

After all this time, Eve was still hung up on Hallow. Staring at the address, I didn't know what I should do. One thing was certain, I couldn't leave the party. "Why didn't you bring her to Royal Road?"

“I wasn’t sure you wanted her brought here with such an event going on tonight.”

“Why not?”

The big man raised his chin and looked at the ceiling. There was something he wasn’t telling me.

“Eve’s okay?”

“Yes, she seems fine,” Horror said but something was off. “You should see for yourself. Decide if she should come back. Or maybe we should just let her be.”

“Let her be?” Confused, I dismissed my officer.

Maybe Horror was right. If Eve was safe and happy, we could keep an eye on her from afar. I wouldn’t have the temptation of her. Reading the address, I punched it into my phone. The diner was only miles away, on the way from here to the nursing home. I’d be driving past the very road later taking Satan back to Silver Springs.

Eve had been hiding in plain sight.

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Chapter 16

Eve

The early shift at Jolene's Diner, a Dolly Parton themed restaurant, wasn't nearly as busy with all the snow falling. After all, it was Christmas Eve and it'd be a half day. I had worked there for the last two months and already made shift manager. It wasn't much, but it was my own. I was on my own. No Hallow, no Kingpin, no Royal Bastards MC. I'd left Royal Road with no real plan. I sold the orange, El Camino, I loved, Gran's car to put my deposit on a small, one bedroom apartment. It had new hardwood floors and granite countertops. The place was better than any house I'd ever lived in. There was not a lick of furniture besides a new mattress on the floor. I'd also bought that with the money from Gran's car. Every dime I made at Royal Road, I put in the bank for the baby. Regardless, my new place was cozy. I planned to fill it with everything I needed for the baby soon.

When I found the job at Jolene's, I knew it was close to Royal Road, but the hours were perfect. I went in at four am and got off before noon. No biker was up and out at those hours.

They'd never find me.

And I'd gotten a text from Kingpin, saying I wasn't safe. Being so close to the clubhouse, I was only a text away from safety. Anything happened I could text Kingpin back and a slew of bikers would be here in no time. I had a life line.

Being farther along in my pregnancy that my doctor considered high risk, the job was easy enough. The pay and benefits were very generous as well, because of our namesake. Even though my heart was still broken, I felt quite lucky, sometimes even optimistic about my future, alone. Even if I'd celebrated my birthday last week all alone. I'd talked to Hob, dad and gran on the phone, though.

As it was fixin to become a blizzard, I was just about to call upper management to see if we could shut down the place.

Go home before the roads become impassable. The bells jingled on the door, and someone walked in, bringing a whoosh of frigid air with him. I shivered. Goosebumps covered me. It felt like an omen. I looked up and saw why.

A biker.

Lordalmighty.

You couldn't miss Kingpin, but his ugly Christmas sweater threw me off. Consequently, it was a hot minute before I stepped behind the register. When he about fainted, I knew I'd not been quick enough at hiding my baby bump. I was only six months pregnant but big as a cow.

"This is where you've been hiding yourself?" Kingpin said in disbelief.

"Hiding. Who's hiding? You said I could leave, so I left," I howled, unable to control myself.

Besides, the Halloween raid had spooked me. While the Gods ran around Royal Road trying to kill everyone, I worried for my unborn child. No one materialized to protect little ol' me. I hid the whole time in a Porta-John. It was downright disgusting. When it was over, no one but Riff, who was tasked with counting everyone, came to check on me. Not Hallow. Not Kingpin. Two men who'd laid claim to me. I heard that Hallow and Steph made it out alive. I went to check on Kingpin as soon as I could, but he was too busy to see me.

I knew then, that evidently, I was on my own. No matter Kingpin's words in the midst of our passion, he always backed out after he'd gotten what he wanted from me.

I'd known the Royal Bastards MC were looking for me from the calls and texts I received first from Kingpin. And then from all the others. I didn't answer them. Regrettably, even Ember, Connie or Allie. And I'd not had any contact from Hallow. I've not contacted him either, not that I had his new number.

Speechless, Kingpin approached me. His eyes fell to my stomach. I placed my hand on my belly and tried to see my toes. I couldn't. Another reason I left was because I'd be

showing soon, and that would give us away. I just never expected to be as big as a Chinese spy balloon. My doctor said it was on account of my health conditions and stress. I breathed in deep, feeling that stress more than ever.

Flustered, Kingpin finally opened his big mouth. “Does Hallow know?”

“Why would he?” I quipped.

“It’s his, ain’t it?” His mouth spoke, not his brain.

“You do the math.”

Kingpin looked around like he’d been caught. He watched the last of the customers leave. I’d leave too if a biker came in here hollering. Once the old couple were through the door he shouted louder, “Is this why you left?”

My eyes tumbled back. “You said I should leave.”

Kingpin leaned heavy on the counter. He pinched the bridge of his nose like he was about to have an aneurism.

Grabbing the counter myself, I said, “I couldn’t very well have Hallow seeing me like this.” I didn’t mince words. I wouldn’t mention Sky. I didn’t think that was my place.

“Why not? The baby could very well be his.”

Lordalmighty. I shook my head. I wished. But I knew very well, there was no way in hell.

“Eve, no math is necessary to know that you were with Hallow very close to the time, well, you know. The first time.” Kingpin couldn’t even say we had sex.

“No, I wasn’t. It’d been a really long time.” I should know.

Leaning on the counter completely, the biker softened, whispering, “But Hallow... violated you, remember?”

“Yeah, I remember but he didn’t get so far as to... ya know... the penetration part.”

The biker’s face bent in bewilderment. “Are you saying, Hallow never raped you?”

Holy shit. I proceeded to clarify, Hallow didn't actually rape me. "I never said he did." I'd never told a soul that either. Enlightening him, I rambled on forever about how I never told anyone that Hallow raped me. They had all just assumed because they were too chicken shit to say the word and trigger me. In fact, the only thing I understood was that Paisley knew for a fact Hallow didn't rape me. She was there and made it a point to discount my own feelings about it. The gossip should've told everyone that fact. But why would that troublemaker tell the truth? She had to have been the one to spread it.

Kingpin seemed to grasp what I was saying. "I'd just assumed. Sky even told me he did. I even confronted Hallow myself. He seemed uncertain. He said he couldn't remember that night. Said he was drunk and high. Though, eventually, he admitted it."

"So, he doesn't even know if he raped me?" That seemed more horrifying than him threatening to. Then I got the meaning behind Kingpin's words, Hallow eventually admitted it. I wondered how Prez got the confession out of him.

Before I could ask, Kingpin finally truly understood the situation. "Surely, I ain't the only man you've been with," he choked out, "sexually, since Hallow?"

Are you fucking kidding me? He still didn't get it. Deadpan, I said, "Surely, I'm just another whore."

"I take that as a no. You've not been with anyone else but me. Sexually." He seemed too surprised. Or maybe he was still in shock.

"Correct." I wasn't amused.

"As in, no other man has penetrated you?" He used my words as if I was dimwitted.

The only one acting dense was him. "Yeah," I strained. Mouthing the words, I was clear. "Only you."

Realization settled on his features. "The baby?"

“A boy, and mean as shit, just like you, kicking me constantly.” The baby kicked as I said it, causing my words to come out tense.

He reached for my belly but hesitated. “Can I?” I couldn’t believe he was asking. He wasn’t the sort to seek permission.

“Go ahead, you and a small army. Everyone’s always feeling me up,” I complained. It’s as if a pregnant woman’s body wasn’t her own.

Smiling, Kingpin made contact.

I frowned, thinking of the trouble this would cause.

“You’re not happy?” he asked, like I should be.

“Why in the Hell would I be? I wanted to have a baby with my husband. I wanted to have a husband. I was supposed to. You and I were a mistake. You said so yourself.” I’d not only lost the love of my life, but I was also carrying the child of a biker who clearly didn’t want me. Sure, in the heat of passion he sure claimed to, but then he went cold. And that wasn’t quite fair. Things with us were complicated. I’d been scared of wanting him.

Shutting his eyes, Kingpin said, “I lied. I lied because you said you loved Hallow.”

He lied? What did that mean? I gawked at him in disbelief.

“But you love Hallow, not me. Like I just told you, Hallow doesn’t realize that he didn’t rape you that night. Come back to Royal Road and let him think the baby is his. If you want.”

I had whiplash. First Kingpin said we weren’t a mistake. And then he was willing to let me be with Hallow. Crossing my arms, I declared, “I will not lie.”

“But you’ll run away? From me,” Kingpin said, trembling in anger. His dark eyes bore a hole in me.

I couldn’t look at him. The tears came in hot, flooding my eyes. “What was I supposed to do? You didn’t want me. I

made a huge mistake.”

If this was a mistake, why was he even here? Why not let me be? Lordalmighty, it dawned on me. Maybe I was dim. Kingpin had been lying about his feelings this whole time. Lying about this being a mistake. But why? I thought about my own reasons to dismiss anything between us. First there was what could've been with Hallow. Kingpin always asked about my love for him. I always replied with the truth. Because I loved Hallow. And then of course, there was Kingpin's relationship. “You are married. You two are having twins. And after what happened to Sky, I could never compromise what you have with her,” I whimpered.

Those were reasons enough. It made sense. The biker always said it was better to lie.

“What's taking so long?” a voice came from behind Kingpin.

Villain rushed to us. “Eve, you're pregnant. Wow. Congratulations. Who's the daddy?”

Fuck. “It's none of your damn business.” I tried to dry my tears.

Kingpin spoke to his underling, “There's only one man who could be the father.” He was letting him think our baby was Hallow's.

Villain said, “Oh, Eve, I'm sorry.”

He obviously thought I was pregnant with Hallow's child without anyone having to tell a lie. That only made me cry harder.

Kingpin tried to console me, “Eve, please come back to Royal Road. I swore to protect you. The club swore. And I shouldn't have let you think that you were allowed to leave. You weren't. So. You need to think about whether you're going to come back willingly or if Villain is going to have to wrestle a pregnant woman into the truck.”

Shaking my head, I knew I couldn't go back there. A confrontation with Hallow was out of the question.

“It’s coming a blizzard. How are you getting home? I didn’t see your car outside,” Kingpin went on, dotting on me.

“I sold it for rent money,” I wailed.

“What about your Gran’s place?”

“It’s occupied. After Halloween.” Fucking Kingpin hadn’t kept his promise. He’d thrown my brother out.

“How are you getting home?” Kingpin asked again.

“I’ll call an Uber.” Without Gran’s car that’s how I got along. The bus didn’t come all the way out here.

“Have you seen it outside? There’s a foot of snow at least, and it’s still falling, heavy and wet. There’s no Uber today. Let us take you to Royal Road.”

“And if I refuse?” I already knew I couldn’t.

Kingpin revealed a big evil grin. “You belong to the club, Eve. Like I said, I shouldn’t have let you think you could leave.”

“Just wait until Hallow gets back,” Villain added. “He’d have a fit if we let you leave with some strange Uber driver in your condition with these roads as bad as they are.”

“Hallow’s gone?” I asked. That made a big difference. I didn’t want him to see me like this. I hadn’t wanted anyone to.

“For now,” Kingpin said. “So, there will be no drama. I promise.”

“Just let me send the cooks home and lock up.” I’d already sent everyone else home because of the snow.

I poured Kingpin and Villain some coffee before I disappeared to close the diner. They took it to a table by the window.

In the back, Jesus, one of our cooks asked me about the men out front. “You want me to get rid of them?”

“No. No trouble,” I said, waving my finger.

Our other cook didn't speak English but sounded concerned. It was sort of sweet how everyone who worked there was concerned for me, a single pregnant woman. Sweet when it wasn't pitiful.

Jesus translated for Mateo, "He saw men in the same vests in here the other morning."

I'd missed it. Our usual breakfast was so busy I wouldn't know if I was coming or going.

"You run with them?" Jesus asked. "The Royal Bastards?"

"Not by choice," I said all too honestly.

"If you're in any trouble, Mateo and I can take them out," Jesus said, all serious.

"I ain't," I promised them.

"Are you sure, Jefa? I have a gun in my truck. They'll never suspect it."

I didn't even consider it. "I'm sure." Leaving was one thing, but Kingpin had saved my life. I wasn't about to get him killed. He was my baby's father.

"Then maybe you can put in a good word for my brother, Mateo and I."

"You want to join a gang? I thought you were religious?" Jesus was pronounced the Spanish way, of course, but sometimes I thought it shouldn't be because he was devoutly Catholic. He talked about God more than my Gran.

"Maybe I'll convert them." Jesus had a charming smile to go with his accent. He had enough tats to pass for a biker, though they were of the Virgin Mary and such.

"I highly doubt that," I said, knowing the debauchery that went on at Royal Road.

Jesus stretched his neck to look out front. "Ain't that their President. The one in the sweater." Kingpin was so well known that Jesus took out his phone and snuck a picture of him.

I laughed thinking of a photo of the bad ass biker in the ridiculous sweater floating around the internet. Taking photos wasn't allowed at Royal Road, but he was in public. He should've known better.

"You're leaving with them, ain't you? They can't be all bad if you are. If you are, willingly?"

I ignored that last part. "I can put in a good word, but I don't have much say," I said, going to the office to count the drawer. I could hear Jesus and Mateo speaking in Spanish when I left. At least it wouldn't take long to close. We'd been expecting it.

In no time, we were finished. As I turned off the lights, Jesus and Mateo were out front talking to Kingpin. Villain had gone outside to warm up the truck. The biker president shooed them away when I approached. The cooks left.

"I'm supposed to put in a good word," I said as I was locking the doors.

"They said you could vouch for them. I told them your word is gold," he said.

"They're good kids, Kingpin. Too good for Royal Road."

"They're older than you, Eve."

Not when it counted. I felt like I'd lived three lives already. "I'm about to be a mother."

Kingpin's eyes sparkled at my words. He placed his hands on my belly. "Yes, you are. The mother of my child."

What was I getting myself into? We stepped out into blinding snow. Kingpin offered his elbow, and I took it so I didn't slip and fall.

Holding his other arm up like he could stop the wind, he grumbled, "The roads are worse. We should've left an hour ago."

"It's only been thirty minutes," I said, correcting him.

"You shouldn't have worried about it."

“About what, my job?” We were shouting to hear each other in the storm.

“You ain’t coming back.”

“You expect me to quit?”

“We can’t talk about any of this now,” he reminded me, opening the car door. He offered his hand to help again. “Where are your gloves?” he asked, his brow creasing.

“Where are yours?” I shot back.

I let him help me into the tall truck and slid over.

“You’re not going to buckle up?” Kingpin complained.

I’d meant to but obviously wasn’t quick enough. Immediately, I struggled with the seat belt, so he reached around the globe to buckle it.

Villain drove. I sat between him and the father of my child. We rode in mostly silence broken only by Kingpin telling Villain to be careful, fifty-eleven times. The roads were bad and getting worse, but the biker Prez was visibly on edge.

“We have a pregnant woman here,” Kingpin told his man more than once.

Ultimately, Villain had to stop so Kingpin could drive. After the Chinese fire drill, we were on the slick roads again. The truck crawled. Every time we slid, Kingpin reached over and became my second seat belt. Not only did the flakes come down fast, but a complete silence fell until we made it to Royal Road and Villain left the vehicle.

“Not a word,” Kingpin warned him not to tell anyone I was back.

We sat alone in the quiet truck as the falling snow covered the windshield.

Kingpin spoke first. “Goliath’s place is still empty. You can stay there again. We’ll talk soon. Figure this out. I’ll help you over, but I can’t stay long.”

Wanting to talk now, I asked, “What’s going to happen when folks around here see me like this?”

Kingpin turned to me, looked me up and down. His dark eyes lingered on my belly. “They’re going to say you make one sexy pregnant lady.”

“I’m serious.” I hit his arm but grinned at him taking this so lightly. Everything was humorous to him. “Obviously you’re not serious, look at that sweater.”

He glimpsed down. “I forgot I had it on. Costume contest last night.”

Kingpin touched my hair. “You’ve cut it.”

“Not by too much.” It was still past my shoulders. “But I’ve thought about cutting it as short as yours.”

At the mention of his hair, he let go of mine and said, “You can call Hallow and tell him to come back.”

“I won’t.” Hallow hadn’t called me. He didn’t want me. “Where is he anyway?”

“On a job. Been away too long though. He’ll hear about it one way or another. Brother’s talk. He’ll be back really soon. I promise you that.”

“I ain’t going to lie to him,” I screeched.

“Then what? What did the truth do for you before? Are you ready to tell everyone that’s my child you’re carrying?”

I hugged my baby bump. “It’s none of their concern. I was better off alone.”

“Alright. What do you suggest? You want me to tell the truth for the both of us? You want me to go tell Sky I’m having another baby with you?”

“No,” I said, automatically.

“I will,” Kingpin snatched the door handle, getting ready to get out.

I grabbed his stupid sweater. “You can’t.”

He shut the door. “Why because she’ll take those twins and leave? She’ll run. She’s barely there as it is. Are you going

to be with me? Are you going to stay and be my woman when she's long gone? Or are you still hung up on Hallow?"

"I should just go back to my apartment." I scooted toward the other door.

Kingpin didn't move to stop me. "The choice is yours, Eve. But Hallow will hear. He'll think our baby is his. Won't he?"

That's what I'd been afraid of. And was Kingpin seriously okay pretending his baby was Hallow's? I was afraid to ask.

"I don't want to hurt you and Sky. You and I ain't a couple. Never was. I don't know what we were. And yes, I'd love everything to go back to the way it was before I left Hallow at the altar. But I ain't going to lie to him."

"I won't lie to you Eve, not anymore." Kingpin took my cold hands in his. "I told Sky about my mistakes, too."

"You what?" I screeched.

He let go of my hands. "I promised I wouldn't make any more mistakes." Mistakes meant having sex with other women. With me.

"Did you make that promise before or after the last time with me?" I snipped.

"After. And so far, I've kept that promise. Having you here I might not be able to, but I can't let you leave Royal Road with my baby. You both would be in too much danger."

"No one knows it's yours. I ain't told anyone about us."

"But you're in danger all the same. I didn't want to tell you, and you might think I'm lying. When we were ambushed, the Gods were ordered to kill you on sight. I can't have that. The club vowed to protect you."

"What about Hob? Were they ordered to kill him too?"

Kingpin bowed his head.

“You promised to protect him,” I whined. I was still pissed at Kingpin for throwing Hob out.

“I am protecting him from the men here. The Gods gave him away. Believe me he’s better off, off property for now.”

“You have to do something, make him a member if you have to.”

“Are we negotiating?” Kingpin got a devilish look in his eye.

“What do you want in return?” I droned.

The biker scratched his beard. “For you to stay,” Kingpin answered, simply.

“Is that all?” It couldn’t be. I waited.

“The rest is up to you.” He had to be lying.

Shaking my head, I swore, “I will not lie to Hallow.”

Kingpin about broke the steering wheel. “At least let Sky have her babies in peace. Can you wait that long to tell him the truth?”

“I thought you told her?”

“I told her I’d made mistakes. We were on the outs at the time. I didn’t use your name. I don’t fuck and tell. The fact that those mistakes turned into a baby might hit different.”

There it was again. Our mistakes. We were nothing but a mistake. Sucking on my lips, I thought. Not upsetting a pregnant woman about to pop, sounded reasonable enough. But I was pregnant too, hormones coursing through me making me irrational and more emotional than normal. Wondering if anyone was going to care about how upset I was, I was hesitant.

“Please,” Kingpin offered.

I bobbed and agreed. Then I wised up. “You’ll bring Hob back right away and patch him. Or no deal.”

Kingpin said, “Yes, mama.”

“Ugh, don’t call me that. You make me sound like an old woman.”

Kingpin helped me trudge through the snow over to Goliath’s old place where I was staying before. The last place we had sex, right on the living room floor. Stepping in, memories of that time flooded back. I knew I was pregnant with his baby then, around three months, so when he approached me, I thought, what the hell? Why not give into him? Pregnancy had made me horny as hell.

Since I’d had no relief since, those same sort of feelings came back as Kingpin helped me to sit on the couch. His beard brushed my cheek causing a shiver down below. The biker lingered near my face where I could feel his breath. He stood suddenly, leaving me cold.

“When the snow’s manageable someone can take you to pack your apartment. You still have my number?”

“Yeah, I do.”

“If you need anything, text me.”

Kingpin turned to leave. I’d half expected him to attack me like he did before. But who was I kidding? I wasn’t as desirable anymore. I didn’t even get a kiss on the forehead.

“I will,” I said.

I was lying.

When Kingpin left, I ran over every scenario, every outcome of our situation in my head. I lost every time. Unless I lied. And I couldn’t lie to Hallow. I’d have to at least lie by omission again until Sky had her babies. Hell, with the gossip around here, I’d have to lie to everyone.

And as it was, I couldn’t leave Goliath’s. I was afraid to show my face at the clubhouse. Well, not my face but the rest of me. I was all alone on Christmas Eve and Christmas day with only a call to my Gran and my brother Hob to comfort me. Since Kingpin never came back, I existed on the canned soup I’d left in the cabinets because I hated it. Apparently, Kingpin brought me to Royal Road to starve.

Christmas night, I got desperate enough to head to the clubhouse. I saw Sky and Kingpin leaving. Here I'd assumed some catastrophe had kept him away, but it was only his wife and her babies he cared about most. I imagined him having Christmas with Sky. Hallow, I didn't want to think of what strange bed he was in.

Luckily, I ran into Jassica. She saved me from the embarrassment of being seen at the clubhouse. She made me a plate from their big dinner and then some, filled my fridge so I wouldn't have to leave again for days. I became an emotional mess around her. I blamed hunger, and the fact someone was being nice to me. But I needed to tell someone the things I couldn't tell Kingpin. And with her being a nurse, she seemed like the logical choice. I let her know the danger this pregnancy presented. And I asked her to keep a secret.

Someone had to know whose baby was inside me. After all, my doctor reminded me all the time, I might not make it. He didn't use those exact words, but that's what he meant. I wasn't even supposed to be working. That was one reason I went with Kingpin so willingly. I'd already made my mind up that I'd rather the baby live if there was a choice. I'd shared my wishes in writing with the hospital. If something happened to me before I was allowed to tell anyone the truth, I wasn't sure the fact that I carried Kingpin's baby would ever come to light.

Chapter 17

Kingpin

Sitting in the truck with Eve, I was dying. The Angel was pregnant with my child. Bringing her back to Royal Road I was risking Sky finding out about it, about us. But there was no way I could let her be. And although I'd not told anyone about my time with her, there was a reason my brother, Horror wanted me to see it for myself. Some of my brothers would suspect me. They knew me, even better than I knew myself. That's why they saw what I felt for Eve when I had not.

When I walked her over in the snow to Goliath's old place, I thought of my best friend. The biker took his life because he betrayed me. Because he chose Junebug over me and Junebug did what she did to my wife. I doubted Eve realized everything I've been through since our time together. So much had happened since I'd decided to leave her be. Since I promised Sky I would be a better man. But my feelings for Eve were the same. It took all I had to leave her in that house all alone, especially on Christmas. I went to the clubhouse. Paisley was the only one around. I told her Eve was back.

“Take her everything she needs during the holiday.”

“Can't she come get it herself?”

“No. And it's an order.”

The whore made a face, but she'd obey.

I wouldn't get to see Eve all weekend. After all, it was Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. There was no way in hell I could leave Sky during the holiday and her not grow suspicious. We were supposed to head to my brother, Bubba's house for Christmas. That's why we had our Christmas party at Royal Road early this year.

Sky's mom, Maddie Mae would be there since she and my twin brother were in a serious relationship. And Felicia was supposed to bring her and my brother's son, Little Johnny, who they recently revealed was actually my kid. The kid

didn't know. But I swore to be a good Uncle until he was old enough to know the truth. It sounded like it was going to be one fucked up family reunion. However, I'd been looking forward to it. Mainly because Sky was so pregnant and so fragile, emotionally, and physically, we'd not been having sex. Without those times, we found we didn't have much in common. And yes, that was we, not just me. Sky wasn't entirely happy with me. I could tell. Things were different after what had happened to her. My love was riddled with pity, and she could sense it. Yet, I was determined to make a life with her.

With all the snow, Felicia and her son's flight had been canceled. And Sky and I were just as snowed in as Bubba and Maddie. Alone, we bickered so much that when the cabin on the mountain caught fire, I was glad. That was until I heard, Pagan, my VP was inside. I launched a rescue party. Pagan survived. The cabin did not. We were all glad about that. I wouldn't have to tear it down in the spring. And speaking of Pagan, I had other shit to deal with, a truly evil man in my barn. Because, with my mind on finding Eve, I'd messed up. He'd fooled me. So, I had to question him again. I planned to hand him over to the cops, but my VP went berserk and killed him himself. I had to bury my bullet in him. Regrettable because he wasn't someone we could make disappear. I talked Pagan's woman into telling her story to the cops so I could claim self-defense.

She asked for something in return. "What?" I lit a smoke.

"First of all, put that out."

"I will not. I own this house." Sky was bugging me to do the same, quit smoking. "What do you want?"

"I ran into Eve today. She's not well. In fact, she's not even supposed to be having a baby, I hear, because of her health. You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, would you?"

Her words reminded me. In my shock of seeing Eve pregnant, I hadn't thought of it. "I believe she told me before

that she couldn't have kids because of something like that. That her and Hallow shouldn't have kids."

"As a nurse, I think the father should know she's unwell. Her doctor warned her not to be working, and she has been, long hours from what I understand. She's showing signs of preeclampsia. Hell, she hadn't even had anything to eat since she's been here. Girl was starving, but don't worry, I made sure she ate. So, I figured you could get word to the father of her baby about her condition. Someone needs to be looking after her. She's getting close to time."

Obviously, Jassica knew the baby was mine. I mulled over the other information. Fuck. Paisley hadn't done what I asked. I never meant to leave Eve with nothing. And I couldn't wrap my head around the rest. Jassica was a nurse so would know about these things, so I asked her. "How about you?"

"What?"

"Fuck, Jassica, why don't you just spit it out. You know her baby is mine. I can't be seen doting on her. You take your old job back and take care of Eve for me. Don't let her know. Just be a friend, ya know."

"I can't do that. Pretend to be her friend and take your money."

"You can and you will. Besides, maybe you can help with Sky too. I'm worn out and when you take care of Sky, maybe I can pop in and check on Eve."

"I ain't helping you cheat," Jassica retorted.

I held up my hand. "Nothing like that is going on. I haven't seen Eve in months. But I would like to see how she is, on account of that's my child she's carrying."

