



Harley
Wylde

ATILLA

Changeling Press

Atilla (Savage Raptors MC 2)
A Dixie Reapers Bad Boys Romance
Harley Wylde

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BIN: 010804-03513
Formats Available:
Adobe PDF, Epub

Publisher:
Changeling Press LLC
315 N. Centre St.
Martinsburg, WV 25404
www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Crystal Esau
Cover Artist: Bryan Keller

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Harley Wylde

[Atilla \(Savage Raptors MC 2\)](#)

A Dixie Reapers Bad Boys Romance

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Solena — At the age of fifteen, my parents forced me to give my baby up for adoption. I never got to see his little face or hold him. All these years later, it still hurts — so much that one night I decide to dull the pain with alcohol and sex. There's only one man I want, but the President of the Savage Raptors MC might be more than I can handle. I've had a crush on him for a while now. He says he can only offer one night. I want more. I want it all.

Atilla — Lost my woman seventeen years ago. Thought I'd lost my daughter too... until she showed up on my doorstep. Now I have a pregnant teen living with me, and a woman who wants more than I'm able to give her. Solena is far too young for me. Hell, she's barely older than my daughter. So why is keeping my distance so damn difficult? Is it really okay to fall in love again?

Prologue

Atila

Three Months Ago

I couldn't believe Lynx had settled down. And not with just anyone. Nope, he'd gone and claimed one of Grizzly's adopted kids. It would have given us a tie to the Devil's Fury, if Meredith hadn't been the black sheep. For her sake, I hoped she could mend things with her sisters. I could only imagine how hard it was on her, living so far from home and no longer having a support system. She had us, but I knew it wasn't the same.

Of course, now that she and Lynx were together, she wanted everyone to get a happy ending. She'd talked about the rest of us pairing off. I knew it was because she didn't enjoy being the only woman here. It had to be lonely for her. The only other females were the club whores, and she wasn't exactly going to hang out with them.

When she'd asked me about finding someone, I'd lied and told her I was too damn old and set in my ways. Said if I hadn't found the woman meant to be mine in all this time, then she wasn't out there. Except... I had found her. A long-ass time ago.

Rebecca had taken my breath away the first time I saw her. She'd been so full of life. It wasn't any wonder I'd fallen for her ass over teakettle. One smile and she'd had me wrapped around her finger. A kind word and I'd been hooked.

We'd had the best summer of our lives, and I'd hoped for more. Then she'd told me the news... she was moving away.

She'd been younger than me by quite a bit. It hadn't stopped me from adoring her. I'd have married her. Well, maybe not. She hadn't been made for club life, and it had been the only thing holding me back. It's why no one knew about her. I'd kept that part of my life separate and for good reason.

Even though we'd been apart, we'd kept in touch. Letters. Phone calls.

The day I received a picture of a sonogram in the mail, my heart had nearly stopped. Rebecca was pregnant — and the baby was mine. I'd been scared and excited at the same time. I hadn't known how things would work out, but I knew I had to have her by my side. We'd discussed her moving back here, and I'd been ready to do anything to make it happen.

It had taken longer than planned, and before I could bring her home, the doctor had put her on bed rest. Something wasn't going quite right with the pregnancy, and my sweet Rebecca was ready to do anything to keep our baby safe and healthy. Nothing else mattered to her. We'd still talked on the phone, and she'd given me every update on the baby. It was a girl, and we'd named her Casey.

I took a shot of vodka, then another. It was the anniversary of Rebecca's death, and it always hit me hard. Hit by a drunk driver before our child could even be born, I'd lost them both. Normally, I'd go to the cemetery to pay my respects. She may have never returned to Bryson Corners, but her family had her buried about an hour down the highway in their family plot. It always bothered me that Rebecca's family didn't give our daughter a proper burial. I didn't know what

happened to her body, and since we weren't married, no one would tell me a damn thing.

"Everything okay?" Spade asked as he settled on the stool beside me.

"Do I fucking look like I'm okay?"

He shook his head. "Not even a little. Get like this every year about this time. Can't figure it the fuck out, though."

"Some secrets are my own." I hoped he'd leave it at that. If I'd kept her here, would we have had a happy life together? Could she have handled being part of this club? I wasn't sure, but at least little Casey would have been alive. She'd be a teenager now.

Since losing my family, I'd never once been tempted to settle down. Watching Lynx fall in love had been bittersweet. I was happy for the two of them, but days like this it made me miss my woman even more. I had no idea if things would have worked out between us, but our kid would have tied us together, and I'd have done anything for my daughter whether her mom and I were still together.