"Eve told me not to tell," Jassica was afraid I was angry with Eve. The opposite was true. She was smart to tell someone.

I hadn't told anyone except my VP and only the other day. "Good. But Pagan already knows about Eve and me. You'd be doing the President of his MC a huge favor."

“I don’t know about any of this,” she began to refuse again.

I threatened her with the fact she set our arena on fire, and then I let her know, “I’ve been a real piece of shit. Eve’s been carrying my child, and I had no idea. Tomorrow, you’ll take Sky to the doctor so I can take Eve and make sure she’s getting a proper checkup. It’s the least I can do for the girl.”

I dialed Hallow that night.

“Hallow. You’re not answering my calls.”

“Murder still needs me here,” he lied.

“That’s not what he says.” When I couldn’t get ahold of Hallow, I called the President of the Charleston, WV chapter, Murder. He said Hallow was spending all his time at his new Bunny Ranch, a whore house.

“We found Eve.”

“What?” A whore screamed in the background. Was he fucking someone? “I can’t hear you.”

“Eve’s pregnant,” I shouted over the yelps.

“Eve’s what?” I’d floored him.

“You heard me right. When I found her, I was just as surprised,” I said honestly.

“Pregnant? Eve? Who’s the father?”

Sucking in my lips, I clutched my forehead. This part pained me. Not being able to claim her or the baby.

“Who, Kingpin?”

“That’s why I’m calling.” I thought about just telling the truth and dealing with the aftermath. However, I wasn’t stupid. The truth would cost me everything, Sky, our children. Eve didn’t want me. She wanted this loser.

“How far along is she?” Hallow asked.

“Six, seven months.” It wasn’t a lie. Hallow wasn’t stupid. Motherfucker would catch what I was throwing.

His silence confirmed it.

“Will you be coming back?”

“No,” he said, shocking the hell out of me.

“You can’t run from this, Hallow,” I growled. All this pussy did was run.

“Fuck you, Kingpin, I’m not running. I don’t want her,” he said.

Part of me wanted to believe him. It would make everything so much easier. I would have Sky and Eve would be alone.

“I can make you come back,” I reminded him.

“Yeah, but you can’t make me be with Eve, pregnant or not.”

He was right. You could lead a horse to water and all.

“I should just come back to Charleston, for good.” Hallow floored me.

“Maybe so,” I quipped, thinking of telling the bastard to stay. But then I thought of Eve. I’d wronged her. I’d taken her but she didn’t love me. “But Eve loves you. Are you willing to give her up? Another man would gladly take her, I’m sure, even if she’s carrying another man’s child.”

“I can’t go back to Eve. I’m with Steph.” I couldn’t understand Hallow’s fascination with Stephanie Lambert. She was nothing to Eve.

Eve expected Hallow to come running, like I’d promised he would. “Eve will be heartbroken. Is there nothing I can do to convince you?”

“If you care so much, why don’t you take her in?” he hollered.

There it was. The man was in anguish. Hallow was lying. He needed to man up and come back. “What can I do? I mean anything. I won’t have Eve suffering anymore on account of you.”

“Yeah, make me an officer, give me a house, and I’ll think about coming back to Eve. And Eve will have to get

used to me fucking other women. I won't make her my Ol' Lady. I'm not going to be mortified by her again."

Fuck. Maybe I was wrong. I couldn't imagine he didn't care for her, but he was a dumbass. "An officer and a house, I can do that. You can move into Goliath's place. I'll find a spot for you. With Levi gone, I need another Enforcer." I'd give Thorn the job and Hallow could be our new Cleaner. He didn't need to know this now.

He replied, "I'll think about it."

"If you come back, I can't make you stay faithful to her. But you aren't to lay a finger on Eve. You won't hurt her. You do, I'll skin you alive," I warned him. What was I doing? The fool didn't deserve her. I added, "She's not okay. You have to know. If you come back, she's not supposed to have relations. Get my drift? You think about it, but I need to know soon."

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Chapter 18

Eve

Holding my wool coat tight around me, I told Donette, “I never intended for any of this to happen. They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Well. I had nothing but good intentions, and I’m in hell right now, torn between an angel and a devil. And I hardly know which is which anymore. All I know is that I’ve been given a second chance, a chance to have everything I want, or at least everything I wanted. I have a chance to turn back the clock. All I have to do is take the advice I should’ve taken in the beginning of this whole mess. Well, you remember, I was here talking to you... All I’d have to do is lie. But I know what my Gran would say about all this. You can’t get happy in the same britches you got mad in.”

The wind whipped, blowing snow and my coat up. Someone tapped me on the shoulder, scaring the living daylights out of me. I thought I’d twirl and find Donette’s ghost staring at me. She’d hug me and tell me to lie my ass off. Get Hallow back.

But why the hell would I listen to her? She got herself killed.

Nevertheless, when I turned around, Kingpin was there. He wore a long black coat over his leather. That’s how cold it was. Panting, he’d been running. “What the hell are you doing out here in a graveyard?” He bent and clutched his knees, out of breath.

“I’m here having a private conversation, mind you.” I could see my own breath.

Donette would say he’s an old man, almost as old as our old boss Grady. God rest his soul. She’d ask what I ever saw in this biker. I’d tell her it wasn’t like that. It wasn’t premeditated. I’d plead insanity.

Fiddlesticks. Who was I kidding? My best friend would’ve loved Kingpin, everything about him. She was a

wild one like him, bigger than life and full of herself. Just like him.

The biker seemed bewildered. “I’ve been runnin all over Hell’s half acre.” Kingpin was just as country as me. It came out when he was flustered. “Gunn told me you left out of Royal Road in an Uber. You know that’s against the rules. I had to threaten quite a few people to find you.”

“I’m supposed to believe you give a damn? You left me over in that house, during Christmas, trying to starve me out so I would have to go parade my condition around Royal Road. Thank God for Jassica. She’s an angel.”

Kingpin stepped in close, blocking the cold wind. He smiled. “You told her.” He was so close the puff from his breath temporarily blinded me.

“Fucking, Jassica. Damn snitch.”

“She told me you’re unwell.” Kingpin took my hands. He was wearing leather gloves. Of course, he was. His head drooped as he eyed my bare hands.

They’d been in my pockets where my gloves were. I wouldn’t explain myself, and I wouldn’t let him lecture me. I wasn’t a child. “The baby’s fine,” I promised.

“What about you?” Kingpin asked, warming my hands in his.

“It’s none of your never mind,” I said, taking my hands away and stuffing them in my pockets. I’d been dealing with it on my own this long. I’d been getting along just fine without anyone.

“I planned to take you for a checkup today. Find out for myself.”

“You are not. What about Sky?”

“Jassica took her for me. I said I had some unexpected business.”

“Already lying. You’re a scoundrel. I won’t have you missing your time with her.”

“You’ve got to get out of the cold,” the biker tried to get a hold of me.

“Can you give me a minute I was in the middle of something?”

Realizing we were at the cemetery, Kingpin stepped back.

I had to speak to Donette in my mind. If I was going to do that I could’ve just stayed at home. *Yes, that’s him. That’s the father of my child. No, he doesn’t want me. He has a wife. He just feels obligated. Yes, I’m sure. It was his idea, the lying the Hallow business. He’s in as big a pickle as me. Yeah, you could say we are partners in crime, Donette but that’s not at all appealing to me. No, I won’t be sleeping with him again. Lying to Hallow? I don’t know what I’m going to do. I guess I don’t have to decide until I see him, now do I?*

Donette stopped answering. Kingpin led me over to the nice, blacked out, SUV he’d driven out here. Obviously in my state, I couldn’t ride on the back of a motorcycle.

Inside, Kingpin tried again, “I’m worried about you.”

“Don’t be. I have gloves,” I pulled them from my coat and put them on. “I’ll wear my seat belt,” I said, dragging it on. I wrestled with it.

Kingpin reached over and buckled it easily.

“You ain’t worried for me. You’re worried for your baby. I’m just the vessel, an incubator. You don’t have to worry, he’s mine too. I worry enough.”

“Let me take you to the doctor,” Kingpin said and pulled out onto the road. He wasn’t asking, he was just doing.

“Which doctor because I already have a doctor?”

“The same fella Sky’s seeing. He’s the best.”

“And risk running into your wife? When hell freezes over.”

“Jassica’s right. You don’t look good.”

“Well, I didn’t think I had to get all dolled up to visit my best friend’s grave.”

“That’s not what I mean, Eve. It’s not your looks, but your actions. You’re weak.”

“You try to have your baby. It’s not easy. If you wanna make yourself useful you can take me over to my apartment so I can get my pills. I ain’t taken them in days now.”

“You have medicine you’re supposed to be taking and you haven’t?”

“You act like I had a choice. You did practically kidnap me. We’ve been snowed in until today, and I was heading to get them before you interrupted me. Spring Hills just happened to be on the way.” I needed to talk to someone about what’s been going on.

I gave Kingpin directions. Turning around, he decided my medicine was more important than forcing a doctor’s visit on me. He drove over to my quaint one-bedroom apartment. Inside, I grabbed a couple of laundry baskets and packed up all my belongings in a matter of thirty minutes.

Kingpin noticed my lone mattress. “You don’t have much here.”

Eager to move into the furnished house at the Eagles’ nest with Hallow, I left so much at Gran’s place. Not only my things but anything Donette left me. I told him that as a way of explanation. Though frankly, I was embarrassed I could live this way. Honestly, I’d saved up a decent amount of money. I intended to furnish the place soon with not only a couch and table, but everything for a nursery. But I’d been too tired, too weak. Kingpin was right about that.

I said, “I don’t need much. Growing up, we were so poor we couldn’t pay attention. All I needed was away from Royal Road before I caused any trouble.”

“I wish you hadn’t run away. I wish you would’ve told me,” Kingpin said, leaning against the wall since we had nowhere to sit.

“Wish in one hand and spit in the other. What would you have done?”

He didn't have an answer.

I answered for him. “Same thing you're doing now. I didn't miss much. But I had some peace for a while.”

“Eve, I told you we'll do whatever you decide.”

Leaving it all up to me wasn't fair. But I was finished talking about it. “Speaking of my Gran. I spoke to my brother this morning. He hasn't heard from you.”

“I've been busy. The fire. We've been snowed in.”

I lifted both shoulders. “I didn't expect you to do it over the holiday. I'm sure you were enjoying time with your wife.”

“You sound a bit miffed like you don't like the fact I have an ol' lady.”

“Oh, I'm green with envy,” I said sarcastically. “I never expected to be a single mom.”

“I don't want that for you either. Hallow will return.”

Not wanting that on my brain either, I changed the subject back to my brother. “When do you expect to bring Hob back to Royal Road?”

After checking his expensive watch, Kingpin bowed a little. “We can do it now if you wish.”

It's as if he'd told me I won the lottery. Jumping up and down wouldn't do though. I clapped my hands. I hadn't seen my little brother since I left Royal Road. Hob hadn't known where I'd been hiding out. My brother and I didn't really get to speak much before that because we didn't want anybody at the club to find out who he was.

Kingpin loaded the vehicle, and I left my key inside the apartment so I could call the landlord and tell him I wasn't coming back. Then we were off to Cotton Town.

I texted my brother on the way to let him know we were coming, “Be ready.”

On the way my stomach rumbled. A pregnant woman's belly growl was like no other. Kingpin made a face. Of course, he'd know. He had a pregnant wife at home.

We stopped for lunch at a little local but authentic Mexican place. I had to watch what I ate, my sugar and my salt. Therefore, I ordered water. Kingpin had to translate what I was saying to the waiter as I ordered the rest. His Spanish was broken and concise but competent. I was so focused on food, I didn't recognize Mateo at first. I knew he worked two jobs. When he finished his morning shift at Jolene's I'd heard he waited tables somewhere. So did Jesus.

He stopped by once Mateo left.

"Jafa," he said as a way of greeting. That meant lady boss or something. "We miss you at work. Carl's filling in. He's throwing a hissy fit." Jesus had learned that phrase from me. He turned to Kingpin. "We heard the President of the Royal Bastard's was expecting a child, but we had no idea we had the honor of knowing his Ol' Lady."

As he said it, I shook my head. "Jesus, Kingpin and I ain't a couple." That was true enough.

Embarrassed, Jesus went about his job.

"Two down with one bullet," Kingpin said as a way of explanation. He was scoping out some potential prospects. "We need some new blood. Actually, we need to diversify. We're not skinheads, but we're starting to look it. I could use more men fluent in Spanish. Nashville's changing fast."

Running into them wasn't a happy accident, Kingpin had picked this place on purpose. The biker President always worked.

"That's all I am to you, an obligation, something to take care of." It wasn't a question.

"I thought you said earlier you were just a vessel? So, eat." He pushed the chips and salsa toward me.

"I can't eat that, too salty," I said, pushing it back.

“I know a pregnant woman needs to eat.” Kingpin inched them toward me. “You said you were starving.”

“I think I know what’s best,” I said, pushing it away, again. “I can wait for my order.”

Kingpin made a noise.

“You may mistake my accent for ignorance, but I’ve been doing just fine taking care of myself and this baby. Sure, there are concerns, but I’m doing my part. The rest is in God’s hands.”

Kingpin pinched his beard. “There’s more you’re not telling. I don’t like it. I deserve to know all about your condition. I know you thought you couldn’t have kids before. That’s why you ran out on Hallow.” He sipped black coffee. I’d never seen him drink anything other than whiskey, even in all our times in his music room.

“I didn’t run out. And it’s complicated. Obviously, I can get pregnant. I’ve made it this far. I’m sure you’re up to date on all the possible concerns that come with having a baby on account of Sky.”

“After she recovered from the worst of it,” Kingpin couldn’t speak of how his ex-whore cut her up. “The only concerns for her have been emotional rather than physical. Physically, she’s healthy. The babies are healthy. Thank the Good Lord.”

I almost said, lucky her, but I was never one for self-pity. Besides, Sky had been through the ringer. Hearing she wasn’t coping only made it worse. The biker had to be affected too. Therefore, I tried to break my condition to him gracefully. I held in all my worry. I kept the concern off my face. I said very steadily, “The question is if I can carry to term. They’ve talked about inducing me early once the baby can survive on its own. They’ll wait as long as they can.”

“What does that mean, as long as they can?”

Shrugging, I said, “They’ll let me carry the baby as long as I can.” I wouldn’t tell Kingpin all of it. That it meant they planned to take the baby only if and when the pregnancy

would almost kill me. That was the only way the baby had a chance. Basically, waiting as long as we could, we were pushing my health to the edge.

Kingpin excused himself to go smoke. My fajitas arrived, and I ate them without seasoning or tortillas. I ate alone. His tacos sat untouched, getting cold. When he finally returned, he blamed club business. After a trip to the ladies, we were out on the snowy roads again.

The biker blasted some rap songs. I reached for the knob to turn it down a hair. I never guessed Kingpin would be bopping to, “Wanna Be a Baller.” He had his phone streaming a playlist to the car. Taking it, I played DJ. Music was something he and I had in common. We both had vast, varied tastes. I agreed we should stick to dirty south classics. Kingpin laughed at me calling anything classic. I reminded him that most of the songs came out before I was even born. He was just happy I knew them. We rode to Cotton Town like we were gangstas, taking turns picking the next song.

Though covered in snow, Gran’s house looked just the same except for a big For Sale sign out front. The first buyer had backed out which was unfortunate. My dad planned to sell the house to pay for Gran’s nursing home. I didn’t want to think of the trouble he’d get into trying to pay for it now.

It had been ages since I’d been to Gran’s. One of the last times I was here was with Kingpin. I had stared down the barrel of a gun. Hallow took two bullets. And I’d almost been raped by our attackers. Kingpin busted in and blew that man’s dick off. Donette died soon after, along with too many others. I’d buried the memories. They climbed out like zombies, but I’d whack them like moles, sending them to their holes again.

Getting out of the car, I expected to hear our aging Great Dane, Killer barking, but then I remembered, I’d asked old farmer Jennings to look after him. I remembered hearing Gran, too, call me about a million names she couldn’t help. Having Tourette’s and a touch of Dementia, my Gran resided in the old folk’s home back in Flipping, Arkansas currently. I called her occasionally but never worried her.

Since no one had cleared it, the carport was ice. That and my top heaviness didn't mix. Kingpin helped me up the steps and to the door. I knocked on it, calling for Hob. My brother appeared at the screen door. His eyebrows shot up. I remembered he didn't know I was pregnant.

"Eve Angel." Hob called back.

I went to hug my little brother's neck. Younger by a couple years, Hob wasn't little. Towering over me, he was as tall as Kingpin though not as wide. He was a man, beard and all. He was as blonde as me before I put my low lights in. After a pat on the back, Hob held me back from him. He studied me. "Eve Angel, you're having a baby. How did this happen? I just saw you in October. It's only been two months. Is this an immaculate conception or something, sis?"

I clutched my belly. "No, this baby is the product of pure, adulterated sin." I flashed my eyes at Kingpin. "He's a real bastard, all right."

Hob seemed confused, but only for a moment.

I said to my brother, "I'm only joking about not being married."

"You've got to be, how far along? Where's Hallow? This has to be his baby."

My hands on my stomach, I asked, "What are you saying, Hob?" He didn't think so too, did he?

Hob said, "I wanted to kill him." He turned to Kingpin. "I don't know why you didn't end him for what he did."

I said to Hob, "Kingpin didn't, because I asked him not to. Now, are you ready to come to Royal Road? You can't stay here. It's not safe."

Hob looked at Kingpin. "I've been here for months. It seems safe enough from everybody."

"Eve's right. When the Gods ambushed us one of them told me they had a kill order for you and your sister."

Hob wasn't ready to go. He led us into the farmhouse. "I feel like it's cheating. I ain't a cheater." Hob didn't want to

become a member because I bargained for it.

Kingpin said, “You sound just like your sister. We need more honest men. If they know who to be loyal to.”

They wanted to talk about it some more, so I left them to it and went up the stairs. I had some things I wanted to get from Gran’s attic. If they were still there. Lord knows who all the real estate agent had let in. I knew Gran stored my baby bonnet and a blanket that had been crocheted by my mother for me. I felt like a fool for leaving anything here. I’d been so focused on Hallow I’d abandoned my past. I wanted to get everything before the house sold. I’d live in the old house myself if I could afford to buy it from my father. And if I wasn’t confined to Royal Road by circumstances I couldn’t control.

I found everything I was looking for and then some. Coming out of the attic, holding a big box, I bumped right into a biker. Kingpin was behind me again like he followed me around like a puppy. No, he was my prison guard.

“Land sakes. If you don’t stop scaring me, I’m going to have this baby right here on the floor.”

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Chapter 19

Eve

Kingpin ignored my outburst. Instead, he wandered into my old room at Gran's. I'd only lived in it a little over a year, but I hadn't taken everything with me. A picture of my mom and I sat on the bedside table. I'd snapped a picture of it with my phone and felt that was good enough.

Kingpin picked it up. "Why did you leave this here?"

I didn't feel the need to explain technology to him or the benefits of minimalism. I talked about the deeper meaning. "When I left here, I wanted to leave my past. It had been holding me back. I thought. You know my mom was murdered. Right? My dad was framed for it and since he was a biker everyone thought he did it. I know you do. You know everything about everybody."

"I have to know everything so I can keep everybody safe."

I grabbed the frame from him and put it in the box. I'd be taking the picture with me this time.

"Eve, we have to talk." Kingpin sounded like I wouldn't like what he had to say.

I sat down the box. And carefully lowered myself to sit at the foot of the bed.

Kingpin paced as usual. "Hob is going to be staying here a spell."

"But that wasn't our deal."

"Eve. You don't realize it, but I know what's best. Don't worry none. Hob will be patched. He'll be protected. He's going to live in this house until then. Yes, coming to Royal Road would be safer for him when it comes to the Gods. But I've gotta let things blow over there. The Asphalt Gods MC just came in and killed three of my people. Those people have families. Friends. And I realize your brother didn't have anything to do with it, but no one else sees it that way. There's

no way in hell he can come back now when our wounds are so fresh.”

“Won’t they find out that you’ve patched him?”

“He’s not going to be a Royal Bastard.”

“Kingpin you promised me. You promised if I didn’t say anything to Hallow before Sky had her babies,” I started.

“Listen to me, Eve. Hob will be patched into another club, the Road Monsters MC.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“It’s not something you’re supposed to know about. It’s a group of nomads. Becoming one, Hob will disappear, take on a whole new identity. When that happens, your brother is going to leave this house. He’ll be out on the road for a long while. You may not be able to contact him.”

None of this made sense. “Kingpin. Are you trying to, like, kill my brother off or something? I ain’t gonna be able to contact him? What?” I couldn’t wrap my head around it. I wouldn’t agree to it. “I can’t go the rest of my life without seeing my brother, Kingpin. My father is a drunk. My Gran’s not much better and on her last legs. Hob is the only family I have left.”

“There’s always a way, Eve. When Hob, eventually, is able to come back, he’ll come to this house. You can see him then. Only then. Only here. Otherwise, you are to make no contact. He won’t be able to contact anyone he’s known as Hob Newberry.”

“This house is for sale. And too many people know about this place,” I said.

“So, nobody would think that I would buy it. It’s not like I’m going to buy it under my name. It’s turned out to be a pretty safe place. It’s far enough from Nashville. Nobody’s bothered Hob in the last two months. No Asphalt Gods have come here. Only your father seemed to know. I was the only one at Royal Road to even think to check here for you before I threw Hob out.”

“Hallow didn’t search here?”

Kingpin froze his pacing. He bit his lip.

“Hallow didn’t look for me at all did he?”

The biker would not answer that. His silence let me know.

“What about Mr. Fond?”

“Yes. Noah Fond and the mob know about this place. But it’s not like you’re going to be staying here. The house will sit empty.”

The thought of never seeing my brother again made me an emotional wreck. It was partly hormones and the realization, Hallow hadn’t even searched for me when I ran away from Royal Road. Also, I was pissed at Kingpin. He promised me he’d protect my brother. Could I believe him now?

“Of course, you can buy this house. You can do anything you goddamn please. Buy anything. Have anybody you want and throw them away.”

“Eve, that’s not true. I’ve not thrown you away. I plan to provide for you. For Hallow too if you choose him.”

Provide for me and his baby, like I was a charity case. All the while, as Kingpin and I were talking, the baby had been moving. I stretched back to give him more room to do so.

The biker became frantic. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong. The baby’s just going wild. Maybe it’s the Mexican food. But it happens all the time when there are a lot of voices. Or when I’m upset like I am now.”

This time, Kingpin didn’t ask, walking over he sat and placed his hand on my stomach to feel it.

“Goddamn,” he said as the baby kicked his hand. “I’m sorry for upsetting you. Damn, he is really kicking hard.”

I removed Kingpin’s hand from my belly. “Sorry, but you are only making it worse. Happens all the damn time.

What kind of kid were you? You weren't hyperactive, were you? Hopefully not as hyper as you are now."

"I don't quite remember. I'd ask my mother, but she's long gone. I could ask Felicia about Little Johnny."

Kingpin had told me about him finding out he had a kid. I wondered what happened with that. I asked about it.

"Of course, I'm gonna see the boy. Felicia doesn't want me to be his father. I'm already his deadbeat uncle. And she'd rather Bubba keep pretending. He's good at that since he pretends to be me. I told her I would come around more. I'd be a better uncle. She also wants Bubba to keep paying child support. I'm paying my fair share too, even though she has a fortune. When the kid finds out when he's older, he won't completely hate me."

"You didn't know. Your brother kept it from you, right?"

Kingpin bobbed his head. "The kid will probably still hate me all the same. And I'm about to have some more kids. That's gonna hurt the kid in the future, too. Knowing I had more kids, and we didn't tell him the truth. That he had brothers, maybe sisters. There's not much I can do about it. Felicia's been the one to raise him. I've left it up to her."

"It's a hard situation to be sure." I figured while I had him talking, I would ask some more questions. "What about the twins? Are they boys or girls?"

Kingpin clasped his hands in front of him. "I don't even know. I don't know if they're identical or fraternal. The doctors know. Sky doesn't want us to know. Therefore, we're waiting to be surprised."

I couldn't believe Kingpin was going along with that. I figured he would just find out and not tell her. "That's got to be exciting. I wanted to know right away."

"I wish I could've been there for you. This is all my fault."

Glancing at the ceiling, I said, "It takes two people to make a baby. I am at fault too. But if you want to see." I set up

and pulled out my phone to show the ultrasound pictures that had been circled, proving it was a boy.

Kingpin took my phone and blew up the pictures, marveling at them once he could see them. He scrolled through my phone. Through more of my pictures. I tried to take my phone away. He held it away from me as I was too big to fight. It didn't matter. I had all the pictures of Hallow and I hidden so I couldn't see them myself. They only made me sad. Other than the ultrasound pictures, my pictures were from before Hallow. I also had screenshots of song lyrics.

I'd forgotten about the screenshots of baby names until Kingpin shouted out, "Galen."

"Yes, Galen, what's wrong with that?"

"You know what's wrong with it."

"It's my great grandfather's name. Galen Prince"

"Are you sure? The kid will be bullied. He might turn out gay."

"There's nothing wrong with that."

Kingpin made a face. He continued to scroll through my phone. "You've gotta be joking with these names. Adam. Like, fucking Hallow."

I stole my phone back. "Why not? His name means a lot to him. You want him to be the father of this baby. I'm having a boy. What do you think Hallow will want to name it? Adam, Jr. He certainly ain't going to name him Beau. Besides, you'll probably use that name by the time this baby's born."

Kingpin sighed as he said, "Hallow knows you're pregnant."

"Already? Is that all he knows?"

"He thinks the baby's his."

Holy shit. "Is he coming back?"

Kingpin seemed unsure, "I believe he will."

"When?"

“I ain’t sure. But I should find out soon enough.”

“Do you expect me to lie to him? Did you lie to him?”

“Eve, I didn’t tell Hallow a thing. He only presumed. You can tell him anything you want. I only asked you to wait.”

Kingpin had already said he wanted me to wait until Sky had their babies. And I had every intention to. He helped me up. I grabbed the box and went down the stairs. I said bye to my brother Hob. I didn’t know what his new road name was going to be. I wasn’t allowed to know. Hob walked me out to sit in the running vehicle. He went back inside and talked more with Kingpin in private, probably about what was going to happen. It’s not that I didn’t trust Kingpin. Or that I didn’t believe him. But the thought of my brother who was younger than me gallivanting all over the United States as a biker did not bring me any comfort. Hob was the only family I had left. The only family. No. I felt the baby kick, reminding me I was starting another family.

On the way back, Kingpin and I forgot about the music. We were able to talk some more.

“How are we going to do this? Hallow thinks the baby’s his and I get back with him. Are you gonna try and come and take this baby from us someday? Should we draw up a contract?”

Kingpin had nothing to say to that.

I went on. “Have you not thought this through? Because I really don’t know what else to do. None of this would’ve ever happened if I would’ve just taken your advice in the first place and lied to Hallow. If I didn’t tell him I left him at the altar. If I let him think that I was kidnapped, we would still be in a relationship. Hell, we’d probably be married by now. And this baby wouldn’t exist.

Kingpin said nothing to that either. I was just rambling to myself, I reckoned. “But this baby does exist, and I wouldn’t want him not to exist. Thus, did I make the right choice by not lying to Hallow?”

Kingpin didn't take his eyes off the road. "Well, maybe if you didn't say we were a mistake that first time."

"Mistake?"

"You said it was a mistake. You said that we were a mistake."

"I just went along with you. You said we shouldn't have."

Kingpin racked his brain. "I meant. I shouldn't have choked you."

"I wish people would just say what they mean," I complained.

"You were always hung up on Hallow. You said you loved him. Subsequently, it doesn't matter what I said then. And then you know what happened."

"Yeah, I know. But then you got back from the hospital. And we did it again."

"You knew you were pregnant then? Why didn't you say anything?"

"Would it have mattered? I ain't the only one who's pregnant. You keep acting like I need to make a choice. I need to choose to tell the truth or lie to Hallow. But you never said what would happen if I told the truth."

"That's bullshit, Eve. I have. I've told you you're mine."

"And you turned around and negated everything you said. You tell me that I can do what I want now. But I can't. I have to keep this secret until Sky has her babies. And then I can tell Hallow and lose everything."

"I'll lose everything too."

Doubting it, I balled my hands into fists. Sky would probably forgive him. Hell, she already had. He'd already fessed up to the worst of it. He'd kept his word to her since. I knew if Hallow found out, he would never forgive me. I'd learned that much from the last six months.

When we made it back to Royal Road, we couldn't be seen together. Kingpin would escort me through the snow into the clubhouse. Someone else could take me over to my house. We walked into the club, and Sky was there, sitting at the bar with Leo. She saw me. Our eyes met. Hers grew as wide as saucers. But more correctly, she'd seen my big baby bump, almost as big as hers. Her mouth fell open. No one had told her. Kingpin let me go and rushed to her. Mortified, she couldn't get up quick enough to leave. I knew the feeling. I'd been humiliated before and felt it again. Sky thought this baby was Kingpin's. It was written all over her red face. I didn't know why, but she had always been suspicious of us even before it was true. I made my way over.

"Eve, you're pregnant. Is this why you left?" Paisley said from behind the bar.

"Yes," I said to Paisley, but I was looking at Sky. "Well. You might realize why."

Resolved, Kingpin hung his head. Expecting me to tell the truth, he braced himself. I could feel the energy vibrating from him as he waited for it. As I said nothing, he looked up. He dipped his head my way telling me it was okay.

But I couldn't. I couldn't look Sky in the face. Her face held at least a dozen scars. It's not that the girl looked bad. She didn't. She looked fucking fabulous as usual. Her makeup covered them well. The scars did nothing to mess up her beautiful, pale face. Although, knowing what had happened to her, she wore that too. She wore the atrocity. You could see it in her eyes. She'd been through some evil shit and couldn't forget it.

And with what I'd been doing with her husband before it even though they'd been apart, I couldn't bring myself to tell her.

She asked, "Why?"

I could not say what she expected. Say my baby belonged to Kingpin. I would not.

Instead, I said, “I left because I was embarrassed. Because everyone would know what he did to me.” Touching my neck, I spoke of Kingpin in a way to let her think I was talking about Hallow. Only Kingpin would realize. “I know I let everyone think I didn’t want it. But I did. I just didn’t realize it at the time.” I was still talking about Kingpin, but I didn’t want them to keep thinking Hallow raped me. “I was upset when it happened at first, but only for a moment. The tiniest moment. But then I loved it. You see. It was all a big misunderstanding. He thought I didn’t want him, but I did. He got back with his ex.” I spoke of Sky, letting her think I was talking about Steph. “Then I found out I was pregnant. I didn’t know what to do. I hadn’t been with another man. I ran away.” On the edge of their seats, they seemed to buy it. All but Paisley who knew Hallow didn’t rape me that night. “Anyway, Kingpin found me. We’ve talked about how everything was a big mistake. I’m ready to go back to Hallow now. If he’ll have me.”

I told Kingpin I wouldn’t lie. And I didn’t. Not technically. But I wasn’t stupid. I was lying all the same. I was leading them to believe something that was simply not factual even as I spoke my truth. I’d be doing the same thing if Hallow ever showed up.

Chapter 20

Kingpin

At the bar I was certain that Eve was going to tell Sky everything. I was prepared to take it. Deal with the consequences of my actions. But Eve shocked the hell out of me again. Her words struck me, though. She tried not to tell a lie. Even though she was addressing the few there, Paisley, Sky, and Leo, her words were for me. And I didn't know what to do with them. I had a choice. I could stop her and tell the whole truth. Tell everybody, I wanted to be with her. Or I could let her save face. Not only did she convince Sky Hallow was the father of her baby, but she also claimed the rape that didn't even happen wasn't as bad as they thought it was.

Eve said she'd wanted me. But that didn't mean she wanted me now. Ultimately, I didn't truly believe if she had a real choice between Hallow and me that she would pick me. For the rest of that week, I kept my distance. Eve was keeping away from me, too. I got my news of her from Jassica. Hallow called and took my deal. He was coming back to Royal Road for Eve.

The next day when I made it to the clubhouse, I walked in to hear an angel singing. Eve was back at it, up on stage with Rome strumming his guitar beside her. She was singing, bluegrass, "I've Got That Old Feeling". She sounded as beautiful as ever. But I made it a point not to look at her. I didn't even glance her way. Going straight to my office, I got on my phone. I let Gunn and Cricket know to expect Hallow. I wanted to see him as soon as he arrived. Later that night. Gunn brought him to me.

Hallow stood in front of me, at attention, like the good soldier he was.

Behind my desk, I sat, leaned back and put my boots up.

He asked right away, "You serious about an officer position?"

“I keep my word. Thorn’s becoming my enforcer. And you’ll take over his station.”

Hallow started to argue.

Standing, I stopped him. “I don’t often get blackmailed into a promotion, brother. That might be how things work in your old job.”

“Blackmailed? Thought you just wanted me to be with Eve.”

“I don’t want you to be with Eve. Eve loves you. As I see it, you wouldn’t come back until you got a position. You belong to this club, this chapter. You promised me this girl was the one. You were going to marry her? I see this as blackmail. You have private information about my chapter. And if you leave my club without my permission, you’ll leave in a body bag. Because of Eve and only for Eve, you’ll be my cleaner.”

Hallow crossed his arms. His head went sideways. Alone in my office with me, he knew better than to argue.

Allowing this biker to come without a real hazin’ had been a mistake. Hallow had gotten too big for his britches. “You’re standing here so I can make it crystal clear that the next time you leave Royal Road and refuse to come back, refuse an order from your President, you’ll be leaving this life for good. Not with your backpack ripped off, burned off, or whipped off, you’ll be leaving life, period. Brothers have perished for much less. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Prez.”

“And another thing. We don’t go leaving our women high and dry.”

“I didn’t know Eve was pregnant.”

“That’s no excuse. You should’ve known. She wears your brand. You and I made a deal. If you planned to leave her, you should’ve informed the club. Now, she’s over at Goliath’s place. I don’t know your personal business. But once Eve says you can move in there, you can move in there. For now, you’re over top of the bar.” I slid him a key. Hallow took it.

“If it’s all the same, I’ll stay over at the Eagles’ Nest.”

“Boy, I thought you were used to taking orders. That was an order. I know you’ve shacked up with Steph. You’re only an officer because of Eve, so get rid of her. Today.”

I dismissed him before he could argue. Leaving my office when he did, I followed him. When he went straight from the club house toward the officers’ houses, I watched from a distance.

He banged on Eve’s door. She answered it, and slunk back in. Hallow disappeared inside with her. I wouldn’t know what was happening.

And it killed me.

Fuck, I should’ve gotten the place bugged.

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Chapter 21

Hallow

I was balls deep in this dark haired, biker bitch that reminded me of Steph, I think named Rosie, yeah, when my phone rang. I hadn't put it on silent. Why would I? I was on a run so no one would be stupid enough to call me. Since my phone laid on the bed, I glanced over. Fuck. Prez flashed on the screen. Fucking Kingpin, of course, it was that asshole. I'd call him back.

Charleston's Bunny Ranch with its themed sex rooms was keeping me and my dick entertained, especially since the basement in Nashville was closed. Since its recent opening, I'd been here nightly, wasting all my money. Their President, Murder had a gold mine on his hands. The idea was brilliant. The whores at Royal Road were practically free for us bikers. We paid our dues one way or another. If not money, in blood, sweat, and tears. Memphis collected from our other patrons, sure. And the sweetbutts would be free here in West Virginia for a biker like me too, usually. This whore house changed all that. I paid well for the experience. Much better than boning Paisley in the boring apartments over Royal Road. Also, the ranch made sure the women had regular checkups. I didn't have to dress my dick for the occasion, like I did back in Tennessee.

Rosie brought me into the Porno Set Room. Set up like a dingy motel room on purpose, where you'd find a trashy prostitute, screens covered the walls. A camera on its tripod was just for show. We were filmed by hidden cameras from all different angles and projected around in 360. No matter where I turned, I could watch my dick thumping in and out this whore's pussy. No footage would be saved, she assured me. I didn't care. I was not beholden to anyone anymore. Certainly not Eve. And Steph, I knew she wouldn't wait for me. I wasn't bothered. My new woman knew I'd be finding somewhere else to bury my bone on such a long trip, too.

We had an understanding.

Rosie's friend joined us. Thankfully not a blonde. A redhead I'd banged at their clubhouse before, Shiloh climbed on the bed with us.

"Hallow, why don't you come back for good?"

I smiled at the thought of spending more time here in the mountains. Already naked, the whore reached behind me and fondled my balls as I stilled in Rosie. The vixen wanted a turn. Tired of Rosie's slick cunt, I left her. After a quick drink from my open bottle of tequila, I bent Shiloh over the bed and rammed my dick up her ass sans lube.

My phone sounded again. It had to be Kingpin, again, but my eyes were on Rosie.

"Hand that to me," I said to her. She'd taken to fingering herself so I could watch. She sucked her digits clean before grabbing my phone. Damn, I wanted back inside her.

Holding my phone to my ear, I answered, "What?"

"Hallow. You're not answering my calls," Kingpin started in on me.

"Murder still needs me here," I lied to my President as my dick slipped in and out of Shiloh's puckered pit. I held her back down with my freehand. My eyes were on Rosie as she continued her show. She could lick her own nipples.

"That's not what he says." Kingpin had talked to Murder.

Fuck.

Prez's voice came again as I pumped. "We found Eve."

"What?" Shiloh had taken my dick up her ass like a champ at first but started howling as I searched for my orgasm. "I can't hear you."

"Eve's pregnant," Kingpin practically shouted as I came in Shiloh's ass.

"Eve's what?" I'd heard him say pregnant. I looked at the bottle of tequila knowing I was plastered. I was hearing things. My dick slipped out of the whore.

“You heard me right. When I found her, I was just as surprised,” Kingpin said.

“Pregnant? Eve?” I tried to wrap my inebriated mind around it. “Who’s the father?” I would kill him. Holding the phone on my shoulder, I started dressing, right away.

Kingpin was silent for too long.

“Who, Kingpin?”

“That’s why I’m calling,” he began.

Holy shit. I thought about what I’d learned while my President whipped my back. The awful thing I’d done. “How far along is she?”

“Six, seven months,” he said.

The room spun. I’d impregnated her that night I couldn’t even remember. Fuck.

“Will you be coming back?” Kingpin asked.

“No,” I said automatically. I couldn’t face her. Shit faced, I knew that much.

“You can’t run from this, Hallow.”

“Fuck you, Kingpin, I’m not running. I don’t want her,” I lied.

“I can make you come back,” Kingpin reminded me.

“Yeah, but you can’t make me be with Eve, pregnant or not.”

Kingpin fell silent again.

“I should just come back to Charleston, for good,” I decided. The fact that I’d knocked Eve up when I did the unbelievably cruel act, I couldn’t handle it.

“Maybe so,” Kingpin said. “But Eve loves you. Are you willing to give her up? Another man would gladly take her, I’m sure, even if she’s carrying another man’s child.”

Kingpin was right, though my brothers hadn’t messed with her in all this time. The fact gave me some comfort as I refused. “I can’t go back to Eve. I’m with Steph.”

“Eve will be heartbroken. Is there nothing I can do to convince you?”

I took a swig of tequila. It burned my throat, lightened my head, and numbed my heart. Kingpin wanted me back mighty bad. Of course, he had a soft spot for Eve.

“If you care so much, why don’t you take her in?” I barked.

He had a pretty little thing of his own, I knew. Kingpin was in love with Sky who was the opposite of Eve, much like Steph and Rosie. A bit older, she was tough and brooding, even if she was broken now. Sky had been wild and dark, something Eve wasn’t. Sometimes I envied Kingpin’s choice. But I wanted Eve how she was before Kingpin changed her with his singing lessons. He’d given her a boldness that hadn’t been there before. Maybe it was, but Eve didn’t shine so brightly as she did now. I missed the innocent girl I’d first met. The girl that was simply property of Hallow and nothing else.

Prez practically begged. “What can I do? I mean anything. I won’t have Eve suffering anymore on account of you.”

I decided to fuck with him. “Yeah, make me an officer, give me a house, and I’ll think about coming back to Eve.” I looked to the whores who were cleaning up. My anger and regret took over, so I added, “And Eve will have to get used to me fucking other women. I won’t make her my Ol’ Lady. I’m not going to be mortified by her again.”

“An officer and a house, I can do that,” Kingpin quipped quickly. “You can move into Goliath’s place. I’ll find a spot for you. With Levi gone, I need another Enforcer.”

Enforcer? Surprised, I said, “I’ll think about it.”

Kingpin grumbled, “If you come back, I can’t make you stay faithful to her. But you aren’t to lay a finger on Eve. You won’t hurt her. You do, I’ll skin you alive.”

Biting my lip, I let Kingpin’s words kick me in the gut.

“She’s not okay. You have to know. If you come back, she’s not supposed to have relations. Get my drift? You think

about it, but I need to know soon,” Kingpin said and hung up on me.

I spent the next week thinking and drinking. I met up with Rosie again wanting one more romp before I headed back to Royal Road. If I decided to. Out of nowhere, a biker started wailing on me. I fought back. Static and I tumbled for a bit, but I was too drunk to put up much of a fight or even care. No one came to my aid. Why would they? I was practically an outsider here in Charleston. I called Kingpin that night and told him I’d be on my way back.

The whole, long ride to Nashville, I dreaded seeing Eve in her condition, knowing I’d caused it when I violated her. She deserved much more. The way I discarded her when I didn’t know what I’d done was killing me. I was so ashamed of how I treated her. I let Steph knock her down. I’d been about to let her smash Eve’s face in. That was all before I’d found out what I’d done to her. And even afterwards, I treated her horribly, choosing Steph over her.

Arriving in Nashville, I stopped over at the Eagles’ Nest first. Steph was staying there. We’d moved in together.

“You’re back,” Steph greeted me at the door.

She came straight for me, so I kissed her as usual. One last time. That’s what I told myself when I took her to my bedroom. Fuck, she was a wildcat. She’d missed me. After we both got off twice, I broke the news to her. We were laying back on the bed, staring at the ceiling. Steph liked a blunt after sex, so I took a toke.

Blowing out, I announced to the room, “Eve’s Pregnant.”

“Okay,” she said. “I know I said I didn’t care about other women, but I didn’t mean her.”

“I’ve not been with her since you and I got back together. But her baby is mine.”

“How the hell?” Steph sat up. Her short purple hair was sticking straight up as if she were a troll doll.

“It’s a long story.”

Steph knew what I spoke of. She'd been supportive of me when others shunned me. "I thought you said you didn't quite remember doing all that."

"I don't but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. I was drunk so I figure it did. I'm going to Royal Road to see her."

The woman blinked. She didn't know what to say to that.

"But wait there's more. Good news. I'm becoming an officer."

Now Steph was truly confused. "Finally but how?"

"I guess I was gone so long, Kingpin decided he needed me."

Getting out of the bed, I pulled on my pants.

"You're going to be back, right?" Steph asked as I was leaving. I assured her I would be. I'd have to tell her Eve and I were back together later. If that happened.

Rolling into Royal Road on my Harley, I stopped at the gate. I didn't expect to be treated like a prisoner. Cricket and Gunn were both working, waiting for me. His pistol out, Gunn took me to the King. The fucker sat in his fucking throne in Royal Road but left for his office to have words with me.

He told me I'd be a Cleaner only because of Eve. Threatened to kill me if I left the chapter again. Said I was to stay over the clubhouse until Eve let me move in with her. Needless to say, I left his office in a fucking mood. I went straight to see Eve. It's not that I didn't want to see her but being made to put a bad spin on everything.

Stomping over to Goliath and Levi's old place, I fumed. When I reached the door, I took my anger out on it. Eve answered. She was pregnant, alright. Part of me hadn't believed it until I saw it with my own eyeballs. Part of me hadn't wanted it to be true. I couldn't face the fact that I'd put a baby in her the way I had.

My name zipped from her lips, "Adam," she called me. She was surprised to see me.

“Didn’t your best friend tell you I was coming?” I pushed past her into the living room.

Eve shut the door and followed me in. “Kingpin?”

She knew exactly who I was talking about. I’d laugh if I didn’t want to scream.

“No. He didn’t tell me when. Just that you heard,” she said, clutching her large middle.

I stepped toward her. “Why didn’t you call me yourself? You know I hate that asshole.”

“You’ve not called me,” Eve retorted, trying to cross her arms.

“We were broken up,” I said as a way of explanation. “I’ve been on a run.”

Eve chewed her lip. Her beautiful face twitched as she tried not to cry. The girl would cry at the drop of a hat. We were ignoring the elephant in the room. Her round pregnant belly between us. So ashamed of myself, I could hardly glance down.

I asked, “How far along are you?”

“Six, seven months,” she said, rubbing her belly.

I did the math in my head.

Before I could say anything, Eve asked, “Are you still with Steph?”

Not wanting to lie, I bowed my head in defeat. “I told you before that if you would have me back, I would leave her. The offer still stands.”

Like I killed her, Eve scowled. She wasn’t at all happy I was with Steph. Her eyes narrowed, “If you wanted me, you’d leave her.”

I’d made a deal with Kingpin to come back to Eve, but I wasn’t sure we could ever be the same again. There was too much animosity. This was not how I wanted things to turn out between us. There was so much bad blood we had to

overcome. Eve was no longer the innocent girl I'd fallen in love with. I scorned her, hurt her. She was so stubborn.

"Why did you even come?" Eve stammered, walking away from me.

"You're my responsibility. You're having my baby."

One hand behind her, Eve lowered herself onto the couch. "I can have this baby all on my own. If no one wants me."

"Fine, then. Do it." I was just as stubborn.

Eve started crying. Turning my back to her, I couldn't witness her tears. I'd been so cruel to her all because I'd done her so wrong. Just like in Columbus, when I ran from the police force. I wanted to run. I couldn't face the agony I'd caused. But back in Ohio, I'd not been directly at fault. It had simply been what I could've done differently that haunted me. With Eve, I was completely to blame.

"I thought we might be able to work things out," Eve wailed.

Facing the music, I went to her. Sitting on the couch beside her, my elbows were on my knees. I hung my head. "I'm not sure you can ever forgive me," I said honestly.

But the truth was I couldn't forgive myself. I didn't deserve Eve anymore. Not after how I treated her after she left our wedding. Getting drunk and taking advantage was only the very worst of it. I didn't even remember it at first. I drowned my sorrows in sleazy pussy. When I learned what I had done to her, I didn't even attempt to make amends. Since memories of me threatening to rape her had come back to me. Deserving her disdain, I had wanted her to hate me.

Eve touched my arm, "I've already forgiven you."

"I'm not sure you can forgive and forget everything I've done. All the women I've been with since. The countless whores."

Looking away, she said, "I don't want to hear about any of it. We weren't together so it doesn't matter."

I didn't believe that.

Eve went on, "I don't expect you to come back to me for this baby. If there's no future for us anymore, I'd like to know, so I quit pining for it. I must know if you still love me. If there's a second chance for us."

"Eve Angel, I never stopped loving you." I turned to her. Her dreamy eyes begged me to kiss her, show her some affection. Sitting next to me, Eve was damn perfection, six months pregnant or not. In fact, she was even better, even curvier where it counted. If I kissed her, I may not be able to stop myself. My heart stopped beating when I thought of harming her again like that. I couldn't just blame the alcohol and pills for that night I lost control. I rarely wanted Eve's consent even when we were consensual. Force was a kink of mine. And before I knew what I'd done, I'd hurt her plenty all the same.

Eve's big brown eyes fluttered. Her angelic voice practically sang, "I've never stopped loving you Hallow. I've prayed for things to be as they were. When you loved me back. I'm ready for this nightmare to be done and gone."

We felt the same.

Leaning over, I took her cheek in my hand. Our noses touched. My lips hovered over hers. I said, "I'm sure you want me to break things off with Steph first."

Eve whimpered, "It would be best."

And it happened, we kissed. I tasted sweet Eve again. Just like the first night we met, it was instant. We didn't have to work on things. We were back. All my resolve crumbled, and I jumped in with two feet. I would break the news to Steph. I'd have my Angel back. But most importantly, I'd be a better man for her. I'd give up booze and whores. I was going to be the father of her child. Soon, I'd ask her to marry me again. All would be back to how it was before.

Feeling right at home, I couldn't touch all of Eve quick enough. Shy and timid, she was reluctant at first. And then there was what Kingpin said about Eve's condition in the back

of my mind. I didn't know if we could be intimate. Bringing her to me, I had her straddling my lap.

"Is this alright," I asked her, trying to be gentle as I pressed my cock against her crotch. It was still safely in my jeans. She still had her pants on as well.

Breathless, Eve didn't look too sure. If anything, she looked frightened, uncomfortable. She could never pretend.

"I heard you may not be able to have sex?"

"Who told you that?" She sputtered, her face reddening. There was my innocent girl. My dick twitched wanting to spear sweet innocent, red faced Eve.

"Kingpin told me. How would that fucker even know?" I griped.

"I guess because he's dealing with his pregnant wife, and he knows about the risks with this pregnancy."

"Why?"

"I told him."

"Why would you tell that asshole anything?" I growled. I hated that she had anything to do with that biker.

Eve didn't answer. She studied the ceiling. There was nothing to say. I knew she was just as much under his thumb as I was. Once I suspected they had something going on, but with her pregnant with my child, I had nothing to worry about anymore. Besides, I'd been gone so long if Prez wanted her, he'd have had her by now. In any case, Kingpin was the one bribing me to come back to her. The joke was on him. In my heart and soul, I wanted Eve back more than anything, but I got a position he'd kept from me out of it. I was winning.

Her other words hit. "What risks?"

Shaking her head, she whispered, "It's nothing. I just might have this baby early. I'm far enough along that he'd survive so it's no biggie."

"He," I exclaimed. A fucking son.

“Did Kingpin not tell you that, since he’s telling all my business?” Eve sounded pissed.

“No.” For the first time, I let myself feel the significance of it all. What I felt was pure joy, gratitude. I was a lucky man. What I’d lost was in my reach again, in my goddamn lap, literally. The universe had brought Eve back to me, and we were having a son. I wanted inside her like never before. My dick jerked between us.

“Are you able to or not?” I asked her, rocking against her.

“Maybe I should get some clarification first,” Eve said, stopping me. “From my doctor.”

“You can get on your knees then,” I said, with a smirk.

Just like old times, Eve obeyed. With the size of her, it took her a minute to get into the position. Taking out my dick, I gave her a mouthful. Damn. I’d missed her sweet mouth. Petting her hair, I thought of how she was so much better than all the whores. She was just as depraved in the bedroom, though. After all, a good girl was just pickier about who she became a bad girl for. And this bad girl was all mine. As I came in Eve’s mouth, I knew I’d have to get creative if her doctor didn’t give her the go ahead soon. She spit my jizz out on my pant leg, but I didn’t give a damn.

After I zipped up, I bent and gave her a quick kiss on the cheek. “I’m going to head out and get my things. I’ll be back to spend the night.”

“Here?” Eve seemed confused. “I thought we could go back to the Eagles’ Nest. Back to normal.”

I hadn’t told her the good news. “No, Eve. Things will be better. Kingpin made me an officer. I’ll have to live at Royal Road. If you’re okay with it, I’ll be moving in here. Otherwise, I’m over the clubhouse.”

Her jaw dropped. “Yeah. You can stay here. When will you be back?”

“Don’t worry, Angel. I don’t want to wait a moment to break up with Stephanie. It won’t take long, I hope.”

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Chapter 22

Eve

Hallow left me on the floor. It took me a minute to process everything and longer to get up. I righted myself. Put on my shoes and coat to go see if I could find Kingpin. Him and I were going to have a word. Royal Road was just like always. Packed. Loud. Smokey. Ignoring all the looks as I stomped in. Looks from the bikers, from the club whores as I made my way to the bar.

I asked Paisley. "Is Kingpin in his office?"

The whore brightened when she saw me. "Are you finally out of hiding?"

"Just tell me where our Prez is hiding tonight," I seethed.

She stopped wiping the counter behind the bar and leaned over the bar. Her face almost touched mine. "If I were you, I'd watch your tone. I may be the only one around here that realizes Hallow didn't do anything to you. He didn't rape you even though you've let everyone think it."

"I did not. You told them he did." My eyes narrowed. I knew it had been her spreading the rumors. "And what does that have to do with anything?" I played dumb.

She stepped back. Her head to the side, Paisley tapped her forehead. "I ain't dumb. I heard your little speech. I only wonder why you let Sky believe Hallow did. I wonder if that's actually his baby."

The bar was loud enough that no one could hear her, I hoped. But her words put me on guard. I glanced over my shoulder before I spoke. "It's no one's business when Hallow and I conceived this child. Certainly not a whore's business."

Paisley's elbows hit the bar as she bent to me again. "I'm certain it wasn't after that night in June. When I threw the lamp at him. Hallow had been spending his nights

elsewhere. And he told me y'all hadn't had sex for months before your bungled wedding day."

My words hung in my scratchy throat. How did Paisley know any of this? For the first time, I wondered if she'd been the one sleeping with Hallow back then. But I had to play it cool. "Hallow was lying. Because we certainly had sex right before our wedding," I lied to throw her off the trail. I went on, rubbing my baby bump, "The proof is in the pudding. And he and I discussed that very matter tonight. Hallow knows more than anyone this baby is his. I was just about to tell Kingpin that he's moving in with me. To my house. If you could let me know where the bastard is."

Opry appeared beside her. "Eve, you're a sight for sore eyes. I see congratulations are in order. My only question is if you're going to be gracing us with your sweet voice again?"

"I don't know." I never intend to start singing here again though I visited the band during their practice yesterday. I missed Ember the most. Apologizing, I tried to make amends with her. Not only had I disappeared, I'd ignored all her worried texts. Before his visit, I assumed while I kept my part of Kingpin's deal, Hallow and I would be going back to normal. That we would be living back over at the Eagles' Nest. It was one of the many reasons I had to speak to Kingpin.

Opry said, "If you're up to it. Your band's playing after the Super Bowl."

I repeated myself. "I don't know yet. Where's your boss?"

"Where do you think he is?"

Opry tipped his cowboy hat toward the crowd. Kingpin was sitting on his throne as usual but watching the strippers. I eyed the horde of people in front of the stage knowing I wouldn't want to waive through them, not in my condition.

The cowboy noticed my apprehension. "Wait here. I'll go fetch him."

Kingpin didn't even look my way as he walked over. The biker was too busy fighting off the crowd himself. Everyone wanted a piece of him, a moment with him. I didn't see how he could stand it. Here I required his time too. I had a bone to pick with him.

The man didn't come to me, he went straight to his office. And Opry signaled for me to follow him. Paisley, who had slid down the bar to take care of her patrons, gave me a sideways glance. She was watching us. I didn't know how much she knew. But she knew something. Or she at least suspected something about my baby not being Hallows. There was no way she could prove it was Kingpin's though. I'd not told anyone but Jassica. I was sure she'd keep the secret. Kingpin knowing she knew, only concreted my belief. Pagan's woman wouldn't dare stir the pot. She had too much to lose. Paisley however whipped up chaos for her own pleasure.

When I stepped into Kingpin's office, I didn't see him at first. It was like he disappeared, but he was behind the door. As soon as I was out of the way, he closed it and locked it. As usual, Kingpin wore his cut without a shirt underneath. He had on tight leather pants that left nothing to the imagination. The man had a hard on. I tried my best not to acknowledge it.

"We can't be in here together," he said right off.

"Why is that? I did what you wanted me to. I lied for Sky. You were there. And Hallow thinks all is well."

"It's not just that," Kingpin said, his hand raking through his short hair.

"Yeah, Paisley knows something. For one thing, she knows for a fact Hallow never raped me. She was there. And she knows he and I hadn't done it before then, not for some time."

"Did you tell her that?" Kingpin asked.

"No. Must've been Hallow." I didn't mention the fact he had probably been having sex with her.

"He told me that too."

I remembered Kingpin asking about it, back when he spoke to Hallow for me.

I was hung up on Paisley. “What takes the cake, that whore seemed certain he and I weren’t together after we broke up, either. Which is true, but how would she know?”

Kingpin held his finger to his lips.

“What?” I all but shouted. It was loud enough out in the bar, we could speak freely. Dimple and my band were playing, “Sweet Child of Mine”. Rome was singing, not Elvis.

“I ain’t going to say anything,” Kingpin explained, his eyebrows high.

My hands flew to my hips. “Why not?”

“Would it even matter to you if Hallow was with Paisley?” Kingpin said, saying it all.

Flying to him, I punched his chest. It was a surprise, but it shouldn’t surprise me. “You knew?”

“There’s not much I don’t know around here.”

“Tell me who else. How many?” Hallow acted like there were too many to count. I knew it but I couldn’t handle it.

Kingpin took a hold of my arms, softly. “I ain’t going to guess or tell.”

I wanted to kill Paisley. She’s the one who originally told me he was having sex with the sweetbutts. And come to find out she was one of the whores he was fucking, all along. At least one of them. But I told Hallow I forgave him, so I shouldn’t think about who he was with. I tried to focus on the reason I came to speak to Kingpin in the first place.

“Like I said, Hallow came over tonight. I wish you would have warned me.”

“Warned you? Why? He didn’t hurt you?” Kingpin let go of me.

“No. He said that you made him an officer. Now we have to stay here.”

“I already told you, I need you to stay at Royal Road. You’re carrying my baby. I ain’t about to let you leave with that, that, detective.” Kingpin said the word detective like that was the worst thing in the world. “That pig,” he added for good measure.

“Why not? This was all your idea. Hallow thinks this baby is his. And we’re back together now.”

“That was quick,” he remarked, scornful.

“What did you expect? He’s gone right now to break things off with Steph. He’s moving in with me tonight. I’m sure in no time he’ll want to go through with the wedding. Again.”

Kingpin backed away. He leaned back on his desk. His face twisted, like he hadn’t expected me to go through with it. The biker seemed more than taken aback.

What the fucking hell did he expect? “And why did you tell him I couldn’t have sex?” I asked.

Kingpin closed his eyes.

“Why would you do that?”

“A little wishful thinking.” The biker smirked, his eyes still closed.

My eyes went to his desk. And then over to his couch where we had made love before. And yes, we made love. We didn’t only fuck. As I remembered it, I physically quaked. Kingpin propelled himself from his desk and came straight at me like a speeding train. He took my elbow, asking, “Do you need to sit down?” He thought my reaction, my trembles were some sort of pregnancy emergency.

Feeling faint, I let him take me over to the couch anyway.

“You didn’t, did you?” he asked.

“Do what?” My mind had been so far in the past, in the memories of us that night in this office, I didn’t know what Kingpin was asking anymore.

“You didn’t already have sex tonight?”

“No. Thanks to you.” My eyes went a little sideways because Hallow and I had done something. It was not Kingpin’s business, but I was a horrible liar.

“What did you do?” Kingpin asked, his eyes turning dark.

I licked my lips, thinking of how my mouth still tasted salty like Hallow’s cum.

The biker’s forehead knitted together. Hot air left him as his nostrils flared.

“Why do you care?” I spat. I wiped the corners of my mouth, practically giving it away. A terrible liar.

Kingpin made a noise. “Did you get on your knees for him?”

I gasped, revealing myself even more. “I’ve had his dick in my mouth, yeah,” I said, so Kingpin would leave me alone about it.

His ring covered hand landed on my thigh and crept up. He squeezed as if he was upset. It wasn’t exactly unwelcome. Hallow had left me wanting.

I found my voice. “How dare you? I ain’t asking you what you’re doing with anybody. Not with your Ol’ Lady. Not with the naked strippers you were so eagerly watching tonight. I’ve not asked anything of you.” He had no right to act like I shouldn’t be with Hallow when lying so I could have my ex back was all his idea in the first place.

“Yes, I was watching. But I’ve not touched. I ain’t been with anybody in months. Not even Sky lately. No one. All I can think about is your pussy. But I made promises. Promises I intend to keep.” As he said it, his hand ran over to my inner thigh. Thank goodness I had on pants. But the thin yoga pants didn’t matter. The biker practically grabbed my clit through them.

I groaned at the sensation.

“I see the bastard didn’t take care of you?” he hissed.

He hadn't. "I can take care of myself." Without a man, I had to do it all the time.

Kingpin took my hand. "Do it now," he said, placing my hand on my crotch. He wanted me to masturbate in front of him.

"I won't." I took my hand away and clutched it with my other hand.

"Are you going to make me do it for you?" Kingpin rubbed me through my pants.

"Hallow will be back soon," I said, meaning I would be satisfied tonight.

At my words, the biker moved. He stood up quickly in front of me. I waited for him to help me up. It was time for me to get out of there. Hallow would be back any moment.

Instead of offering his hand, he went for his belt, undoing the large buckle. In a flash, Kingpin had his dick out. At eye level, it was as impressive as ever. Eyeballing the metal ring under the head, I recollected how that felt. Fucking marvelous. I shuddered. My lady parts trickled in response.

I watched his black tipped fingers run up and down, stroking his cock. "Is this what you want? Is this why you came to my office tonight?"

"No," I yipped, but I didn't know if that was true. Seriously turned on, I didn't know what to do. I opened my mouth to tell him off but shut it right away. Pursing my lips shut, I was afraid he'd shove his big cock down my throat if given a chance. Afraid, I would welcome it. I clutched the edge of the couch for strength. Shutting my eyes tight, I held my breath. I would not be tempted.

Stepping toward me, Kingpin ran his thumbs over my lips.

I opened my eyes, trying not to look at his tempting cock. Raising my head, I met his scrutiny. He held my gaze much like he always had.

The corner of his lip twitched. "I won't make a woman pregnant with my child get down on her knees. You can sit comfortably while I fuck your pretty little mouth." The biker held his dick dangerously close to my lips.

"Is this a competition? I have every intention of being faithful to Hallow, even if." I stopped short, catching myself.

"Even if you want me?" Kingpin stepped forward.

I felt the fleshy head against my lips. Felt it because my eyes were locked on his face. He traced my lips with the head of his dick, but the response written all over his features was what turned me on.

Heavens to Betsy. Why didn't I leave? Why didn't I just bite the damn thing and end it all? Gazing up at him, I read his jealousy plain as day. He wore it proudly. He couldn't stand Hallow having been somewhere he hadn't in a long while. His eyes screamed it from the mountain tops.

The man was on the brink of shattering his promise to have me. For me to suck him off. It was unbelievably wrong. Yet, I'd never been more compelled. Besides, Hallow had left me wet and wanting. He was off to go break up with the woman he'd moved in with. The woman who he'd been fucking on the regular. And he'd gotten his dick sucked many times over after he left me. He'd been with whores like Paisley, of all people. Fuck. Countless other women, I reckoned. He confessed to it. I'd said I forgave him. But did I? Was I wanting revenge? Or was it something much more? Did I just crave this bad man like before?

"Open up, my Angel," Kingpin rasped, his eyes worshipping me.

Mastered by my libido, I opened wide. Kingpin's ring covered fingers went into my hair as he took the back of my head. His piercing clinked against my teeth as his dick slipped between them. Humming, the biker lunged his cock deep into my mouth. Relaxing, I accommodated him. I let his dick hit the back of my throat. Showing off, I pleased him as best I could, slobbering and sucking. I sucked him dry. All the while, guilt marred my delight. Having had two cocks in my mouth

that evening, it was as if I'd had a wine tasting but with dicks. Swirl, taste, spit. Repeat. And I didn't know which one was better, exactly. Pierced and over the top, Kingpin's was extra alright, like the man. And forbidden. I didn't get a chance to spit Kingpin out.

"Fuck. I'm watching my salt," I grumbled after I swallowed it all.

After that, the biker fell to his knees. He took off all my clothes in a tizzy. Which wasn't easy to do with a pregnant lady. A willing participant, I lifted and twisted to help him along. A man on a mission, the biker had me naked and on top of him in no time. Kingpin had gotten completely naked too. His long hair was gone and his beard was a bit shorter, but his black tattoos and piercings were exactly the same, sexy as all get out. Like every other time we'd been together, a fervent energy took control of our bodies. The couch was too small as I sat on his dick. The head tucked between my folds, but he'd not entered me. Kingpin rubbed my pregnant tummy like a crystal ball.

"Do you think we'll hurt the baby?" he asked.

"I've not been told I can't have intercourse. But the doctor knows I'm single and not mingling. It's not really come up. I've had plenty of orgasms, though," I confessed. It'd gotten lonely when I was on my own.

"I hope they were all self-inflicted. I don't have to worry about those Mexicans? They seemed sweet on you."

"They were all on my own," I clarified.

"Were you thinking of me?" There was a sparkle in his dark, lined eyes.

"Maybe once," I admitted.

Reaching under us, Kingpin positioned himself as I lifted a bit. "I'll let you take the lead," he said.

So wet and juicy, I sat down, stabbing myself with his stiff dick. It fucking felt amazing. Even better than before. Kingpin let me take what I needed from him. I was so careful. The biker was so tender and sweet, but raunchy at the same

time, rising to suck my tits. I got off in no time, and Kingpin was quick too. He squirted inside me. I figured it was a little too late to worry about that.

I collapsed at his side, my big belly about burying him in the couch. He tangled his legs in mine and kissed my forehead. His thumb brushed my cheek. His dark eyes searched mine for what I had no idea. I was affected. My heart fluttered, but I tried to ignore it.

Then he about bowled me over. “Promise me, you’ll wait for me.”

My fluttering heart flapped and stuck in my throat. “What are you talking about?”

“You’re going to tell him, right? After Sky has her babies. You said you won’t lie.”

“I don’t know,” I’d not thought that far. I’d pretty much lied to him. “Hallow’s coming back soon. Lordalmighty, he might already be back.”

Kingpin held me to him. “Promise you won’t let him have you like this. You won’t make love to him at least.” The man’s face dripped with vulnerability.

“Kingpin, I ain’t sure what you’re asking?”

Defeated, he bit his lip. I stared down at his beard. His eyes were just too intense, and they were wet. He stammered quietly, “I want to be with you. I’ve wanted it since the first time. Hell, I probably wanted it since I first laid eyes on you. I just didn’t know it. You and I are meant to be.”

The words caused goosebumps. “Meant to be, Kingpin? You said I shouldn’t think like that.”

“I was dead wrong, Angel.”

Scared of my own feelings, I got up as best as I could. Kingpin helped me. My tears started.

Kingpin flopped back on the couch as I tried to get dressed. “There you go again, crying,” he complained. “After we’ve had the best sex.”

“You always say all these things that never come to pass. Impossible things. I don’t believe you, now. I won’t be fooled again. I can’t give my heart to you.”

“But you can lie and be with Hallow.”

“That’s all your plan because you don’t want me. And Hallow, he’s leaving Steph for me.”

Kingpin sealed his eyes shut. He breathed like he was meditating. I knew he couldn’t leave Sky so easily. I wouldn’t ask him to. Our situation was super complicated. We could never be together. I said as much.

“No, Eve.”

Standing over him, I took either side of his face. “What do you want? Do you want me to not give my all to Hallow because of what?” I needed him to tell me what would happen if I gave up Hallow for him. I wouldn’t be left high and dry.

Kingpin clutched either side of my big belly. “I can’t stand the thought of another man fucking you. You have my baby inside you.”

“Is that all this is?” I asked. “I’ll give birth soon, don’t worry.”

“Eve, love, Angel, you know it’s more than that.” Kingpin took my hand and placed it on his chest, over his heart. “I just need more time.”

Never in a million years did I think I’d want Kingpin to leave Sky and be with me. I had everything I wanted, Hallow and a baby right ahead of me. But I promised him, “Alright, I’ll wait for you.” Meaning, I’d put Hallow off sexually while I lived my lie.

“You’ll come to me in the meantime.”

I told him I would. He helped me get my clothes back on. But when I got back to the house, Hallow was waiting for me with a big bunch of flowers, lilies which I adored. And he had chocolates, dark ones. He’d picked up dinner, takeout Chinese and a bottle of Italian red wine. All my favorites. I didn’t know if I could keep my promise to Kingpin. I wasn’t

sure he'd truly be with me if I did. Suddenly I knew how Hallow felt. I'd betrayed him. He wanted to be sure I wanted him before he gave up Steph for me. I felt like the biggest fool for not understanding it before.

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Chapter 23

Eve

“You can have a glass of wine, can’t you?” Hallow asked, pouring me one.

“I shouldn’t, but it’s a sweet thought.”

He drank it down in one gulp. “I want to wine and dine you. I want to make up for everything I’ve put you through.”

Smelling like another man, I told him I needed a moment before we ate. In the bathroom, I cleaned myself off as quickly as I could. Looking in the mirror, I told myself to be strong. I didn’t make promises lightly. And I promised Kingpin I would wait for him even though I had no idea what it all meant.

So of course, I had a wonderful evening with Hallow. But no hanky panky. But I did sleep in his arms all night. I loved Hallow, so it touched my heart. And the next morning, he was right where he should be. Against his hairy chest, I woke in the crook of his big arms.

Suddenly, we lived together again. There were many times when we had been before when I just jumped on his morning wood and had my way with him. Even half asleep, he tried to get frisky, putting his hands in my pants.

But I said, “Let’s wait until I talk to the doctor. I don’t want to start something we can’t finish. Not again.” I got out of bed quick as lightning, so I didn’t give in.

Instantaneously, Hallow and my relationship went back to normal at least on the surface. We loved each other. Yes, I harbored resentment about all the women he’d been with. I was holding on to that grudge. Not really giving into Hallow helped me live the lie. Helped me wait for Kingpin. This wasn’t Hallow’s baby. That helped too.

However, Kingpin didn’t come around all week. I was busy catching up with Hallow. And no, I didn’t have sex with him. But I let Hallow kiss me. And he held me. And there

were plenty of times heavy petting commenced. I didn't give him another blowjob, having made a strange promise to Kingpin in the heat of the moment. Hallow wanted way more. My body longed to give in at times too. My heart also was more than torn.

The whole club gathered when Kingpin swore Hallow in as Nashville, Tennessee's Cleaner. Hallow was happier than I'd ever seen him. Becoming an officer was all he wanted since he came to Royal Road. But I realized it was because he wanted to provide for me. He wanted the position so we could have a bright future together.

Kingpin said to him during it, "Not as many long runs, but you'll be busy here."

But as it was, Hallow wasn't busy yet.

Though Kingpin told me to come to him in my time of need, I saw Hallow every day. I couldn't escape him. I slept in his arms. Sure, he'd go to Church and on rides on his Harley, which I couldn't go on in my state. Then he'd come home to me. Having no need to be over at the clubhouse and casino, I cooked and cleaned. When I wasn't doing chores, I knitted little booties and blankets, thankful my mom had taught me how. Lounging on the couch, I read all the mysteries, I could get my hands on. It was peaceful. I was never much for TV, but at night, I laid on Hallow's lap and watched the true crime documentaries he loved until we were too tired to go on. As long as they weren't too gory. I'd never minded it as much before. I blamed the pregnancy for the aversion.

I thought about singing again, but Hallow didn't want me singing at Royal Road. We were cuddled up on the couch. The biker had moved in everything we had from the Eagles' Nest which included all his toys, his big TV and his video game consoles. He told me all about it when I mentioned Opry kept asking. With all the relaxation, I was feeling better than ever, so I'd thought about it. I missed it.

"I wish you wouldn't perform anymore. Especially in your condition. You don't need to anymore," Hallow argued.

No, I didn't exactly need the money, but music was a part of me. With Hallow and I back together at least superficially, I wasn't so embarrassed about my condition that singing at the clubhouse would be out of the question. I had a few months to go though. I could wait until after I had the baby if I needed to.

But Hallow went on, "If I had my way you'd never have to sing again."

"It's not that I have to. I want to."

"Not just here. Anywhere," he added like he hadn't heard me. "You'll have our newborn to raise."

The realization took over. I wanted to get back to my gigs more than ever. Hallow was right about one thing. I would have a baby soon. Afterwards, it'd be some time before I felt like getting up on stage. That's if I had the time at all. And who would watch the baby?

All this thinking was useless because as I laid in Hallow's big arms, I was keeping secrets for another man. They were my secrets too. But I was lying to Hallow without the benefits, thinking that at any moment Sky would have her baby, and I'd be free to tell him the truth. I'd end this charade. I didn't know what happened after that. Kingpin told me to wait, so I assumed he'd made up his mind that he wanted me. I'd not let myself really contemplate what that meant. I just kept my promise to wait. But of course, I wanted Hallow too. I just knew that I couldn't lie forever.

Another week passed and I had my doctor's appointment. Hallow took me. I introduced him as the father of my child though it pained me to do so. And lo and behold, everything was steady with my health. Not great, but Doc Jarvis said they weren't going to induce me yet. I felt it had a lot to do with the fact that I had a partner helping me. They said no bed rest yet if I was taking it easy.

With pride, Hallow assured them I was. The biker was doing everything in his power to take care of me, make me happy.

Holding his hand, I had an ultrasound. Hallow watched in wonder. I'd not even shown him the ones I had pictures of on my phone. After all, I didn't want him getting too attached. Watching his face as he saw the little miracle inside me, I felt lower than dirt. A tear fell down my cheek. I smiled so everyone would think it was a happy tear.

Hallow asked about resuming sexual relations on his own. My doctor seemed surprised we hadn't. The kicker, he said only if I felt up to it. The ball was in my court when I promised not to play. I didn't have to fake my apprehension about it.

"Would sex be considered taking it easy?" I asked, knowing I'd had sex with Kingpin just fine.

Hallow joked, "Not with me."

For some reason, my doctor changed his tune. "There are other ways to orgasm. Maybe you two should go that route for now."

That night I had no excuse to refuse Hallow, so I faked a stomachache.

But stomachaches wouldn't last forever. Soon, I was on my knees again. I had my good minute too, as Hallow pleased me, with his fingers, his mouth. He was all too gentle. But I didn't let him enter me, not with his dick. I'd made a stupid promise.

It had been weeks since I had even laid eyes on Kingpin. I decided to sing at the Super Bowl party. Opry offered a pretty penny for only a few songs. I couldn't resist.

"It's just a couple of songs, and I get the full rate," I explained to Hallow. Four hundred dollars a gig was nothing to sneeze at.

"You're supposed to be taking it easy."

"It's not like I'm dancing a jig up there. I have a stool. It's just singing."

Hallow and I went together since we'd become inseparable. At Royal Road, gambling was a given. There was

betting on all kinds of things, including sports. Hell, I couldn't even imagine everything they bet on, on a nightly basis. One time I saw the men betting on whether one of the whores would fall down, on her face or her ass.

The strippers were dressed not as cheerleaders. But as football players. Barely wearing anything in booty shorts and crop tops that showed the bottom half of their titties. There was the big Vegas style buffet filled with game food, chicken wings and chili. All the fixings. The atmosphere sure was different with everyone watching the game. I sat at a booth with Hallow. He held my hand across the table. Smiling, he was as happy as a lark. After all, he was an officer now. Another officer joined us. Thorn was Kingpin's Enforcer now. He was as pleased as punch as well.

I had wings with celery and carrots with blue cheese dressing. Nuts. Chips and dip. I went a bit overboard with all my favorite things. I ate the celery and carrots first. I tried to pick the fried skin off the chicken. I listened to Hallow and Thorn complain about every flag in the game.

Being with Hallow felt comfortable. My smiles were genuine. Even though I was holding back, I was still under Hallow's spell. After all, we'd been together for almost a year before we broke up.

It didn't help that Kingpin was on his throne with Sky in his lap. She had on an Eagle's jersey. He wore Chiefs. Both teams made it to the championship again, just like last year when the Chief's won. Needless to say, this rematch was a huge ordeal. Though I knew nothing of it, I had on a Bengal's jersey that had belonged to Donette. I didn't have a horse in this race. Hallow rooted for Philly. And I joked with him it was because he was a Yankee, being from way up north in Ohio.

We laughed and caught up with all the members, not just the ones always at Royal Road. Connie and Dawg were there in Titan's Jerseys. Blitz and Allie had come too. Allie was so much older than our tattoo artist it took me ages to figure out they were a couple. She had grandkids but not with him. They were with another member called Sniper. It was

nice to be a couple again and not have everybody staring at me in pity because Hallow left me. And even if they thought that he raped me, I felt I'd squashed any concerns about that with my little speech last month. I knew it would spread like wildfire.

When the game was almost over, I left Hallow for the dressing room. I was already dressed in my sport's ball jersey that was large enough to be maternity wear and stretchy leggings. I had every intention to wear it to perform, but I wanted to refresh my makeup and right my hair before I went on. Pick the chicken out of my teeth. Honestly, I needed some time to beat my nerves, as well. Lying to Hallow, I was more anxious than ever. However, the dressing room was filled to the brim. All the sweetbutts and strippers congregated there, clucking like hungry hens. No one paid them any mind today because of the football. I turned and walked out right away.

Stepping into the hall, I ran right into a Chief's jersey.

"Motherfucker. Someone needs to put a bell on you," I said.

Kingpin winked. "I'll show you a motherfucker. Ain't you about to be a mother?"

"Hush, your mouth. Someone will hear you."

"I was just coming to the dressing room to wish you luck."

"It's too noisy in there."

"I know somewhere it's quiet."

Clutching my hand, Kingpin led me to his Throne Room. That's what we called the soundproof conference room where Church was held, even if his throne was out in the clubhouse tonight. Even though no sound could get out, he had noise from the club piped in. I could hear the game was still on. Safely behind the heavy doors, the biker wasted no time. Kingpin took my hand and kissed it. "Why haven't you come to me? It's been weeks."

Was he an idiot? "I'm with Hallow. We're back together." There were about a dozen other reasons I couldn't

think of as he kissed up my arm.

“You’ve not kept your promises then?” he asked, his beard against my skin.

I huffed. “I’ve not had sex with Hallow.”

“You’re waiting for me? Still?”

Closing my eyes, I let my head nod forward. I admitted I was with a long exhale.

Kingpin bent and swooped me up into a honeymoon hold.

“There’s no time,” I grumbled. “There’s only ten minutes left in the game.”

“Angel, that could be a good thirty minutes.”

“What about your wife?”

“Sky’s occupied. Jassica said she’d keep an eye on her. Leo’s with her.”

“This ain’t right,” I whined as Kingpin laid me down in the padded pit, built into the floor. I’d been there before. I’d lost my virginity right there to Hallow, with this biker watching. On his command.

“I don’t want to be here.”

He laid with me. “You’re still in love with Hallow?”

“Are you serious? We sleep in the same bed. We’re back together. Of course, I think of him in here. Remember what you did, in this very room?”

“I was punishing him. And protecting you.”

“By demanding he fuck me right on the spot?”

“Yes, you had to become one of us. He was lying about you belonging to him, so I had to know he was serious. You too. Too bad I was wrong. He wasn’t serious about you.”

Kingpin’s words hurt.

“I don’t believe that,” I squawked.

“You’ve slept with him?”

“In the bed. There’s been no sex.” I assumed Kingpin wasn’t talking about anything but actual intercourse. “He took me to my check up last week.”

“How did that go?”

“The baby’s just fine.”

“And you?”

“Better than they expected. I go back in two weeks.”

“Why didn’t you let me take you?”

“You know it all. I’m likely to go early. I told you all about it.”

“Have you?” he asked, grilling me.

“You’ve not been around.” It was an excuse and a question.

He answered. “Sky had a breakdown. I couldn’t get away. Besides, I can’t stand to watch you two together when you’re mine.” Kingpin’s hands went under my jersey. He skillfully undid my bra, releasing my heavy breasts.

“I can’t do this before I get on stage. I’ll have that freshly fucked look. Everyone will know.”

“We don’t have to do anything,” he said as he felt me up. “Just kiss me.”

We did just that. I felt like a teenager again, making out at the football game.

Breaking our kiss, the biker drew my jersey up. His mouth descended. My breasts were so sensitive, his tongue ring on my nipples drove me wild. I reached for his stomach and found the waist of his jeans. I wasn’t used to Kingpin wearing jeans. It was usually leather or nothing. And leather and nothing since he didn’t wear underwear. But I guess, leather didn’t look right with a football jersey. I ran my fingers under the denim. Kingpin undid his pants. My hand found what I craved. Reaching down, I cradled his balls before I fondled his shaft. Stroking him, I found a rhythm.

As always, there was no going back. Soon, Kingpin had me on my knees. He'd taken down my leggings, my panties. He entered me from behind, steering my hips back to meet his hasty thrusts. We fucked like we had little time. Coming together, we laid in a heap for only a moment.

As our breaths quieted, I noticed the game no longer played. Rome had started into "Stroke Me" by Mickey Avalon. I had to straighten myself and get out on stage. But I was like a turtle on my back. Kingpin had to help me from the floor. Again, he had to help me get dressed. I was too big to be sneaking around and cheating. Fuck. That was the least of it.

I just barely made it out to the club on time. Instinctively, I wanted to look at Kingpin in the crowd like I always had, but I couldn't. Not with Sky with him and on his lap, her about to pop. I saw red for a moment before I remembered I had someone else myself. All I could think about was Sky's twins and that Kingpin couldn't leave her. If he really did, I would be the cause. I was going to hell. Kingpin was the devil himself. I looked at Hallow. Paisley brought him a drink. He gave her some secret smile. Then he actually fucking winked at her. He touched her shoulder. I'd think they were fucking again if he wasn't with me every damn night. She stood beside him, and they both stared at me, waiting for me to start.

The baby kicked while I sang, "Better Than Revenge". The Swifty's in the crowd went wild. In my mind, I secretly dedicated it to Paisley. But I didn't know what I felt about anything anymore. I knew I was living a lie. I'd been just like Paisley. Sky stared at me like she wanted revenge on me.

I didn't even get through the song when the commotion started. I thought a bar fight had broken out. Everybody ran around in a panic, but there were no broken glasses, no chairs sprouting wings. Kingpin shouted something. The music stopped abruptly.

"Oh fuck. Her water broke." I heard somebody shout.

I watched Kingpin carry Sky out of the clubhouse.

Lordalmighty. Sky was having her babies. She was having them early. But not too early, I suspected. As it was, I had to continue. Everyone settled down and expected the show to go on. So, I did just that. I went on with the few songs that I'd agreed to sing. Then I joined Hallow who was celebrating his team's win. In my absence, Rome and Ember took turns singing. In the time I fucked Kingpin and sang three songs, Hallow had ten too many beers. No room to talk about moral shortcomings, I complained anyway, asking him to take it easy.

“Oh, Eve, it's Super Bowl Sunday. You got what you wanted. A cheering crowd. Let me have my fun.”

“You think I just want attention?”

Hallow didn't register my question. He was that inebriated.

We went back to the house. And he was a bit handsy on the way. Safe inside, he was taking off my clothes.

“We can't do this,” I said, pushing him off me. I'd just been with Kingpin and needed a shower.

“Can't you just let me? Can't we just? I don't have to get all the way inside you.” Hallow was practically on top of me. He smelled so strong of whiskey, just like the time before when he'd threatened me. At least he wouldn't smell another man on me. He was too shit faced to notice.

Quickly, I got my wits about me. “Stop, I yelled.” I was actually scared of him for a second.

Hallow reacted. He was disgusted with my reaction. Or maybe with his actions. I couldn't rightly tell.

“I would never do that to you, again. Eve, I'm so sorry. For before. I didn't know what I was doing. I was hurt. I was drunk.” Was Hallow talking about the night he threatened me? The night I let him think he raped me? “When I heard what I did to you, I couldn't live with it.”

Yes, I realized that's just what he spoke of.

“That’s why I didn’t take you back when I found out why you’d been refusing me. And I know none of that matters. I did it. It kills me. And it kills me that you can’t forgive me.”

“I forgave you,” I reminded him, knowing I was nothing but a liar now.

“Have you? This last month. It’s just not the same. You’re not my Eve. Maybe you forgive me for the whores. But you won’t let me really touch you. You’re not really here. You’re a million miles away. You’re scared to have sex with me. You don’t forgive me for violating you before.” Almost crying, Hallow hugged me. Rather, he stumbled against me. “If I could go back in time and stop myself from doing anything to you, I would. But I am glad something good could come from it. We have a baby. I promise I’m going to make this up to you. Do you still have your ring?”

“No. You had Paisley get it from me, remember?” I helped Hallow to the bed.

“No, I didn’t. Paisley showed up one day and told me you wanted all your things. I told her to tell you to keep the ring.”

“She told me you had her bring me my stuff. That you were throwing me out.” Fucking Paisley. I was going to kill her.

Hallow and I went to bed. Thankfully, he passed out. But I had too much to think about. I couldn’t sleep. There was no way in hell, I could continue to let Hallow think he actually did the horrible act anymore. It was almost time to tell him the truth anyway. I’d kept my word to Kingpin. Sky would have her twins without knowing about his other baby. I’d be free to tell Hallow that this wasn’t his child inside me. Because it didn’t matter how much I loved him. My heart belonged to someone else as well. My fate was tied to another man. My heart broke in two halves. I was caught between the past, all my hopes and dreams for me and Hallow, and an unknown future with a man I never wanted but could not possibly escape no matter how hard I tried.

Chapter 24

Eve

The news came like a thief in the night. By morning, everyone knew Sky lost one of the twins. Pagan called Church. I followed Hallow to the clubhouse. I waited out in the bar while he attended the meeting.

I wasn't the only one waiting.

"It was stillborn. It happens," Memphis said.

Just hearing about it caused my head to spin. Poor Sky. Poor Kingpin. Poor baby. I thought of my own baby. I felt him tumble around, and I was mighty thankful.

"These kinds of things happen," Sweet Tea added. "I lost a twin myself back in the 90s."

"How horrible. Can you imagine?" Paisley said right to me.

Placing my hand on my stomach, I said, "Oh yeah, I can imagine, Paisley."

"Who sucked the red off your candy?" she asked, full of attitude.

"Hallow said he never got his ring back. Where is it?" I didn't care who heard me say it.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she tried to play it off.

Memphis made a noise, letting me know Paisley was lying. Hell, I knew she was lying anyway.

"You told me Hallow asked for my ring back. He said he never got it back. And that he never asked you to bring me my things either."

"Well, don't throw a shit fit. I'll get it to you. I didn't sell it or anything."

I couldn't fucking believe it.

“You’re a goddamn bitch. I thought you were just a whore. I didn’t think you were the one sleeping with Hallow.”

Paisley gasped. “How dare you? Have you no feelings for poor Sky. Why would you?”

And I couldn’t really say anything else about it. There was a greater topic of conversation. I knew going off on Paisley, I was just trying to distract myself from it. But her words were a threat. I shut up. I listened to everyone talk. Mainly, they were sorry, going on about how unfortunate the whole business was. Those sentiments were always followed by the happy fact one child survived.

“And Kingpin has the other one,” Memphis added.

I about jumped out of my skin until I remembered Felicia’s kid, Johnny.

Leo remarked, “I’m just worried for Sky. She’s not been herself in a long time. This is liable to push her over the edge.”

Hells bells. Things just kept getting worse.

The steady stream of Royal Bastards flowing out of the Throne Room meant Church had been dismissed. Hallow joined me at the bar, putting his arm around me. Nuzzling my neck, he rubbed my tummy. The news had affected him too.

“It’s a boy,” Opry announced, slipping behind the bar. “That’ll make Kingpin proud as a peacock.”

Then the bad news, Pagan revealed that the baby boy was in the NICU. “Kingpin might not be back for a while.”

Sky hadn’t been too early, having her babies on February fifth instead of the twentieth. I asked Pagan what exactly was wrong, but he didn’t know.

Hallow left on his morning ride, and I went back to the house in a daze. More than anything, I understood that when Kingpin got back, things wouldn’t be the same. There was no way that I could tell the truth after Sky lost a baby. Full of hormones, I cried for the loss myself. I could sort of imagine

the anguish she must feel. There was no way Kingpin and I could be together, ever.

In sorrow, instantly, I turned to Hallow. After all, he was the good man I was intended for. And Kingpin was the bad man, I couldn't have. But that night I still couldn't make love to my biker. All I could think about was my lies. Shame threatened to swallow me whole.

Unlike what Opry said, it was just a couple days before Kingpin and Sky returned without their newborn baby. The boy was still at the hospital, but they expected to bring him home any day. I made no move to try to talk to him, of course. However, the biker popped up behind me like usual, in the dressing room. I had agreed to sing a couple of songs that night. Luckily, I was alone this time. Much like that first night we were together in the basement, the biker appeared shaken, so forlorn. Instinctively, I went to hug him.

Kingpin dodged me immediately.

I grasped my error and clasped my hands in front of me. "I heard, and I'm real sorry."

Leaning heavily on the door frame, he carried the weight of the world. "It's my fault. I'm to blame. I've broken promises that I made. I'm being punished."

Those words from him struck me as odd. Nevertheless, I felt the same sickness in the pit of my stomach. Hearing it called out, the feeling bubbled over. We were to blame. I sucked in a breath. Although my rational brain knew it wasn't really true, it was truer than anything in the whole wide world.

Kingpin reached out for my hand. "Yet here I am."

Just like he darted away from me, I refused to let him touch me. "There's no way that we can ever. I can never." I sulked. "I could never. Ever."

"Not in a million years, I know. But I'm tired of lying, love." Kingpin looked tired. His serious stare let me know he meant business. He was about to do the unthinkable. Unimaginable at least for him. Tell the fucking truth.

I couldn't let him. "No. No one can ever know."

“I promised you once Sky had the babies. You made me promises too,” he danced around our deal.

Terrified, I lied to him. After all, he’d always said it was best to. “No. Don’t mess things up for me now I have what I want. I have Hallow back.” For the most part I was lying. “I’m happy.” Most of the time I was. Maybe without Kingpin haunting me, I could truly be again. I willed myself to believe my own lies. “So don’t get any ideas in your head that I’m going to wait for you again because Sky’s too fragile. Cause I don’t want you. Because I haven’t waited.”

“You’ve given yourself to Hallow?” Kingpin was asking if I’d had sex with him.

I lied again, “Yes.”

He didn’t believe me. “You just said the other night you kept your promise.”

“I lied. Hallow went to my doctor’s appointment with me, remember. I had to give in. He has given me so many orgasms since.” That part wasn’t a lie, though I didn’t let him go all the way.

“Eve.” Kingpin was on me like white on rice. He seized me by the upper arms, almost picking me up. His nose dropped. He wailed in the crook of my neck, “Angel. Don’t do this to me. I’ve lost too much. I don’t want to lose you, too.”

Although it pained me to do so, I fought out of his hold. “You never had me. All of this between us is just some psychological bullshit of yours. You hypnotized me during our practice sessions just like Hallow said. You’re nothing but a liar, a snake. The devil.”

“You can’t be serious,” he almost laughed but looked like he might just cry.

Pushing him away, I doubled down. “Fuck. How could I ever choose a man like you over Hallow? You don’t care about me. All you care about is money and your club. This dump. You think I’m going to be your cash cow if you can make me a star. You’re nothing but an evil criminal.” I twisted the knife. “A dirty old man who wanted to watch Hallow take

advantage of a young girl like me. Hell, you're old enough to be my father. Can't you let me be with someone in my own generation? A good man like Hallow. Him and I are destined for one another."

Kingpin took to a slow pace. "Paisley said you've been looking for your engagement ring."

"That's because Hallow wants me to wear it again. I belong to him." To add insult to injury, I pulled up my dress, showing him the property patch he hated so much. It held the scar from him trying to mutilate it. I'd told Hallow I did it. "Remember, you made Hallow and I get this. I'm his. I always have been. If you come around me again, like this, I'll tell everybody the truth."

Raising his chin defiantly, he snapped, "I don't care. That's what I want."

I'd gotten confused. "You'll lose everything you have left." I placed my hand on my big belly. "I'll run away, and you won't ever see your baby. Hallow would run away, far away and hide me. I only have to say the word."

"You wouldn't." That forlorn expression overtook his features.

"I'd do it in a heartbeat." Fuck. I was hurting him. "Do you really want to lose another child? You need to leave."

Speechless, Kingpin couldn't leave quick enough.

Out on stage, I didn't see him or Hallow.

I sang Lady Gaga's "I'll Never Love Again" as my final goodbye to the biker President.

Finally in my right mind, I would be giving my heart, body and soul to Hallow from this point forward.

Chapter 25

Eve

Surprisingly, Kingpin didn't come back around. My cruelty had worked. I could scarcely believe it. I'd turned around so many times expecting him to pop up on me, but he wasn't there. But what did I expect?

I expected him not to give up so easily.

His newborn came home just days later. No one knew the reason he'd been in the neonatal unit other than being too small. Kingpin and Sky were proud parents. They seemed happier than ever. Hallow and I went to a welcoming home party for the baby. They'd named him Beau but spelled it Bo. Of course, they would.

"Have you thought about a name?" Hallow asked me as I refused the cake they just cut.

"No," I lied. I'd thought about Beau. I'd also thought about Adam. I hadn't known until this week how it would all turn out.

"I think he should be named after his father," Hallow said, confusing me more. "So, which is it?"

"Huh?" My guilt threatened to show on my face.

"August or Adam?" Hallow offered his first and middle name.

I blew out my breath. "I can't decide. Your choice."

Kingpin's brother had come with Sky's mom, Maddie Mae. In their finest, they looked practically regal for Nashville, in matching white cowboy hats. And out of place. But even amongst the bikers in their leather, you could tell they were family.

"I can't believe Bubba's here, and no one is throwing a punch?" Hallow remarked at one point.

Another time, Maddie, the new grandmother passed the little bundle to me. Maybe on the account of me being

pregnant myself. Wrapped in a soft blue blanket, the baby seemed so small. A burrito, its fresh pink face was the only thing sticking out. I bounced him a little on instinct. Sleeping, he looked plumb angelic. He was the spitting image of his mother. Looking at Maddie, I saw her too.

I didn't see much of Kingpin or his brother in him, but I was sure it'd come later. I started to worry my baby would look like Kingpin. Sure, with his once broken nose, the piercings and dark beard, one could never be sure, but with his brother showing his clean shaven face around Royal Road so often, folks would know. Not that they couldn't Google him if they wanted to, but what if people noticed.

Paisley would be looking for similarities surely. What if my baby came out looking like Bubba? What if my baby had his dimples, dark hair, and dark eyes? Hallow had green eyes and light brown hair. I was completely towheaded. Lighter, my brown eyes weren't anything like Kingpin's.

It's as if the thought of him summoned him to me. He came over to take the baby from my arms without giving me the time of day. I'd half expected him to ask me to sing because his brother was here. But he hadn't. Bubba had brought the entertainment, a group who opened for him on the road, the Wicker Valley Fowl. They didn't play until the baby was far away from the noise, over at the Big House with Sky and Maddie. Hallow and I stayed to listen. They were really good.

Although almost all the ladies followed the baby over, I could not. I didn't want to be in their house and see where their baby slept and such. I leaned into Hallow swaying to the band who played strictly to the bikers and me until the party was over. Hallow disappeared with the other officers to help the band load up their van.

After almost everyone had gone, Kingpin did reintroduce me to his twin brother. "You remember, Eve, and her angelic voice."

Country music superstar, Beau Strick, who was actually Bubba puckered like he was trying to remember. "I'm

just pulling your leg, of course, I remember. How could I forget that voice? Eve Newberry.” He shook my hand. “If you were able, I’d ask you to come on the road with me. We leave next week.”

My hand on the obvious, I said, “Yeah, unavailable for a bit longer.”

Bubba replied, “Next time then. If my brother will give you up.”

Kingpin chimed in, “Eve’s not mine to give.”

“Well, alright. We’ll talk.” Bubba tipped his hat at me and left out, leaving Kingpin and I alone.

He locked eyes with me, asking, “How’s everything?”

“Me and Hallow? Right as rain,” I said. It was the truth. “Actually, better than ever.” That was more like it. It’d only been a few days, but I was letting myself love Hallow again, properly in my heart even though I’d not had sex with him yet.

“I meant the baby. It’s been over two weeks.”

“Appointment times ain’t exact. I don’t go in for a couple of days.” We were staring at each other. “How are y’all?” I asked. “You, your Ol’ Lady and your baby, Bo?”

“Junior,” Kingpin corrected me. “Bo Jr.”

“Just like my baby. A junior.”

“August or Adam?” Kingpin asked, not breaking the stare.

“It’s his choice. Either sound perfect to me. And you and your Ol’ Lady? How are you?”

Kingpin tore his eyes from me as he answered, “Much better. It’s like after she had the babies, she woke up.” Grinning big, Kingpin seemed happy. Maybe they were having sex again. Doubtful if she just gave birth, but maybe he was looking forward to it. Maybe he’d come to his senses about us. Then his smile dropped like a stone, and I could see the anguish underneath.

My heart immediately softened. “I’m glad your baby is home. Bo is beautiful. He’s precious. I’m so sorry.”

Leaving out of the clubhouse in a hurry, I felt all the misery of our sins again. I wished I’d never submitted to him. I felt like nothing but a whore. And I knew how I hated Paisley. I hated myself with the same fervor.

Full of remorse, I decided that night to let Hallow really have me again. Running my hands over his hairy chest, his strong back, his glorious butt, and his tight abs, I told myself I preferred him. Going lower I took his stiff erection. He steered my knees apart as he worked my clit.

“I can’t take it anymore, Hallow. I want you.”

“But the doctor said to wait,” Hallow lamented.

Lordalmighty. Hallow wouldn’t do it. He was afraid of hurting me. I made a decision. “No, Hallow. I think it’s okay. My body feels good.” I couldn’t tell him it was safe because I’d had sex with Kingpin.

“Yes. You feel good.” He ran his hands down me. “But no,” he insisted we wait.

“We’ll ask again,” I said, so I didn’t give myself away. We had an appointment after Valentine’s Day.

Hallow and I got off like we had been, but I realized I was finally letting myself really get into it. Having been tempted by another, I’d not been completely with my biker. As Hallow pleased me, I vowed to forget Kingpin altogether. Hallow had been simply perfect like he always had been before I left him on our wedding day.

Kingpin had been my terrible mistake. I’d been silly. More than that, I’d been stupid. I blamed my innocence. I’d been nothing but a virgin before Hallow. Not unaware of the ways of the world, I was inexperienced in matters of the heart. With Kingpin and I happening upon one another like we had, of course I’d attach more to our sexual act than was actually there.

I imagined myself in the garden of Eden with my Adam. Kingpin was the snake, of course tempting me. The

motorcycle club president was the devil himself who had me under his spell. Who put a baby in me. Heavenly Hallow was everything. He'd been so good to me when I didn't deserve it. Where had Kingpin been but with Sky? Kingpin asked me to lie to Hallow, take all I ever wanted. I agreed. Then he'd dangled himself in front of me like a shiny red apple. Fucking twisted shit. Just like in the bible, I'd fallen prey. I'd eaten from the tree. I'd always know the truth. I'd suffer to keep Hallow from hurting.

My grudges against Hallow all but disappeared. I thought of the other night when he admitted how upset he was, thinking he raped me. I'd been so upset at him for even suggesting he would before. But he didn't. He wouldn't ever. I knew that deep in my heart. It'd been the alcohol anyway. Not only did I seek to quiet his guilt, but I also didn't want him to feel like this baby was the product of such a union.

As he spooned me, I let him know, "Hallow, I have a confession to make. That night when everyone thinks you raped me."

All ears, he sat up a little, "Yeah?" His breath struck my ear.

I caught myself. I couldn't tell him he didn't rape me. He'd know the baby wasn't his. Fuck. Kingpin, the evil had turned me into nothing but a liar. I modified my words, "It wasn't exactly unwelcome."

Hallow took my meaning. "But everyone has said."

"It was all Paisley's doing. She walked in."

"But you were so upset."

"About the women. I'm still upset about them. Especially Paisley."

Guilty, Hallow said nothing about that.

"She told everyone you raped me. Including Sky who told Kingpin. I didn't tell a soul." That much was true.

"That motherfucker whipped me, ya know."

I'd wondered how Hallow got the scars on his back. Usually when I asked about that sort of thing, he claimed it was club business, so I hadn't put it all together. And motherfucker was right. I remembered the sex we'd had only a week ago.

"But those bruises on your neck?" Hallow asked.

"Oh, you did put them there. But I enjoyed it. Really," I lied. "Had the best orgasm ever because of those bruises." I sprinkled the truth expertly.

Hallow smirked. He liked hearing that.

The next morning, I hummed, happily as I picked up the house. The windows were open. Unseasonably warm, it was almost seventy degrees outside. Therefore, Hallow had left his leather jacket when he went on his morning motorcycle ride. Picking it up, I heard a jiggle jiggle. I reached into the inside pocket feeling like a snoop. But feeling a box, I pulled it out quick. Opening it, I saw my engagement ring. It'd escaped the slot.

Hallow had found it. Or rather maybe he'd retrieved it from Paisley. I thought about them getting close the other day in the club and felt like an idiot. He'd been getting this ring back. No, that was before I told him Paisley had it.

No matter. My wedding band was in the box too. The one I'd not gotten to wear yet. That's why it'd clinked. I sat down slowly. So pregnant, I couldn't help being slow, but moreover, I understood Hallow meant to propose again. Afterall, this was a brand-new box. Red and shiny, it had the tiniest card attached.

Having ruined the surprise, I popped back up too quickly. I saw stars as I shoved the box back into Hallow's jacket pocket. Red box. Valentine's Day came tomorrow, but the club was hosting a dinner tonight, on Valentine's Eve. I'd agreed to do a couple of love songs. Hallow said we'd partake in the dinner part while we were there, too. I hadn't realized until now it was an actual date, date. Hallow more than likely planned to pop the question tonight in front of everyone.

How terribly sweet.

Before, he hadn't even been able to ask himself. He'd just gotten out of the hospital. I was sure he meant to make a fuss this time. But what would I say? My heart mended for only one man, the best man. And the baby was a gift for Hallow and I, I decided. Despite it being Kingpin's, I intended to treat it as such from here on out.

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Chapter 26

Eve

I planned to wear something special to sing on Valentine's Day anyway, but suspecting Hallow would propose, that night I made sure to really gussy up. Someone might get a video for me. I could only hope to have such precious memories for the rest of my life. My life with Hallow.

Therefore, I donned my blood red maternity dress that actually had pockets. I curled my already wavy hair. It was blonder than ever since I hadn't been to the salon in ages. I wore my matching red lipstick. Standing in front of the mirror, I was smoking hot for a pregnant lady. My ankles wouldn't allow me to wear cowboy boots or heels, hence I had to pair it all with the ugliest, wide, white tennis shoes in the world. But getting creative, I tied a red bow into the knot. Even though they could pass for cheerleading shoes now, I made my peace in the mirror. Then made my way to Royal Road on Hallow's arm.

Hallow hadn't dressed up. He hadn't needed to for me like he had for Steph. I liked him fresh off his Harley, grease on his jeans, and long sleeved flannel with his cut. It read Cleaner. He wore it with satisfaction. We both had all we ever wanted. Well, I was about to.

I'd told Opry I would only sing two songs. My songs were always my choice. But he asked me to sing a song from him to his woman, Leonora. Therefore, that would be one of them. He offered to pay me personally for the favor. I refused any money.

Then the slick man got an idea. "If you were up to it, we could make a killing taking requests like they do on Broadway."

"I'm not up to it. Another time maybe. Only if it was extra for me." I liked that Royal Road paid me by the gig. I didn't have to rely on tips like artists did on Lower Broad. I'd made more as a waitress there. "And I can't sing everything." I

knew a lot of songs but couldn't know it all. I didn't want to get caught unawares. The band knew more music than I did and could usually follow me on a whim. It was something to think about another day.

I saved my one other song to silently dedicate to Hallow. Planning to sing our song, "Come Away With Me", I recalled how I'd wanted to write him something original for our wedding. I'd struggled completing it before because of everything that had happened between us. I would before this next wedding, I promised myself right then.

Almost as soon as we got there, I'd be going on. I'd planned to before we ate. Because afterwards, I wouldn't feel like it. The pregnancy was running me down. Hallow took a table in front of the stage like he'd reserved it for us. Sweet Tea had a fancy three course menu that brought in the crowd from all over Nashville. I spotted Jesus and Mateo with her in the back. Irked for a moment that Kingpin used them as cooks, I reminded myself all the prospects did the dirty work around here. At least these two had experience in the kitchen.

I started with Opry's request, announcing it and singing the classic, "You Belong to Me". These bikers were all the same, wanting their woman to know they were theirs. Their property. It was archaic, barbaric, but celebrated. Young Leo seemed smitten with her old cowboy.

After the applause died, I readied myself for my moment, but Dimple left his spot on stage and came up, saying Riff wanted me to sing, The Cure's, "Just Like Heaven". Thank goodness the band, and I had done it before. Him and the new girl, Mary slow danced as did others to our twangy version of it.

Listening to the cheers, I knew I only had one more in me. I wouldn't say who this one was dedicated to. Hallow would know. Making eye contact with him, I waited for the music. But the band hesitated.

"There's another request," Rome announced and started a different tune. I recognized the first piano bit.

Lordalmighty. This was why I didn't take requests. I turned to see who was asking Dimple now.

Fucking Kingpin was on stage right beside me.

Leaning over, he spoke into the mic in front of me. "Y'all. We've got a special request. Anonymous." He pushed a note into my hand.

The band had already started. Kingpin stepped off stage and sat at the table with Hallow. Looking around, Sky was at a whole different table, but she didn't look like she minded his absence. She was chatting with a slew of women who surrounded her. They must've all wanted to hear about their baby.

I opened the note.

Kingpin's chicken scratch read,

My Angel,

Sing your song to the man you love, me, "Right On Time," Brandi Carlile.

In the low light, I couldn't make out the rest, but it was signed.

- Beau

The fucker even signed it. He knew I could sing that. I'd practiced it in front of him a million times for no reason other than it was good to practice to, slow and full of lows and powerful highs. The biker Prez was forcing me to sing what he wanted to hear as if I meant the words for him.

Motherfucker.

That was just like him. How dare he? I couldn't stomp off stage like I wanted to though. Hallow would want to see what upset me so much. He'd demand to see the note. The devil was in those details. The devil was Kingpin. He always thought of everything.

He forced my hand or rather my voice.

Smiling nervously, Hallow studied me like I was having a bout of stage fright. I tucked the note into my pocket.

I'd sing my heart out, looking at the man I truly loved, Hallow. Then I would join him so he could pop the question again.

If only he would do it now and stop this. Hallow's hand was in his pocket. I gave him one more second before I started the song.

As I listened to the words coming from me, I almost laughed. I was no great lyricist, but clearly Kingpin wanted me to beg him to come back. Even if it exposed me. I should understand I made him angry? He wanted me to apologize? He was seriously conceited. I was the only person that should be angry. Unlike what the song claimed, it was far too late for us. But I made sure to hit the highs all the same. The part that got me was about turning back time. I'd really wanted to with Hallow. I wanted Hallow all along.

Kingpin wanted me to have those feelings for him. I had. As the song dragged on, I reversed it, as if it was a duet. I'd like to say I wasn't affected at all. Touched by the rest of the words, I felt them dig up emotions I thought I'd completely squashed. Singing about losing him hurt me the most. Mostly, I felt like he wanted me to admit that what we did wasn't all wrong. However, by the end I only felt like the song pretty much summed us up. Kingpin was having me sing a sad goodbye to him.

He'd missed the actual goodbye I sang to him before.

When I stepped off the stage I was almost in tears. Hallow stood as everyone clapped, but I had to excuse myself to the ladies' room. In the stall, I read the rest of Kingpin's note.

My Angel,

Sing your song to the man you love, me, "Right On Time," Brandi Carlile.

Although I preferred your song. Come back to me. I'm ready to tell the truth tonight. With or without you.

- Beau

Shit on a brick. Leaving the bathroom as quickly as I could, I had to stop him. I went straight to Hallow. I stood

beside him, waiting. He didn't move.

I gave him a hint. "I know what's in your pocket."

Standing up, Hallow searched his pocket.

"It's on the inside," I said, trying to help him out.

Hallow produced the box. But his face scrunched up full of confusion as he held it out. He opened it.

"It's your ring," he announced like he hadn't known it was there.

Regardless, everyone quieted, thinking he was about to drop to one knee. At a nearby table Ember, who was all smiles, started filming us on her phone. She gave me a thumbs up.

Kingpin shouted out, "Wait." He appeared between us.

No one seemed bothered. Fuck. The club thought he was simply calling attention to what was about to happen.

But fuck a duck, I knew what he planned to do.

"I have something to say. Something that may come as a surprise to everyone," Kingpin announced.

Holy shit.

Nevertheless, no one in the club batted an eye. They didn't expect what was coming. Hallow looked at his President like he was about to praise him. Like he was going to say what a lovely couple we made.

"Yes, Hallow. Yes," I tried to answer his unspoken proposal to stop Kingpin's speech.

Hallow spoke up. "I hadn't been planning to, but of course, I want to marry you again, Eve. This ring just appeared in my pocket. I guess it's the perfect night for it."

As he moved to read the note, the wheels in my head were spinning.

Kingpin opened his mouth.

"You shut it down. You don't say a goddamn word," I barked at him.

Hallow's eyes got wide as he read the note. His head whipped up. Hallow's eyes turned to slits. He looked like he could kill me. "Your baby's Kingpins? It says here, I never raped you. We never had sex at all."

"You did this," I shouted, accusing Kingpin of sticking the ring in Hallow's pocket, of writing another fucking note.

Meeting my eyes, Kingpin shook his head. At the very same moment a sound came from overhead. The TVs flickered on. A surveillance video of Kingpin and I having sex in the basement flashed on every screen. I was on top of him, riding him hard. The sound was there too. My grunts echoed throughout Royal Road. Soon, Kingpin was choking me. I watched in horror for too long before I wrenched my eyes away in shame.

In the midst of this, Hallow punched Kingpin's lights out. His President fought back. A fight broke out, spreading like the wave. Brother against brother until more of the bikers held Hallow off Kingpin. A pain shot through me, a labor pain. I worried for my baby. I looked to see if Sky was coming for me, but gone, she must've bolted. However, I did spot Paisley and Hallow's ex Steph at the bar. They high fived each other when they saw me looking.

Lordalmighty. It'd been Paisley who slipped the ring to Hallow almost a week ago. But I had no idea there had been cameras running downstairs.

Kingpin explained that part when he told his men, "Bring me, Bull." He was our new tech guy, and Donette's ex's brother.

Hallow held back by Opry and Riff, shouted, "Don't blame Bull for your misdeeds."

Kingpin said, "I don't. In fact, I was getting ready to tell everyone that Eve is carrying my baby."

"Bullshit," Hallow shouted.

"Eve, knows it's true." It was the first time anyone looked at me as both of their necks whipped around.

“Yeah, Kingpin was about to let the cat out of the bag.”
Stupid motherfucker.

“Are you okay?” Kingpin asked me, full of concern.

Unable to speak as another pain shot through me, I waved him off.

“It’s time for Church,” Kingpin bellowed.

The bikers were shooing everyone who wasn’t a member out. There’s nothing more than I wanted but to run away from the embarrassment, but I had another pain. I couldn’t move. Lowering myself, I sat on a chair, clutching my belly. Villain came at me fixin to escort me out.

Breathing hard, I held up my hands. I didn’t want him to touch me.

“Can Eve stay?” he asked, looming over me.

Kingpin answered, “Yes. She can tell y’all the truth.”

“She’s nothing but a fucking liar,” Hallow yelled at me. “I knew you were fucking him,” he growled.

Kingpin’s voice came easy. “You didn’t. Never happened until you wouldn’t take her back. Hallow, you’d moved on. Sky and I were on the outs as well. As I see it, Eve and I did nothing wrong. Not at first. But still, you didn’t go back to Eve until I promised to make you an officer. How do I know you didn’t know, Eve’s baby was mine the whole time? Apparently, Paisley knew and you’d been fucking that whore.”

Hallow didn’t deny coming back only after he made a deal.

I had no right to be angry, but it hurt.

“I demand restitution,” Hallow roared. I didn’t know what that meant when it came to the bikers. Some of them stirred.

Kingpin shut it down. “I told you, Hallow, if you left Eve, she belonged to the club. All of you heard me tell Hallow this. That she’d be our whore if he left her.”

Hallow seethed. “I’m serious. Do our rules mean nothing?”

Pagan and Kingpin shared a look. Pagan was Vice President. He nodded to Villain.

Villain took Kingpin by the arm like he was under arrest. He was the Sergeant of Arms, so I started to worry.

Gunn showed up dragging Bull.

Pagan said, “He’ll have to wait.”

Hallow said his peace. “Eve was mine. She wears my brand, and Kingpin took what’s mine.”

“Kingpin does what he wants,” Pagan said. “You’ve got to be crazy to think otherwise. It’s in our Chapter’s rules. This is no democracy. This is a kingdom. We all know that. Our President has the final say in all matters. That’s the way it’s always been.”

The members echoed Pagan’s words all around.

“But I can ask for restitution even from the President. That’s written.”

“Let the detective have his justice served,” Kingpin said to the crowd. Then he spoke to Hallow. “You left Eve unprotected. We all saw that. Brand or not. You discarded her.”

Apparently, they were having some sort of makeshift trial.

“Eve was still protected. No man would touch her because she’s mine. Brothers y’all know that,” Hallow addressed everyone. “She was single for months and not one other man bothered her, except Kingpin, I assume.”

Kingpin countered, “Brothers there’s not a member here that didn’t keep their distance from Eve because she was under my protection. Not Hallow’s. Everyone thought I was fucking her. Ain’t that right boys?”

The members chattered, agreeing.

Horror spoke up which was unusual. Though his road name said otherwise, he was quiet, almost sweet. “Brothers, we all knew Kingpin had something for Eve. Or he would’ve never promised to protect her if Hallow didn’t. He’d have treated her like any other whore ‘round here.”

Opry agreed. “Everyone here thought Eve and Kingpin were fucking from the very moment she got here.”

Pagan chimed in, “I had my doubts at first, on account of Eve, not Prez, but in hindsight, Prez wouldn’t have chosen Hallow over Levi if he didn’t want something. Levi’s on his own mission. He could attest to that if he were here.”

Thorn reminded everyone, “Brothers died because of Levi’s bad choices. Kingpin was simply keeping his monster at bay. He wouldn’t have let him kill the girl, regardless.”

Irish spoke up. He wasn’t an officer. “Kingpin’s been good to Cece. Doesn’t mean he was in love with her. But not a brother here kept away from Eve because she was Hallow’s lass. You bastards said so over and over. You bunch left her alone because you feared our President’s wrath, ya did.”

All the officers agreed but Thorn. “I’m siding with Hallow on this one. We all knew Eve was no whore. She was Hallow’s and Hallow’s alone. Kingpin didn’t just sleep with some loose woman. Eve was fixin’ to be Hallow’s Ol’ Lady. Y’all would be singing a different tune if they’d married.”

“Kingpin has an Ol’ Lady, himself,” Hallow argued.

“If we start punishing a brother for cheating on his Ol’ Lady, we wouldn’t have a club left,” Villain said.

Pagan asked, “You did abandon her. Didn’t you Hallow?”

“She left me at the altar, brothers. You all were there.”

Kingpin spoke. “Eve had her reasons. I spoke to Hallow myself. He wouldn’t have her back. It’s all been recorded in the book. I wasn’t with her until a month later. It’s all in the goddamn book.”

Hallow seemed confused by that.

Villain explained, “You’re new,” speaking of him being a new officer, I supposed, not a new member. “All that happens here is in the books. Unless it’s off the books.”

That was confusing. But Cousin went to Kingpin’s office to get some files.

I wanted to complain that Kingpin wrote anything about us down, but I had recurring pain. I feared I was in labor.

Riff turned to Hallow. “No one asked him, blood or money?”

Hallow said, “Both. Either,” wanting to be compensated for what Kingpin did to me, I imagined.

Riff went on, “You going to want the girl back, too? I don’t think we can do that. She’s carrying Kingpin’s child.”

The whole club erupted in voices. I was tired of them. Someone said they’d need a paternity test, for land sakes.

Hallow spoke to me, “Yeah, who else did you fuck?”

“No one,” I croaked. The pains were regular now. But with everything going on I couldn’t count them.

“You let me think I raped you,” Hallow howled.

“You tried to. You were gonna until I told you about my miscarriage. You were so stinking drunk. Paisley spread the lie, not me.”

“There you go again. You blame everyone but yourself. Nothing’s ever your fault. You’re nothing but a whore. You think Kingpin is going to leave his woman for you?”

Kingpin broke out of Villain’s hold and struck Hallow before the Sergeant of Arms could catch him.

The bikers held Hallow. He couldn’t fight back. “Let him fight me,” he said, his face bleeding.

Kingpin stepped back on his own, back into Villain’s hold. The men muttered, debating letting them fight it out. The winner would get me, someone said.

Hallow replied, "I don't want her. I just want Kingpin gone."

I had to say something. Even though labor pains came one after another. Not only pain, but my vision also blurred. I saw spots. My head pounded, scaring me.

"Everything Kingpin said is true. Yeah, I started it. I left Hallow on our wedding day. I had my reasons. They're personal. Kingpin spoke to him for me. But Hallow wouldn't make amends afterwards. I wouldn't either for a time. Because I was mighty irate that Hallow had even threatened to violate me. But I begged him back even after he'd been fucking every woman in this club. He wouldn't have me. I've put the timing all together in my head, so I know that was all before Kingpin whipped him and told Hallow he raped me. Kingpin had been under the wrong impression too. Nothing happened between Kingpin and I until we were both hurting. It wasn't right. But," I said.

A pain struck. I couldn't say anything else.

Pagan declared, "I think that settles it."

Hallow was surprised. They let go of Kingpin.

Our President said, "Brothers, by a show of hands who wants me to step down because I fucked Eve when Hallow was fucking every one of our whores?"

No one raised their hand. In fact, they hurried to tuck them away.

Kingpin called out Thorn. "What do you think?"

"No. Prez. This is a matter of restitution, is all."

"Agreed. Hallow will get his coin. But if he wants blood, he'll have to take it. Who wants me to kick Hallow's ass?"

All the men raised their hands. They let go of Hallow. The men circled each other.

This was so unnecessary. In pain, I prepared myself to watch two grown men duke it out.

Cousin ran in, hollering, “We’ve been cleaned out. The Vault. There’s nothing in it.”

Everyone froze.

“Are you sure?” Pagan asked, in disbelief.

“I’ve checked all over the office. Shit’s everywhere.”

Chaos ensued as the men leapt into action. The bikers all drew their weapons and dispersed, searching for the enemy.

An unbearable pain hit me. I slipped onto the floor.

“Fuck, Eve’s going to have her baby right here in the god damn floor,” Riff announced.

Over me, Kingpin yelled, “Fetch Mary and Jassica. Call a fucking ambulance.”

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Chapter 27

Sky

On Halloween night, Kingpin told me he made mistakes. And he made me promises. We rekindled our romance. However, I didn't know if I could ever forgive him. And even after a month of marital bliss. I hadn't forgiven him. I'd suffered too much at the hands of his old whore Junebug. Yes. I heard Memphis shot her dead. But still. Her death couldn't erase my misery. And even as twins grew in me, I knew, I was dead inside. Slowly, my gratitude for my life being spared turned sour. The high of surviving wore off. I lost all flavor for life.

Kingpin and I put on a good show for everybody. But behind closed doors things were tense. He walked on pins and needles because any minute I could explode in anger. A nuclear melt down, was what I heard him call it one day. He couldn't do enough to make me happy. He tried, but it was never good enough. He couldn't go back in time.

I blamed him. Because if it hadn't been for his double standard, I would be whole. If he'd never left me when he found out my lie, I would've never been hurt. I'd forgiven his lies. And he'd argue he was already coming back to me, but it was too little too late. That didn't change what happened either. I was broken. Not just my physical body, my emotional state. As it was, I was jumpy. I was scared. I had nightmares. Nightmares I was being dragged across an old hardwood floor and cut into a million pieces. Not only was it a nightmare, it was also a memory. Trying to wake, I'd only be able to open one eye.

Needless to say, I became an insomniac. I kept my husband up all night fighting. And I wouldn't let him sleep in the day either. Why should he if I could not? Kingpin tried, but I began to resent him more and more as he tried to placate me. Because I was breaking him. My pain had conquered the outlaw biker when I needed him to be strong. I needed him to

tell me to suck it up and go on, but he did not. The bad ass biker Prez had become putty in my injured hands.

And I hated it.

We stopped having sex completely. Because all I could think about was his mistakes. Because while he was out fucking someone, Junebug had been plotting to kill me. And even though I survived, I wished for death on a daily basis.

Soon, Kingpin found every excuse to stay away from me.

“The twins don’t even make you happy,” he said one day.

And he was right. The biker was convinced the babies were his because they were twins cause him and his brother were. It was like he had forgotten all about the possibility that the children may not even be his. I hadn’t forgotten. Although, he claimed it didn’t matter, with the way we split up before, I no longer believed a word from his lips.

My husband started sleeping in the other room, his music room, all so he could actually sleep. He’d lock himself in. When I found out, I tried to break down the door. Kingpin tried to come back to our bed after that, but I wouldn’t have it.

One night he forced his way in.

“Sky, this ends now,” he said one night in December. “I’m sleeping in my own bed with my Ol’ Lady.”

“I won’t sleep. I’ll keep you up again.”

I wanted him to tell me to get over it, but he said, “So be it.”

When he did find a bit of himself, I hated that too.

Kingpin crawled into our bed and snuggled close, muttering, “You need to get over this. Put it behind you.”

Him telling me to suck it up didn’t feel as good as I thought it would. It pissed me off. Like getting over this was supposed to be easy.

He went on, “We have so much to look forward to. You’ll get there.”

I didn’t agree. We fought. Mostly about whatever mistake he made while we were apart. The women he fucked during that brief time. Eventually I got it out of him it was only one woman. That fact made it so much worse.

“I’ve kept my word,” Kingpin promised he hadn’t made any more mistakes.

When he fell asleep, I paced. The fact he could rest while I couldn’t drove me crazy, literally. Taking his knife, I stabbed him. Not in the chest or anything. His arm. Screaming he woke up alright.

I felt bad and good.

He had to go get stitches and complained. It’d only been one goddamn wound when I had a hundred slices carved into me because of him.

After that, Kingpin never came to bed again. He was there for me in every other way, but when he came home to the Big House, he slept in the music room.

At least I had a relationship with my mother again. She had grown close to my husband’s twin, Bubba who used Kingpin’s real name Beau Strick as a stage name to become rich. My mother had the life that I longed for, a carefree time of her life with a celebrity. Most importantly, she’d not almost been killed by a psychotic whore. Her smile was genuine. I saw her often at Bubba’s Brentwood Estate.

Anything to get away from Royal Road. I made all the appearances I was supposed to make as Kingpin’s Ol’ Lady. But on my end, it was all a show. Even at our Christmas party, Kingpin wore the ridiculous ugly sweaters for the contest with me. He submitted to all my whims. I’d sit on his lap in his throne, but it was all lies.

“You won’t humiliate me again,” he’d say, if I refused to act like we were okay. Reminding me of all my previous sins.

I knew he'd never let me forget Ralph Getty showed him a video of us having sex. That he'd not only learned of my betrayal, but he also got to witness it in glorious 4K. Kingpin no longer held back all his venom on account of my pitiful state. Sometimes it would slip. I pushed him as far as I could. Any cruel word from him was my reward. Fuel for my self-loathing.

I didn't think things could get worse.

It was almost New Year's. Cece's old nurse, Jassica was back. Her and Pagan were quickly engaged. I knew this, but I didn't know she would show up to take me to my checkup. Kingpin claimed to have an important matter to attend to. He'd never missed an appointment before. Subsequently, I felt it had to be dire. I enjoyed my visit with Jassica. In Kingpin's absence, there was no pity. No guilt. Jassica was caring but indifferent. She seemed preoccupied if anything.

Later, I went to the bar to see Leo, as I often did. I couldn't have her coming over to the Big House and see it trashed from our fights. I liked to break things. Kingpin wouldn't immediately pick them up. And I couldn't go to Opry's place where she was staying because I didn't like to see them so happy. It served as a reminder of how unhappy Kingpin and I secretly were. Anyway, at Royal Road I had to keep up appearances. Afterall, I wasn't allowed to feel sad there and embarrass my Ol' Man, the biker President. Therefore, a weight lifted while I was at the clubhouse. Just pretending to be okay helped me feel better.

That was until Kingpin walked in with another pregnant woman on his arm. Fucking Eve of all people. My greatest fear had been confirmed. I knew instantly who Kingpin's mistake was. The girl tried to convince us otherwise with her little speech. She said she was getting back with Hallow, but I knew in the pit of my being, her child belonged to Kingpin.

Why else would she run away?

I never told Kingpin what I suspected. I acted like I believed her. But in a matter of days, I lost it. Completely. January became a blur of breakdowns. Even as Kingpin spent every waking moment with me. Even as all the gossip was that Hallow and Eve were back together and the baby was his, I never believed that. One day at the bar when I was acting okay, I got confirmation.

Paisley took me aside. “Don’t have a cow,” she started.

I braced myself.

“Hallow never raped Eve,” she admitted and told me the story. “I spread that rumor. For some reason, he believes he did. He was pretty trashed.”

“But are you certain they didn’t have sex at all? That there’s no other time. Surely there was.”

“Hallow was with everyone but Eve. And he was with me too. He told me that they hadn’t been having sex before the wedding either. There’s no way her baby is Hallow’s.”

“Whose is it?” I asked, playing dumb.

Paisley crossed her arms. Her eyebrows raised and her lips flattened. She didn’t want to tell me her suspicions. She wanted me to understand them though.

I wouldn’t give her any power. “If you know you should tell Hallow, not me. It’s none of my business who Eve’s baby is.”

“I don’t have any hard proof,” she said.

“Does that matter?”

Paisley had an idea. She produced Eve’s wedding rings.

“How did you get those?”

“It doesn’t matter, but I figure I can use them in my plan. I’ll let Hallow know as Eve, and she’ll have to admit it. She’ll say who.”

Later that night I saw Paisley slip a box into Hallow’s jacket. I fantasized about leaving the babies with Kingpin.

About running away. Far away, maybe back to California. Starting over. I was young enough. But I knew I couldn't. Deep down, I wanted everything between Kingpin and I to go back to normal. I'd been waiting for the babies like they would fix everything.

When my water broke, I felt like I was freed from a prison. As planned, I had a C-section. Labor was still excruciating, somehow more so than what I suffered before. But it was thwarted quickly through an epidural. There was no pain involved in the birth part. Nothing to bring back the horrible memories. I stared at the ceiling for too long.

Awake for it all, I felt nothing but pressure. All the gory bits were hidden from my view, thankfully. I should've known something was wrong when Kingpin left the operating room before I did. He said his goodbye, giving me a kiss on the forehead but no explanation. I'd not even seen the twins. I was in there for another hour. The anesthesiologist who stood by the whole time, clarified, telling me my uterus had ripped when they'd cut into it. They were repairing the tear.

But when I was finally in a room no one handed me babies, either.

Something was wrong. Dead wrong.

Kingpin talked to the surgeon.

"We've given her something to calm her down," a nurse said from beside me.

That's when I was told, we lost one of the twins, a girl. She was still born. And the boy was in the NICU. They were going to transfer me to a different floor. I wasn't allowed to be on the same floor with the successful mothers. I didn't even get to hold the baby that lived.

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Chapter 28

Sky

Kingpin went to see our boy first. My time would come. I was told I was recovering from more than giving birth. Having lost too much blood, my heartrate was through the roof. And they couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. The nurse came in my room while Kingpin was gone. I thought they needed more blood or another test. I was tired of everyone bothering me.

I held out my arm, but she sat beside me and said, "I have a message from Ralph."

"Ralph?" I asked before it dawned on me.

"Mr. Getty," she repeated herself.

I tried to sit up.

She stopped me. An actual nurse, Brenda, introduced herself. She claimed she didn't want me to hurt myself, but she worked for the Music City Syndicate, all the same. Which meant she was a relative of theirs. She worked for the mob. For the man, I promised to get information on Kingpin for. That was before I fell for the biker.

"Your baby ain't yours," she announced cryptically.

"What?"

"Family is all. Make good on your promise to Ralph or you'll lose another child."

"He's threatening to kill our baby?"

She placed her hand over my mouth and whispered, "No. He's the father. He'll take him by right."

Brenda didn't remove her hand right away then she suddenly covered my nose. I found myself too weak to fight. Instead, I tried to process her words as she cut off my air.

When she released me. I gulped. "He's not," I said, determined. "There's been no test."

Kingpin swore he didn't want one. Had he gone behind my back?

"There has been," she said. She explained the mob had her do a paternity test. "There's nothing wrong with your baby so calm down."

As I understood it, Kingpin didn't know Ralph was the father. It took some more explaining, but I soon realized the threat. The Getty's would claim the boy if I didn't make good on giving Ralph what he'd asked me for when he first found out I'd gotten close to Kingpin.

Brenda gave me a list. The MCS wanted intel, books, codes, numbers, the list went on.

"There's no way. I can't get all this. Not right away."

"Get something. And your baby can go home."

Later that night Brenda wheeled me to the NICU to hold my baby. Only five pounds, he was so small, their official excuse for keeping him there. Otherwise, he was as healthy as could be. Thinking I could overcome the threats, I complained that the baby shouldn't be there. I wanted to be the one to take care of him. But Brenda claimed I'd not been cleared to do so.

Kingpin appreciated the abundance of caution. Watching him with the baby, I regretted my conversation with Paisley. Would it just be better if no one knew about Eve's baby? I didn't think so until I found out this child wasn't his. I didn't want him to know this child was Ralph's. What if he found out? He has a baby coming that is his. Would he leave me?

And I certainly didn't want the mob to take my baby.

The next day my mother came and insisted we name the baby Beau, after Kingpin. Bubba would never have a child, so it didn't matter to him.

"I don't care if it does matter," Kingpin rebutted. But he decided we'd spell it differently.

Telling Brenda I would take the deal, I was released without my baby. Back at Royal Road, I had to find something

to give to Ralph. It didn't matter if I needed to recover myself. I wanted my baby home. I knew Kingpin's codes. While he slept peacefully in the music room, I went to Royal Road. Thankfully, at three am, Paisley was the only one in the bar. That wasn't always the case.

"Where's everyone?" I asked her.

"Pagan canceled the late-night parties, out of respect." She spoke of the baby we lost. "How are you holding up?"

"I'm looking for evidence," I said, as I went into Kingpin's office.

The whore wouldn't tell.

Thankfully, the code I remembered from when Kingpin and I were happy was the same. And even better, it was the same for the door and the vault in the wall. My task had been too easy. Inside lay a jackpot, a treasure trove of things to offer Ralph so he wouldn't take the child. Bags of cash, documents, weapons, and strange, tagged items.

But what would Kingpin do when he discovered it missing, and he learned I was in here? Paisley knew. Once it became clear I cleaned it out, Kingpin would hate me. The whole reason I was doing this was, so he never found out my baby wasn't his.

The answer was right under my nose. I spotted her name. Eve, written in black Sharpie on masking tape on a USB drive. What the hell? I picked it up. Taking it to Kingpin's computer, I tried the same passcode. It didn't work. I couldn't figure out what was on that disk. Having an idea, I took it to Paisley.

"Look what I found."

Paisley smiled her crazy grin. "What's on it?"

"I'm sure it's evidence. Maybe who the real father is. But I don't want anyone to know I'm involved." I handed it to her. "Don't tell anyone you got this from me."

"Good. Hallow's still not found my note. Maybe Eve found it and got rid of it. What do you want me to do?"

Fuck. But I was too far gone. “That’s completely up to you.”

With all I had going on, I still wanted my revenge on Eve. I didn’t want her to be happy with Hallow. Even if it exposed the truth. After all, Kingpin would already know her baby was his. He’d been lying all this time. As much as I was mad, I wanted him exposed. I wanted him to be the bad guy instead of me. Craving more of his pity, I wanted him however I could have him. I didn’t want to lose him.

I thought of Hallow’s ex. “Steph might be interested too.”

Paisley slapped the bar. I could tell she was forming an evil plan.

“Shit. I hope I shut the vault right,” I said as I was leaving Paisley.

The gossip would remember that fact when the Royal Bastards MC discovered they’d been cleared out. Her big mouth would be my alibi. My story would be, I was only getting the USB drive. I must’ve not closed the door properly. I could blame the mob for stealing what I planned to give them.

Later that night, when Paisley was long gone and the clubhouse was dark, I shuffled through everything in a hurry looking for something to give the Getty’s so my baby could come home. I hid what I could, mostly the money. I took it little by little to the Big House. I wouldn’t want the club to be broke. I hid important documents like deeds and titles for the same reason. I stuffed them under Kingpin’s couch cushions in his office. Taking all their books to my room in the Big House, I put them under the bed. Kingpin didn’t come in there anymore. He’d moved almost everything of his to his music room. He’d never know. The nursery was set up across the hall. He’d have no reason to come in my bedroom. I picked one of the binders and opened it, seeing nothing but numbers. Not knowing what they meant, I packed it in my diaper bag.

The next morning, I called Brenda and offered an exchange. Kingpin and I planned to visit Bo regardless. As

Kingpin cuddled the infant, Brenda and I went down the hall. She made the excuse of wanting to check my sutures, but she actually made it clear that allowing the baby to come home with us was an act of good faith. I'd have to feed her more or Ralph would expose me. The Getty's would take his baby.

Kingpin felt burdened by the sorrow of our loss, the girl, but I didn't feel the same. I was overwhelmed with what remained. Probably because I'd been on the verge of losing him too. Our baby got to come home, and I was thrilled. Kingpin suggested a big party and I agreed. My happiness was no longer an act. Our Bo was home. We were proud parents. Clouds parted, and I could finally see sunshine on the other side.

I didn't give a fuck if my baby wasn't Kingpin's. I would never let him know. And he had promised all this time that he didn't care. I finally comprehended just how much the biker loved me all this time. Longing for a do over, I knocked the chip off my shoulder, quick.

I let Leo come over to the Big House and help clean the place up. I told her how horrible I'd been acting toward my husband. I needed someone to keep me accountable going forward.

"Sweetheart. Kingpin needs a Queen, not a wilting flower," Leo said. She always had the best advice.

I decided to find my strength. Remembering the woman I was when we met, I promised to be her again. I believed I was on my way. At least, I could be ultimately. In the meantime, I would go through the motions. Kingpin and I were getting along for a whole week. Though we kept our separate rooms. As soon as I could be intimate again, I wanted that to change. I'd have to move all the shit I'd stored under the bed, but I planned to win the biker back in the bedroom. I just hoped it wasn't too late.

So, when the shit hit the fan on Valentine's Eve, I wasn't completely surprised. I'd known Eve was Kingpin's mistake. I'd felt that her child was his deep in my bones. I'd been right, I discovered when Hallow read Paisley's note

thinking it was from Eve. It looked like he was going to propose.

Fuck. Paisley was wicked. The horror on Eve's face was enough. I relished it. It satisfied me.

However, seeing it all with my own eyes, I felt the betrayal severely. I discovered how Kingpin felt when he saw me with Ralph. Our TVs were 4K as well, but this surveillance video was grainy. The noises coming from Eve reverberated through the casino.

I even felt a jolt of joy when Hallow's fist hit my husband's face. He deserved it. And so much more. But I couldn't watch. If I saw blood, I would faint. I left as the bar erupted into a huge fight. Jassica had been watching the baby. Without a word about what had happened, I took over. Acting like everything was alright, I didn't know what was going on at the clubhouse after that. I simply expected Kingpin to come home eventually and try to apologize.

I planned to ask him to make a choice between Eve and me. I wouldn't want their baby here at Royal Road. If he agreed to give up her baby, his mistake, I would stay.

Later that night, Leo called to check on me. She told me Eve went into labor and Kingpin left with her in an ambulance.

Shit.

"And it's more than that. Hallow's demanding something be done to Kingpin."

"He's President. What can happen?"

"Nothing. But that's not it. Someone broke into the vault. Kingpin's gone, so Pagan is interrogating everyone. Paisley told him you were in there."

"I was. Who do you think found that video?"

"So, you've known about Eve's baby? Why didn't you tell me?"

"Leo, it's fucking embarrassing."

“Opry came home saying you cleaned out the vault. That Ralph Getty put you up to it. He says you took the money and files from the office.”

“Why are they talking to him?”

“Is it true?” Leo squeaked.

“How do they know?”

“Ralph called them, and Sky they have cameras.”

Ralph called them? He planned to screw me over all along. “There are no cameras in Kingpin’s office.” I knew that for a fact. No cameras in the throne room either. I’d used it for passage.

“No, but there are in the club. They point to the door to the office. They’ve seen you going in and out with armfuls of shit. I didn’t believe it myself until Opry showed me.”

Fucking hell. In my haste I hadn’t thought it all through. I just wanted to save my baby. “Leo. I was blackmailed.”

“Well, that’s not all. Pagan said Ralph says your baby is his. Is that true, too?”

What was worse than hell? This was it. Kingpin would know. “The mob says so. But I’m not sure. I didn’t see the test myself.”

“What the hell, Sky?”

“What’s going to happen?” On edge, I was afraid the bikers would come and drag me to the barn.

“They’ve let Kingpin know. They’ll let him deal with you.”

“Thanks for the warning.”

When Kingpin came home, I braced myself for a fight. Listening to him climb the stairs, I laid Bo in the crib. I sat in the rocking chair beside it, waiting. I planned to tell him the whole truth and go from there. The club didn’t know it, but I’d been smart. I’d only given away one book of basically crap. I had the rest safely hidden here and in Kingpin’s office. And I

had no idea if Brenda had been telling the truth. I didn't see the test. I never should've trusted the mob in the first place.

Anyway, Kingpin had sworn it didn't matter. He loved me. Armed with this knowledge, I felt everything would turn out for the best.

Too bad, it wasn't Kingpin who entered the room.

Holy shit.

"What are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here."

"Kingpin thinks he can take what's mine. I'll show him."

He reached in the crib and picked up the baby.

My baby was being kidnapped.

I screamed, "Don't touch my baby. Put him down."

The man slapped my mouth, shutting me up. "Don't worry. You're coming too. If you leave quietly, I won't hurt you."

That's when I saw his bloody face. My eyes rolled back. I felt myself falling before all went black.

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Chapter 29

Kingpin

As Eve sang the song I requested, I watched her lips tremble. She was taking in my meaning. Therefore, when she stood in front of Hallow, and I realized the bastard was about to propose, I knew I had to stop him and tell everyone the truth. I couldn't let her go through with living a lie. I was so tired of living one myself.

At first, I felt it was what was best for Sky with what happened to her. But soon, it became clear as much as I wanted to love Sky completely again, my heart had moved on. At first it was split. But I realized I wasn't what Sky needed or wanted. My guilt was the only thing keeping me with her.

Not only that, my whole being, every part of me, belonged to another.

After everything she said to me the other week, I didn't know if Eve would have me. I'd confess all the same. I never expected the words to come from Hallow's lips. Eve hadn't written them. I suspected Sky. My ol' lady had come to hate me. She had every right to. And just as Eve fought her own morals, deciding to lie to Hallow all so Sky wouldn't hurt, I knew Sky would want to inflict great pain onto Eve if she found out. The video that played next wasn't a surprise. Nor was the fallout as the fighting commenced.

What was surprising was that Hallow thought he could take me down by invoking our chapter's rules. The boy didn't realize who he was dealing with or how loyal my bikers were. Pagan gave me a look. We'd play along, see what Hallow claimed. What he wanted. Put on a show. I was never worried.

And I wanted to bust his face in when he started attacking Eve. I got in one more blow before Villain held me back. But then, my brothers thirsted for a fight like I did. Hallow and I rounded each other, ready to come to blows again.

I never thought Eve was going into labor until she heaved onto the floor.

Our two nurses, Mary and Jassica came at my command.

I sank down beside Eve.

Clutching my offered hand, she said, “Fuck you. Why did you do this to me?”

All the sudden, it didn’t take two to tango anymore. Eve cursed me out in between contractions. She called me every name in the book in an even thicker southern drawl. Hell, I didn’t know some of the words coming out of her mouth. There was no moving her as we waited for the ambulance. Bearing down, Eve was pushing.

“She’s going to have this baby, right here,” Jassica told me.

Royal Bastards circled us.

Mary went to pull down her drawers. She reached up the red dress Eve wore.

“Everyone leave,” I shouted, clearing the room.

They no sooner got her in the position than a head was crowning. I’d not seen the bloody act before. Sky had her babies by surgery, and I hadn’t known Felicia’s kid was mine. Eve had no painkillers. She screamed bloody murder with each push. Mary coached her along. Jassica waited to catch the baby like this were a game of football. We weren’t really helping. Eve was doing all the hard work.

Mary went to help Jassica, and I thought I was going to be a father again any second.

I kissed Eve’s forehead. “You’ve got this,” I promised her.

“No. I can’t do it anymore,” she hollered.

Mary came and whispered to me, “She needs to push. The cord’s wrapped around the baby’s neck.”

Even I knew how bad that sounded. We all understood we shouldn't say anything out loud. Eve shouldn't know. I wanted to shout for the ambulance. Ask where the fuck it was, but I recognized that wouldn't make it come any faster.

"Eve, you need to push."

She shook her head. "I can't. It hurts too much."

I couldn't imagine the pain, but one look at Eve and you could see she was pale, weak. I decided to piss her off. That had been the only way to get her over her nerves before.

"I guess you're mine now since Hallow left."

"I ain't," she wheezed.

"You heard the meeting. I won you. Fair and square."

"You did not. Y'all didn't even fight," she got louder.

"Hallow left the room first. I call that a forfeit. That boy ran away like he always does. I told you so many times he'd run." I was thinking of anything I could do to get a rise out of her, make her push. But I'd seen Hallow leave the clubhouse. I knew that'd be the last time we ever saw him.

"I ain't some prize," Eve said, with a bit more spunk.

"But this baby is mine. You can't escape me."

"I'm leaving too," Eve heaved, finally pushing.

"No. No you're not. You belong to the club. I told you when he left, you'd be mine. Here we are."

Eve was really bearing down now.

Smiling at me, Jassica gave me a thumbs up. She said, "Eve, one more push, please."

I knew she had it in her. "You're going to be my ol' lady," I said, knowing that'd really get her upset.

"Like hell, I will. I'm leaving this place," she said, full of fire. But she was straining too. She was going to have our baby any moment. "You were going to tell everyone. Now everyone knows. Sky knows."

"None of that matters. You're mine."

“You’re just going to end up leaving me like Hallow has.”

“Angel, wild horses couldn’t drag me away.”

Our baby skidded into Jassica’s hands. All hunched over, covered in goo and looking like an alien, he didn’t cry. I noted the absence. Jassica explained he was early. Mary went to cleaning him a bit. Somehow the girl had everything ready to cut the cord. She tried to hand the scissors to me. I passed because my hands were shaking. Jassica stopped her all together, telling her it was better to wait a minute. I took a quick turn holding our baby before I laid him on Eve’s chest. He was beautiful, but he was too small. That’s when I noticed Eve was out cold. I took the baby back as Jassica checked her pulse. Holding my breath, I waited. She had one. Mary cut the cord.

The paramedics finally rushed in. They got Eve on a stretcher, and I followed them out to the ambulance, bringing the bundle, our baby. During the ambulance ride Eve started convulsing. Holding our baby on the bumpy ride, I felt helpless. But once we hit a big enough pothole, he did cry softly, a sign of life.

The EMTs shouted out questions I didn’t know answers to. How far along was she? I did the math in my head. Around thirty-four weeks, I answered, knowing that’s how they counted it. They asked about her doctor and medical conditions. I just didn’t know. I understood Eve said something about her doctor keeping an eye on her blood pressure and her sugar. That they were letting her carry the baby as long as she could.

They said something about resuscitation, scaring me to death.

At the hospital things got worse. At a breakneck speed medics swept Eve away. They took our baby from my arms to check him out too. I was left alone to worry.

I made the same bargains with God I had before, finding Sky in the cabin. I’d give anything if Eve would make it. “I promise this time. Give me one more chance.” But I

knew Eve had been something I'd promised to give up before, so Sky would live. She was being taken from me now. I deserved it, but she did not.

My phone rang off the hook, and my texts blew up as everyone wanted to hear about Eve and the baby. I had no news. I only took Pagan's call. I found out who cleaned out the safe. Sky. Pagan explained that she'd been blackmailed by Ralph to give the Mob intel on me. He didn't have to tell me how it came about. I knew about the original proposition. He then told me, Sky's twins weren't mine. Just a coincidence. The babies belonged to Ralph Getty all along. Of course. Otherwise, Sky would have no reason to give them a thing.

“What do they have on us?”

“Not much from what I can tell. Enough to land us all in jail, almost certainly. But the rest of it's been scattered around Royal Road from what I can tell. We're going to have to question her.”

I told Pagan to leave Sky be for now. She just gave birth, after all. I couldn't think about it as I worried for Eve.

Eventually, a doctor found me. He told me about the baby first. Just like Sky's baby, he was in the NICU, but moderately preterm. He had a low birth weight. The doctor threw out words I recognized like IV, feeding tube, respiratory support, but I couldn't wrap my head around it all. He took me to see the baby, explaining he wouldn't need any of it for long. A nurse said, our baby was over four pounds, like that was a good thing. In a clear box, the boy was clean, covered with stickers and tubes that connected him to machines. Bo had not had all this. Regardless, they thought he'd be okay.

I should've known when they asked me to sit down, worse news was on the way. Sitting beside the baby's box, they explained to me that Eve had something called eclampsia. She wasn't okay. Firstly, they were trying to control her seizures. If they couldn't, they'd put her into a medically controlled coma to keep her from going into a real coma or dying.

I didn't take the news well. “How did this happen?”

They explained again, her preeclampsia resulted in new convulsions so turned into eclampsia. The other risks were coma and death. They had to repeat it three times for me and I still didn't understand how she could die from being pregnant. Apparently, Eve knew the risks the whole time. She had mentioned it. I felt like a fool for playing around and not doing what I wanted in the beginning and talking to her doctor myself. I couldn't even see her. She was in the ICU. I had to wait.

Later in the evening I got word that Hallow had left Royal Road. I figured he would. But I never thought Sky would leave too. Gunn saw them leave out together. He tried to stop them. Pagan figured they skipped town together. They also took the baby. I reckoned Sky didn't want the mob to get him.

"Send a crew after them," I said. I couldn't go. Eve needed me.

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Chapter 30

Eve

Weeks Later

I eventually woke up and was fine. That's what I thought anyhow.

Kingpin broke the news carefully. I'd been in a coma for a whole week. I'd not noticed. I lived a whole life in my head during that time. My confusion faded quick. Or maybe it'd taken a while. Baffled by it all, I wasn't sure of anything.

All I knew for certain was a beautiful baby boy was brought to me and placed in my weak arms. He looked nothing like the baby I dreamed of who was suspiciously covered in tattoos, piercings and had a tiny beard. I said as much.

"Sounds frightening. Maybe they weren't dreams but nightmares," Kingpin remarked, not really talking to me.

This baby, my real baby, was precious as a peach. No tats or beard. No black little painted nails.

Kingpin explained he'd come early. I remembered that much. I had him right on the floor of Royal Road. I worried for a minute about the cleanliness of the event until they reminded me it hadn't just happened. Not only did my baby look clean as a whistle, but he also smelled fresh like baby lotion and powder.

Fortunately, the nurse took over enlightening me. I learned our baby spent time in the neonatal unit growing until he thrived on his own. As I counted fingers and toes, she listed out more details. I'd recovered, but I hadn't wanted to come out of the slumber.

I took offense to that. "I'm sure I wanted to."

Regardless, I wouldn't wake up, she explained. Even though I understood what she was talking about, I was overwhelmed with emotions. Feeling like I was on my period times one hundred, I cried at the drop of a pin. Though, I

wasn't exactly sad. I was so happy that the feeling had circled back on itself, overlapping sorrow.

Come time to find out, they put me in a coma so I could recover from the preeclampsia. At least, hoping I would since I'd already given birth. Therefore, it'd essentially been three weeks. I spent one week under and two weeks coming out of it, she revealed. I didn't remember all the horrible things she described, like me fighting a breathing tube coming out of my throat. But what she described sounded more like a nightmare than anything I'd dreamed.

I felt grateful, I couldn't recall a thing about it.

Kingpin agreed, I was lucky in that respect.

The nurse expounded, our baby was smaller, but he'd catch up. He also had a little heart murmur, that was no never mind. Kingpin remarked that it ran in his family.

I sighed at the reminder the baby was his.

The nurse went on, and said, soon I'd be able to breastfeed like I intended to. She said that'd help him put on weight. They were simply waiting for medicines to be flushed out of my system before I could attempt to.

"You think she'll remember any of this tomorrow?" The nurse asked Kingpin like I wasn't even there.

Apparently, we'd had this conversation before.

"She's stubborn," Kingpin told the nurse, petting my head like a dog.

I spoke to the baby who I couldn't take my eyes off. "If I realized I'd be staring at the most beautiful boy in the world, maybe I would've woken up earlier." The baby talk had already started.

"He looks just like his daddy." Kingpin rocked on his heels. As always, he couldn't miss a moment to praise himself.

The nurse gave me an exasperated look as she left the room.

I must've made a face back because Kingpin gazed over his shoulder.

"Poor woman has been dealing with you," I said, as explanation, when his scrutiny met me.

He sank down in the chair beside my bed. "Ought to be glad I'm here. They would've just let you sleep. Look at him. He's so precious, the nurses wanted him all to themselves. They've only gotten you up to get rid of me." He winked.

"You're insufferable."

I remembered the birth like it was just yesterday. Valentine's Eve. That crazy night was fresh in my mind. All the shame and heartache came back to me, reddening my face. But in reality, that night was long gone. All that remained was Kingpin and this baby in my arms.

"You've been here the whole time." It wasn't a question.

"Mostly, when they let me. I ain't your husband. I had to convince them I was the father. Someone had to be in charge. I took a test since you had someone else listed as the father. But don't go thinking I didn't already realize this little guy was mine. He has my brother's dimples."

"I assume you have them too, under that beard."

"Maybe," Kingpin said, acting coy.

I didn't need to ask if Hallow was around. Obviously, he wasn't. Besides, that ship had sailed. My focus was the baby in my arms.

"You didn't name him without me?" I asked Kingpin who was just as busy studying him.

"No," he said, his eyes on the baby. "Though I've decided."

"You've decided?"

"I'm the father," he said as an excuse, finally meeting my eyes. I realized the baby did have his dark eyes, though the tuft of hair was white as mine was as a child.

“I carried him,” I argued. “We’re not married.”

“We can change that,” Kingpin said casually. But the expression on his face said it all. He regarded me with an intensity I could feel down in my toes. He was dead serious.

And what was stopping us? “You are married,” I said, like it was out of the question.

“Not for much longer.” Kingpin proceeded to tell me about everything that happened while I was out. Evidently, Hallow left the clubhouse right away, but he didn’t leave the property. Not without Sky. While Kingpin was here at the hospital with me, Hallow kidnapped Sky and her baby.

I could scarcely believe it.

“We thought they simply ran off. I sent a crew after them, but they were long gone. Left Tennessee. I told Maddie Mae, her mother, about it. Wasn’t a week later, when you first recovered, that Maddie contacted me and told me she heard from her daughter. Sky wanted to talk to me. I spoke to her over the phone. She said Hallow took her and her baby by force, but she swore she was fine. Sky explained everything that happened. She swore she was happy to be out of the Mob’s grip. She wouldn’t come back. I’d asked her to for Maddie’s sake, not for mine. I talked to Hallow, too, and afterwards, arranged some new identities for them.”

Like he had Hob. “They’re together?” I meant in love.

Kingpin took my meaning. “By all accounts, yes.”

“That was quick,” I remarked.

Kingpin shrugged. “Maddie knows more about it than I do. She seems convinced they’re telling the truth. Believe me, we considered the possibility. If Hallow forced her to leave, he could be making her lie.”

“Do you know where they are?” I asked.

“I do,” he said. “Won’t tell you here. The walls have ears.”

“What about little, Bo?” They had his baby. I didn’t understand how Kingpin could be okay with that.

“They’ll change his name too,” he said.

Kingpin told me about Brenda, the nurse that was working for the Getty’s when Sky gave birth. She’d gotten a paternity test on Sky’s baby without them knowing in this very hospital. Sky was the one who broke into the vault. She gave away a folder to the Music City Syndicate all so they wouldn’t reveal that her baby wasn’t Kingpin’s. Bo was Ralph Getty’s child, not his. Everything he said before was making more sense now. Sky also gave Paisley the video of me and him in the basement. The sex tape, he called it, with a chuckle.

I didn’t think it was at all funny. All the embarrassment rushed back. “What about that video? How? I didn’t know there were cameras down there? Did you know?” I bit his head off as quietly as I could, so as not to bother the baby.

“No. I didn’t know. I mean, I knew, but I’d had them turned off after Sadist died. New techie prospect turned them on thinking he was fixing something that was broken. I was unaware until he bragged about it. Don’t worry. No one was monitoring them. When I learned about it, I combed through the footage stored and found it. I deleted it but not before I saved it for myself.”

“You mean to tell me this was your fault? Of course, it was,” I quipped.

“I could’ve gotten rid of it, yes. But the drive was password protected and in the vault. Sky found it and gave it to Paisley. Paisley got it to Steph.”

The mention of Hallow’s ex made my blood boil for a moment until I remembered Hallow was gone for good.

“Steph convinced Bull to hack into it. He’s good. Bull swears he had no idea what he was breaking into though. I’d just made him a member. He’s been demoted. He’s a prospect again.”

“Paisley and Steph played it for everyone,” I said what we both knew.

“Paisley planted your rings in Hallow’s jacket with the note in it, but he’d not found it. She got impatient.”

“That fucking bitch,” I whispered since I had a baby in my arms. “Why the hell did she want to ruin my life?”

“She said you called her a whore.”

“I did. Everyone calls her a whore.”

“Not to her face,” Kingpin said, as if that explained anything.

“I hope you take care of her,” I said, wanting Kingpin to get rid of her. Not kill her. I opened my mouth to clarify, but he was speaking.

“I took care of Brenda. She’s fired at least. Not before showing me the paternity test.”

I guess he had to be sure. “The test that said Sky’s baby wasn’t yours?”

“Yep. Part of me thought maybe the Getty’s were lying about that, but why would they care to bother Sky if the baby wasn’t Ralph’s?”

“I’m really sorry,” I said. I truly was.

Biting his lip, Kingpin wobbled his head. “I always knew it was a possibility. Well, that’s a lie. After the doctor told us Sky was having twins, I lied to myself. I thought twins meant they were certainly mine.”

I knew Kingpin really thought Sky’s babies were his and mourned the twin who died in childbirth. Just the thought of a baby dying made me feel like I was being stabbed.

Kingpin admitted, “I also lied to Sky. I told her it wouldn’t matter if her babies weren’t mine. She knew it did. And it did hurt me. But that’s not why I ain’t with her.”

“You’re not with Sky because Hallow took her.”

“You know that’s bullshit. You know I planned to destroy everything between her and I even when I thought she had my baby. I intended to tell the truth about us.”

“Then why?” I wanted him to say it. “Why ain’t you with her?”

“I ain’t meant to be with her.”

I’ve never rolled my eyes harder. But I didn’t say anything to him. I talked to the baby. “Your daddy once said it was foolish to think you’re meant for anyone.”

Kingpin laughed. “I say a lot of things that ain’t true.”

“You mean to say you lie a lot.”

“I’m done with that. Where it counts, anyhow.”

“I’m supposed to believe you now?”

“Sky agreed to give me a divorce before her name changes. That’s why I know where they are. I had to know where to send the papers. After she signs, they’ll move on quick so no one can track them.”

I put it all together quickly. “So, she’s fixin to marry Hallow? Is that what you’re telling me?”

“I reckon. Their new names share a last name per their request.”

Shocked myself, I focused on him. “How do you feel about that?”

“I don’t much care. I care for Sky but not like I should. I’ve agreed to pay Hallow off. He’ll take care of her and her baby.”

“You’re giving Hallow money for me? The restitution he asked for?”

“Not really like that. And not by choice. If I had my way, he wouldn’t have gotten out alive.”

I covered the baby’s ears. “What did Hallow do to deserve to be killed?”

“Near mutiny,” Kingpin reasoned.

“There wasn’t any.” I remembered that much.

“He had designs. And he disrespected my woman.” He spoke of me.

“I wasn’t your woman. I ain’t your woman.”

Kingpin ignored my words. “And he kidnapped my wife. He thought that baby he took was mine, you know. He planned to take my baby and my wife.”

“Yes. It’s beyond horrifying to think he would stoop to that level,” I said, looking at my own child. The thought of someone taking this baby was too much to endure.

Unexpectedly, I understood Sky’s motivations. The mama bear in me knew if I had a chance to save my child from the mafia, I would do anything. I still wasn’t over the fact Hallow left. But I couldn’t blame him for leaving me. There hadn’t been time to justify anything to him. I never meant to really hurt him. I loved him and only wanted a second chance. I had only been trying to protect Sky by lying and that was all Kingpin’s doing.

Protect Sky while I was sleeping with her husband. I knew how crazy that sounded. I felt like a lowly dog. Of course, Sky would want to humiliate me. I was sure Hallow was hurt and wanted revenge on Kingpin, too. With the way he found out about me sleeping with his President and what happened afterwards, I was sure he wasn’t thinking straight at all. We hadn’t aimed to, not exactly, but Kingpin and I had done them both real dirty.

“Deep down, Hallow’s a good guy,” I said, believing it with all my heart.

“Hallow’s a runner. He never deserved you,” Kingpin said, full of conviction. “Sky’s always wanted to run away, too.”

I decided, “I don’t want to hear anything else about Hallow.”

I had a lovely baby in my arms. Snuggling, I concentrated on him until he fussed. Kingpin lifted him from my arms and fed him a bottle like a pro. He’d been doing it in my absence, I realized. After the baby ate, he pressed him against his shoulder, burped him and everything. I felt helpless as I watched, but also grateful. I teared up again. But when it came time for the diaper, the biker lucked out. The nurse came in just in the nick of time and snatched the baby, saying I

needed to rest. She promised my little bundle of joy would be with me again real soon. And she also said, I wasn't ready to take care of him on my own yet. I'd still be recovering for a week more if I remembered any of this.

"Then you two can take the baby home. He have a name, yet?" she asked.

"No," I said at the same time Kingpin said, "Beau."

"Y'all think about it. I'll send someone in to make it official before you're discharged."

She took our baby out of the room to the nursery. I found myself anxiety ridden without him. I was also disturbed by her saying I wouldn't remember this. "All this has been said before?" I was afraid I had amnesia.

Kingpin chuckled. "Only parts. I think you're good now."

"Thank goodness. I feel like I have my wits about me."

"You could hold the baby this time. I think you're really awake. What are we going to name him? Beau, of course."

"There's been too much to take in. I can't think on it now." I was more tired than anything. I had so many cords hanging from me to weigh me down.

"We'll figure it out before we go home," Kingpin said.

"Home?" I asked. I didn't really have a home anymore. I'd left Arkansas for Gran's then Gran's for Hallow. I'd left my apartment on Kingpin's orders. "I expect you think the baby and I are going to go to Royal Road with you? You think you have an instant family or something." To replace Sky, I thought, but I didn't say that.

"I don't just think it. You are going home with me," he declared, sure of himself.

Not having anywhere else, I thought twice about fighting. I tried to lift my shoulders and give him a defeated shrug, but only could a little. I hadn't even been up to pee on my own. Reaching down, I felt a catheter. Hell, I had a

newborn and literally not a pot to piss in. I was in between a rock and a hard place, a hard headed biker.

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Chapter 31

Eve

Waking in the middle of the night, I saw Kingpin stretched out on the recliner next to me, fast asleep. He'd taken off his boots and socks. His bare feet stuck out of a blanket. I wanted to cover them up, but I felt too weak to move. I spent the next week trying to eat on my own and walk on my own. I hadn't been in bed very long, but I had to get stronger before they would let me leave the hospital. The biker was with me every step of the way, helping me try the walker. There for all the therapy they quickly threw at me. He brought me our baby so I could feed him. The man bathed him and swaddled him while I was near useless. I even saw him change many a diaper.

Right before I was discharged, I agreed to name our little guy after him like he had wanted. But only if I could pay homage to my family, too. We wrote down about every name I had on my side. My grandfather on my mom's side had the surname, Prince. They had nothing to do with the Asphalt Gods MC like my father's side. When Kingpin heard the name, he wouldn't take no for an answer. I only thought of the singer, the purple one. I flat-out refused. Kingpin didn't care. The biker thought he ruled everything so something regal felt right to him. The biker swore it was destiny, fate. He wanted his son to take over the club one day. I wanted to name our baby Angel after my middle name, but Kingpin argued that I was his Angel.

"I ain't your anything," I reminded him.

Kingpin gave me a look that said he didn't believe a word of it. "And what if we have a girl next?" He added. "Our next baby, a girl, can be called Angel."

"What if it's a boy?"

Kingpin shook his head.

I didn't have the strength to argue that there wouldn't be a next, either because we were not together or because I

couldn't carry another. In the end, we settled on Prince Beau Strick.

"It's perfect. A real royal bastard," Kingpin quipped.

However, as soon as we made it official the name instantly grew on me. I couldn't look at our baby without hearing the name. It was meant to be.

Leaving the hospital meant it was time to go back to Royal Road. Kingpin offered to let me stay in the Big House with him. I wondered how I'd climb the stairs. I'd only just wobbled down the hallway. He mentioned his elevator. I'd forgotten about it. He pointed out that there was already a nursery upstairs. The fact felt more than awkward. It was damn off putting. Frankly, I couldn't live with him. I felt ashamed of what we'd done. Not the sex, but the lies. Everyone at the clubhouse knew about us and the secret we'd kept. The lies we'd told. They'd seen the proof. They'd seen me naked beneath this biker. They'd seen him choking me. They'd heard my cries of passion. Okay, maybe it was the sex. I wanted the ground to open and swallow me whole.

Kingpin compromised, suggesting I stay at Goliath's place again since it was one floor. I'd have to let him or Jassica stay with me for a while since I wasn't one hundred percent.

"I prefer Jassica to sleep over. But you can come help if you want. At my house." I'd taken to not mentioning Goliath anymore. In the hospital all Kingpin and I did was talk. Obviously, he wasn't happy about how his friend took his own life. The biker had many demons. However, none of that bothered me. Unbeknownst to us, we'd grown so close over time, I no longer feared the man at all. We were equals and that made me feel quite grand since he was such a powerful man.

Regardless of anything that had happened between us before, I didn't think I was ready to live with Kingpin. I wasn't comfortable after all that had happened on Valentine's Eve. My emotions were everywhere. Yes, I'd promised to wait for him, thinking we were going to be together, but nothing had

been clear. And then after Sky lost a baby, I'd settled on having Hallow again. My heart had been convinced too and broke afterwards. Kingpin had said so many sweet words in the throes of passion before just to rip them away. I no longer assigned any meaning to any words from our past. And in the back of my mind, I didn't want to be like Sky. I was already recovering like she had been. I needed Kingpin's help. The similarities between her and I more than bothered me. I didn't want Kingpin to feel obligated to be with me because of my condition or because of Prince.

We set up a nursery in my house. The furniture had come from the Big House. Sky had picked it all out down to the baby blankets, but I wouldn't complain. I wasn't wasteful, so given the choice, I'd rather use everything Kingpin bought for Sky's baby than buy anything new. Jassica practically moved in at first to take care of me and help us take care of the baby. I started breastfeeding, but it was harder than I thought. Prince had gone too long without it and wanted a bottle. Therefore, I ended up pumping a lot until he got the hang of it. For a long time, I felt like nothing but a milk machine. Between constant feedings and changings, Jassica was a Godsend. Shortly, I was breastfeeding almost exclusively. I was afraid he'd backslide any moment. Thus, I took on the brunt of the feedings.

There were plenty of times Kingpin would send Jassica home and help me solo. But it wasn't help, he kept reminding me. He was the father. Jassica was engaged to his Vice President, Pagan, after all and didn't want to be anyone's live-in nurse again like she had with Cece. She reminded us of this often. Thus, it was no surprise after a couple of weeks when Jassica refused to spend the night anymore. She only came during the day. Kingpin relieved her at night but slept in a separate room. Prince, who was busy catching up when it came to growth, ate nearly every two hours. Up all hours of the night, I didn't feel sexy at all when Kingpin woke me up to feed him. My breasts were out, but ran ragged himself, I didn't think he ever noticed.

Eventually, I made my way to the clubhouse again. Jassica watched the baby for us sometimes. Paisley was no

longer around. Kingpin had sent her packing, thank goodness. She went back to Shakey's where she came from. The Getty's exchanged Kingpin's file for something they wanted more than a child, information on Noah Fond. They wanted out from under his thumb.

Kingpin said he was sure they copied everything inside, but the file wasn't anything but stats from the fights they no longer ran. The arena was still in a state of construction. All the mafia could do was use the information to bet on the fights. He found everything else Sky stole from the vault at the Big House. The Mob still wanted her baby, but Kingpin promised he'd never divulge her location.

And he finally confessed to me Sky and Hallow were in Alaska. Hallow took a job in commercial fishing. Working on a big boat was something I knew he always wanted to do. I felt somewhat happy for him. Kingpin said they'd move to California when it was safer though. He worried that Sky was trying to get back to her old life. He hoped Hallow could keep her safe. Then he spoke of the most shocking news, Kingpin had his divorce, and Sky and Hallow were married before they became new people. It was all very surreal for me to think about. They were together, married and had a baby when just a couple of months ago they'd been practically strangers. But Kingpin and her had married quickly too.

Him and I were courting if anything. All the tension from before was there, sexual and otherwise. The thuds in my chest pounded. His steady gaze reminded me of all our times together. We wanted in each other's pants, but it hadn't happened again yet. I was holding out. The baby was one excuse. He took all our time, and when the baby slept, I threw daddy out of my room. Kingpin wanted more, no doubt. He told me every day, I was his and he would have me again.

I never disagreed. But it hadn't been the time. My body like a deflated balloon, I didn't feel myself. And I was being careful, so my heart didn't get broken again. I couldn't be sure the biker truly wanted me. Being so close to giving up and in for someone and having it all come crashing down, devastated me. That was holding me back. Plus, I'd let myself feel for

Hallow again before he found out and left. I was recovering from that wreckage, as well.

When Kingpin wasn't riding his Harley, attending to club business or being a dutiful dad, he was on stage a lot more. I felt like he was taunting me with it. He knew I loved to sing. Though it was a passion of his too, he was trying to make me jealous, so I'd give it a go again.

I often met him in the bar. "My Angel, the beautiful mother of my son, he'd call attention to me."

I would always complain.

"Just be my Ol' Lady already," he said, kissing my hand.

"I ain't ready." It wasn't exactly a no.

"I know. If you were, I'd be on one knee."

"I just need you to wait for me. Like I waited for you," I said.

"I know. You're stubborn."

He stepped on stage and dedicated a song to me, "Wild Horses", by The Rolling Stones.

It was his way, I guess, of saying he'd wait. That he'd never leave. He wouldn't run out on me.

That night we found ourselves in my bed together.

I woke up in the dead of night. It was pitch black in the room all but the nightlight near the door. My left boob was out of my nursing bra. I felt for Prince in the crook of my arm as I had dozed off a time or two while feeding him. I panicked for a moment when I didn't find him at first. Thankfully, he was safely on the bed beside me. I stroked his soft skin and checked where his face was, making sure nothing covered him. Prince was fine, breathing. Then my hand landed on Kingpin's bare back. The biker hardly ever wore a shirt.

He was fast asleep beside the baby. The baby was safely in between us. I repeated it in my sleepy mind. Since Prince was snoozing so peacefully, I decided to quietly lay

down and go back to sleep. Besides, it wouldn't be long before the baby roused again.

The baby cried, waking me once more, I fed him and took him to his crib in the other room. When I climbed back in bed, I'd not forgotten about Kingpin. However, I wasn't about to wake him. He'd been just as tired as me. So when Prince's cries woke me before first light. Moving to get up, I discovered the biker spooned me. His hands cupped my naked breasts. In my exhaustion, I had left them out. His warmth felt too good at my back. It'd been a long time since I'd been hugged. I needed a hug and was getting a full body one. But I needed to check on the baby. I tried to move carefully.

Kingpin mumbled in my ear, "I've been wanting to get my hands on these."

"You're awake?" I asked, my voice high. But I didn't rush to move away from him. I quieted and listened for Prince. When I didn't hear him anymore, I relaxed.

"Not really," Kingpin murmured. His breath in my ear sent shivers down below, telling me I needed more than a hug. Instead of pulling away from him I rolled in his arms to face him. Met by his high eyebrows, I could tell I surprised him.

"You're not fixin to kick me out of your bed?"

I had to think for a moment of the timing of my last shower, but I knew I wanted to be touched. Being in his arms felt more than right. Come to find out watching a man take care of a baby was a complete turn on. A man, my baby's father, taking care of our baby. Taking care of me. Kingpin had been nothing but a gentleman, too.

"No," I said, deciding. "I ain't kicking you out of my bed."

He wasted no time. His hands at my back made it to my breasts again in a hurry. They were engorged and leaking, but I didn't mind his rough touch. Not at all. I hummed in response as he ran his thumbs over my nipples. Then in a rush, Kingpin took the back of my head and kissed me. He kissed me like he'd missed me bad. He kissed me like we had never

stopped. He kissed me like he didn't want to ever stop. That kiss was all it took. We were at it like animals. Like all the times before, we weren't slow. Kingpin had his dick into me lickity split. It had been eight whole weeks since I'd given birth, so I was more than ready physically. Emotionally, I was stunned on how hard I fell as our bodies got reacquainted.

In Kingpin's arms afterwards, I felt completely at peace.

From then on out, the biker Prez practically moved in with me. We went riding on his Harley. We ate most of our meals together even if he was busy at the club. Jassica would watch Prince, and we'd go out for an hour or two, leave Royal Road to do something, anything. He needed away from his baby as much as we needed away from ours. I was dating the MC President and more content than I'd ever been. I started singing again, privately, practicing with Kingpin. When we weren't caring for our infant, we were trying to find a moment alone in the bedroom. I'd never had so much sex. We weren't careful, but I was breastfeeding. I thought that would protect us.

I was dead wrong.

"You have to get that tattoo removed," Kingpin said, speaking of Hallow's property patch when I told him the happy news.

I agreed.

"You'll wear mine," he decided.

"But you don't do tattoos." I knew Kingpin liked to carve his K into women. He used to anyhow.

"You're special. You're the one. Even if you're not ready to be my ol' lady, you'll do that much."

I agreed to that, too. I was going to be having another baby with this biker. We weren't even married. "Are you going to get my name tattooed on you, as well?" I asked.

Kingpin said, "Why not? I don't plan on ever giving you up."

I didn't believe a word of that, the tattoo part anyway.

However, we were both overjoyed at the thought of having another baby. If it all went well. I moved into the Big House with our baby. Because I was pregnant, I didn't want to get his tattoo as a tramp stamp like he wanted. I promised I would though, eventually. And I'd certainly get Hallow's tattoo removed as soon as it was safe to. It would have to wait as well.

When Prince was six months old, I was two months pregnant. I had a full performance at Royal Road. We had plenty of eager babysitters, that wasn't an issue. But I'd not felt up to it until then. Kingpin sat in the crowd on his goddamn throne. His eyes never left me as I sang. Just like before he was my anchor. But it was just a normal night. No holiday. No special party. Just Royal Road. But since it was my first full night back, the big bouquet of white roses wasn't unexpected. Opry brought them on stage. They were from my man. My biker. He winked at me as I took them in my arms.

Then the lights came on, blinding me. Kingpin rose from his seat. I looked around afraid of trouble. I wondered if the mob was back. Or if Noah Fond had finally come for me. The possibilities were endless. The whole clubhouse stirred and then quieted. We all waited on pins and needles for the worst. Bikers drew their weapons. A woman screamed preemptively.

I never expected Kingpin to get up on stage with me and get down on one knee. He took my hand while Dimple appeared in his full Elvis attire, complete with rhinestones and began singing, "I Can't Help Falling in Love with You." The song wasn't long but seemed to last forever. During it, Kingpin's eyes never left me. I cried, ruining my face. I knew what was about to happen. I felt ready. Ready to spend the rest of my life with a biker I once feared. A biker I once loathed. A biker I loved more than anything.

When the song ended, Dimple handed Kingpin the mic.

"Eve, my Angel, will you be my ol' lady, my queen?"

Nodding, I could hardly answer for the cheers that commenced.

Kingpin stood. He didn't have a box or a diamond for me, but he took a ring off his pinkie. I hadn't even noticed it was there amongst the ones he normally wore. The ring matched his, the one with the Royal Bastard's logo on it, but it was yellow gold, like I preferred. Fortunately, it was smaller, daintier. Across it read the words, Property of Kingpin.

And as taken aback as I was, nothing could compare to what happened next. Kingpin took off his cut and handed it to Dimple. He stole his shirt over his head. Along his side, he had gotten my name tattooed on him, I saw Eve right away. I bent down to read it. He had, "My heart belongs to an Angel, Eve Strick," tattooed along with Prince's name, Prince Beau, and another, Angel Francis, which he'd already decided our new baby would be, boy or girl. Francis for my grandmother.

"It's a good thing I said yes," I remarked.

The fact wasn't lost on me that he did it to prove his point. He did it because I couldn't yet.

Then another surprise, Pagan and Villain carried in a large gift with a large red bow and sat it down beside Kingpin's throne. They took off the wrapping draped over it like a sheet, revealing a matching throne, one for me.

"Lordalmighty."

"For my Angel, for my queen," Kingpin said, taking me by the hand. He led me off the stage and down to it. I read the same words carved into the wood. Then two tiny thrones the bikers brought in afterwards were the icing on the cake. Outlandishly over the top was Kingpin in a nutshell. I couldn't ask for more.

"Our babies will not be in the club house," I said to him right then. But I knew that wouldn't ever be completely true. There would be times when they would be, times when no one was topless and nothing illegal was happening. Sanctioned family friendly times.

Unlike before, I decided I wouldn't wait to get married, but Kingpin wanted everyone from the whole club to attend from all the different chapters. That would take months to make happen. After Halloween, he wanted to make sure it was safe, too. And I didn't want to be big and pregnant during the wedding. So, we compromised and decided to get married right away at the courthouse and have a big wedding in a year's time, around the anniversary of this proposal. It'd give me time to recover from giving birth again, hopefully.

And not only would we tie the knot right away, but we'd also be going on a honeymoon right away. Kingpin couldn't wait to get away. Pagan would play President while he was gone and Maddie Mae agreed to keep our baby. Since she didn't get to see Sky's baby and be the grandmother she always wanted to be, Prince fit the bill. Besides, she planned to marry Kingpin's brother in the near future. He'd popped the question recently. She'd be family soon enough, my sister-in-law, strangely enough and was happy to help. I guessed it was better than her being Sky's sister-in-law and mother. Moreover, the baby's brother was there. Maddie was also keeping Little Johnny for a spell while Bubba was on tour. She had plenty of help from their staff. The kids would think they were cousins, but they were actually brothers.

Jassica and Pagan joined us as our witnesses at the courthouse. I dressed up for the occasion, wearing a simple white dress, cowboy boots and had a bouquet of wildflowers. Kingpin wore his cut and leathers. I wouldn't have it any other way. Since I wasn't showing yet, we stopped to take pictures downtown in Nashville. Jassica had offered. She turned out to be an amateur photographer, having all the equipment. Pagan and her took their leave and Kingpin took me on his Harley to Spring Hills cemetery so I could visit Donette's grave. I left my bouquet on it. Proof that I was following my heart like she wanted me to.

After we were officially married, Kingpin and I had a small celebration at Royal Road. Then ended up on an island off Key West, Florida. He'd wanted to go farther, but I didn't have a passport. He did but had never used it. And we couldn't ride that far with me being pregnant, so we flew. It was my

first time. And because he always rode his motorcycle everywhere, it was his too.

Waking up to a tropical breeze and sunshine streaming into open windows with my biker lying beside me, nude, I felt like I won the lottery. I was Mrs. Beau Strick, Eve Angel Strick. The ol' lady to the President of the Royal Bastards MC: Nashville, Tennessee chapter. We had a beautiful baby back home and another on the way. I didn't plan any of it. Hell, I hadn't known I wanted it. It'd just happened. Slowly and all at once.

I knew somewhere, Donette was smiling down on me, or up at me, depending.

The End for Now

For some of the songs played in this novel visit [Spotify](#).

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[Royal Pain, Royal Bastards MC: Nashville, TN](#)

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Royal Bastards MC 5th Run

From USA Today Bestselling Author Morgan Jane Mitchell comes the next installment of her Royal Bastards MC: Nashville, TN Chapter series, Royal Pain.

Biker Prince of the Smokey Rollers MC, Riff was born bad. A biker rat, he was set to inherit the Presidency. But after his father's motorcycle club disbanded, his prospects of ruling one day all but disappeared. That was until he found the Royal Bastards MC in Nashville and quickly became Road Captain. Dead set on taking over for Kingpin one day, Riff has become a Royal Pain around the club. ***All that changes once Mary arrives.***

Finally free of her childhood prison, Mary knows nothing of the outside world, let alone the biker lifestyle at Royal Road. After choosing to leave her Amish family, being offered a job as a live-in nurse seems like a dream come true. She quickly finds out how different things are at Royal Road. Not only different but depraved.

The more she learns the more she questions leaving her Godly home.

Thankfully there's a hot biker around, more than willing to show her the

ropes.

Can Riff convince her it's not all bad when the outlaw biker life is all he's ever known?

Riff having something he wants more than becoming President of an MC couldn't come at a worse time as Kingpin's disaster comes to a head. Will his focus on not only showing Mary around but also protecting her from the evils of the club make him miss the perfect opportunity to take the reins from his President?

Pushing Mary away puts her in unknown danger.

Can she ever forgive him? Can he forgive himself? More importantly to Riff, will she stay at Royal Road?

**To read more about the Asphalt Gods MC start with
Scar for FREE**

[Scar, Asphalt Gods MC](#)

Scar, Asphalt Gods MC

Emery wants to die. Good thing she just ran into a killer. *“They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, but that's bullshit. What doesn't kill you leaves a scar. More than the eyesore down my torso, I was a scar, the jagged, fucked up remains of a tragedy.”*

Scar's Nomad status gives him a chance to fulfill his one wish, but his lonely mission is interrupted when a possible one-night stand goes horribly wrong.

“They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, but what if I can't live with myself anymore?”

Finding the blonde face down in a puddle of her own blood jeopardizes everything. Saving her and keeping her quiet could get

Scar killed, but when Emery wakes up, her shocking proposal for him to kill her starts the ride of his life.

About the Author

Award winning, USA Today Bestselling Author Morgan Jane Mitchell spent years blogging politics and health trends before she rediscovered her love of writing fiction. Trading politicians for bloodsuckers of another kind, she's now the author of bestselling post-apocalyptic fantasy novel, Sanguis City. Her action-packed series of vampires, witches, demons and zombies is paranormal romance, dystopia, urban fantasy and erotica in one bite. When Morgan Jane is not creating the city of blood or conjuring up other supernatural tales, she's dreaming up erotic and dark romances including her latest bestselling erotic suspense, Asphalt Gods' MC series and bestselling romances, Royal Bastards MC: Nashville, TN series.

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Reading Order

Asphalt Gods' MC

SCAR

Seven Sunsets

Hell on Heelz (standalone)

Sunrise

Cowboy, Take Me

Picking Bones

Lucky Stars

Bone Daddy

Mud

Trax

Snakebite

Hawk

Freedom

Slayer (standalone)

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Asphalt Gods' MC series

Hell on Heelz, an Asphalt Gods' MC novel

Morgan Jane Mitchell An Asphalt Gods' MC Novel. Full length, Stand Alone.

“They say time heals all wounds, but my time’s done run out. I’m no spring chicken, but it’s more than that. I’ve been mad as hell for far too long. It’s made me a different woman, a bitter woman. No, they don’t call me Rage for nothing—I’m a twisting bitch tornado and that’s before you make me mad. When I’m not fuming, I’m secretly festering in suffocating smog of self-loathing. A man did this to me, and now that I’ve finally met another man, one who calms my storm, one I might let break through the thick thorny vines I’ve wrapped around my heart—I fear there’s nothing left of me.”

Edie Pearl better known as RAGE never thought her decision to leave her cheating husband and join the Hell on Heelz would land her as the potential President of the female outlaw motorcycle club when the Banshee is killed. Rage has spent the last two years mad as hell, nursing her broken heart with booze and fast men. When she’s pitted against her fellow heel, Dixie, in a race to track down the Banshee’s killer, she meets the man of her dreams. Mud may be the only man to get her motor running, but he’s also her sworn enemy. Will Rage do the unthinkable and choose a man over her club? Or is time really up for her?

Mud’s been a mess since his twin brother left the Asphalt Gods’ MC. He’d hate to have to kill his own kin. When Scar shows Mud mercy by sparing his brother, he thinks everything will finally be back to normal. He’s proven wrong. A ride to California is interrupted with by the Heelz. After he leaves his brothers and catches up to his enemy, he finds a beautiful woman, one he cannot resist. Him showing her the same mercy puts him in even more jeopardy. His heart on the line with his life, which road will he choose?

Cowboy, Take Me, Asphalt Gods' MC

Morgan Jane Mitchell

“I’ve been waiting all my life for a Cowboy.” When Cowboy finds Halley outside of the Devil’s Den, it’s a damned dream come true for her, but she’s not alright. With all the double-crossing going down within the Gods, Cowboy hides Scar’s sister away until she’s well and he can get a hold of Scar. He never expected to fall in love. When the two arrive in Tucson, they aren’t alone, and Scar is beside himself.

Picking Bones, Asphalt Gods’ MC

Morgan Jane Mitchell

”Suzi was a bone. Like when I hunted one, a piece of my enemy, a substitute would not do... Nothing could satisfy me until I had her again..”

Can a one-night stand lead to a lifetime of love?

Bones heads to California not only to help Cowboy rescue the woman he loves, he’s left something in Texas. Suzi has something that belongs to him. Not his heart. His unborn child means more to him than she can ever know.

Her life finally on track, Suzi doesn’t want a thing to do with an outlaw, let alone to raise her baby around one.

Bones, not used to hearing no, does the unimaginable. At least Suzi couldn’t imagine being kidnapped and hauled back to Louisiana, especially in her condition.

When they’re done picking bones, will Suzi pick Bones?

Bestselling Erotic Romance Table 21 Series In Too Deep (Table 21, Book #1) Morgan Jane Mitchell

25-year-old Loraine Wynters has always been in control. She takes what she wants, from a new man every night -and leaves.

Too bad this has cost her last job and landed her in the local sex addict’s support group where she is certain she doesn’t belong. Within this group of weirdos, she sees a familiar face. Richard Mahoney may be the gorgeous 30-year-old, successful owner of Table 21, but he has lost more than Loraine could ever imagine because of his obsession. After learning all her secrets, Loraine’s new boss Rick is determined to fix her with his own brand of therapy. After digging deeper, Loraine finds

that her boss needs more than just physical healing.
Can they repair each other so they can be with other people?
With both Loraine and Rick longing for a normal life, will a
pact between them be the answer to both their problems? Or
are they getting in too deep?

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Bestselling Paranormal Romance, Sanguis City Series
Morgan Jane Mitchell

Ever wonder what happens *after* the world ends?

Lilanoir Rue did. A mere by product of the destruction, she never knew what had happened before hand either. Banished from the only place she called home, the Human Reservation, she wipes her tears and never looks back.

In a world gone dead, life has never been so good, for some. While others live in chaos, the chosen call Sanguis City home. The rich and powerful found a way to survive The End and to enjoy every minute of it, for eternity. On the brink of a gruesome death from starvation, disease or a hungry mutant, humans flock to sell their blood for peace.

The city of blood, made for and by vampires welcomes Noir, her kind are in high demand. Neither Human nor Vampire, Bleeders take care of the city in the daylight. Draining humans by day and dating Vampires at night leaves Noir little time to think about her past, or much else, until it finds her.

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