The clubhouse doors opened, and Rebel popped his head inside. "Um, Pres. Might want to come out here a minute."

What the fuck was happening now? I stood and walked over to the door, yanking it all the way open. Nothing could have prepared me for the sight in front of me. If I hadn't known Rebecca was dead and gone, I'd have thought her teenage self was standing on my steps.

"Are you Atilla?" the girl asked.

“Yeah. Do I know you?”

She shook her head and pushed her hair behind her ear. When she shoved her jacket aside to pull something from her pocket, I saw the swell of her stomach. Kid didn't look old enough to be out of high school and she was pregnant? Well, as long as she wouldn't say it was mine. No fucking way I'd have touched someone so young, not even dead-ass drunk. Didn't matter if she looked like my sweet Rebecca.

“You knew my mom.” She came up the steps and handed me a picture. Rebecca. My throat grew tight and then her words registered.

“What?”

“My name is Casey,” she whispered. “And I think you're my dad.”

Holy. Fucking. Shit. It was like the earth tipped under my feet, and if I hadn't locked my knees, I'd have gone down hard. Casey. It was the name we were going to give our baby. And this girl claimed Rebecca was her mom. Was the reason there hadn't been a tiny grave because the child didn't die? My mind was reeling.

Everything hit me at once, like a freight train. With so many eyes on us, and my pregnant daughter standing in front of me, I knew I needed to keep my shit together. I could freak the fuck out when I was alone.

“I think we have a lot to discuss,” I said. “Not here. You can follow me to my house.”

She gave a nod and went to her car. The back seat looked crammed full of shit, and I wondered if she was here for more than dropping the *daddy* bomb on me. Where had she

been all this time? Who had raised her? Why did she wait until now to find me? I had so many fucking questions. I could only hope she had the answers.

I also wanted to strangle Rebecca's family. I didn't know for certain if they'd been the ones to keep Casey from me, but I couldn't think of anyone else who would have. They'd known Casey was mine. Rebecca and I hadn't kept it from them. Discovering I had a kid after all this time... I was both excited to meet her and pissed as fuck at the people who'd kept us apart.

I got on my bike and rode slowly, making sure Casey could keep up. My house wasn't far. I pulled into the driveway and killed the engine, then waited for her to exit her vehicle. She checked out the house and scanned the surrounding area. Not once did she ask me anything. Casey meekly followed me into the house, and I pointed to the kitchen.

"Let's sit in there. Want something to eat or drink?" I asked.

"Water would be good."

She took a seat at the table while I got a cold bottle of water from the fridge and set it down in front of her. I took out a beer for myself, thinking I'd need it for whatever discussion we were about to have. I studied her face and saw parts of Rebecca, but that wasn't all.

"I have your eyes," she said.

I nodded. Yep. That she did. Her hair color was closer to mine as well, but the rest was all her mom. I couldn't take my eyes off her. It amazed me I had a daughter. Of course, whoever had kept her from me deserved a sound beating. As

much as I wanted to blame Rebecca's parents, I wouldn't until I knew for certain they were the ones who'd lied and said my daughter was dead.

"I guess you have questions," she said. "I don't blame you. I had a lot over the years myself."

"Where'd you grow up?" I asked.

"My grandparents took me in when I was born. They raised me until I was seven. That's when my grandfather died, and my grandmother had to move into a home. She'd started showing signs of Alzheimer's. After that, I lived with my aunt and uncle."

I leaned forward and braced my arms on the table. "What aunt and uncle? Your mom was an only child."

Her brow furrowed and her nose scrunched a little, just like Rebecca's used to do. "I didn't know Mom was an only child. I've always known them as Aunt Su and Uncle Mark. They lived down the street and were always coming over."

"How did you find out about me?" I asked because I seriously doubted her grandparents had told her a damn thing about me. They'd never thought I was good enough for their precious daughter. Didn't matter she'd been in her late twenties when we got together. It wasn't like she was a teenager.

"Mom's diary. When we were cleaning out the house to sell it, I ran across it in a box up in the attic. I didn't tell anyone I had it, and I read it in secret. I was so young I didn't really understand a lot." She took a swallow of her water. "About two years ago, I pulled it out and read it again."

"You're what? Seventeen?" I asked.

“As of today, in fact.” She gave me a tired smile. “You haven’t asked about the baby. *My* baby.”

“Noticed it. Figured you’d say something if you wanted to.”

“Well, that’s different from what I’m used to. I refused to sign the baby over to someone else, so Aunt Su and Uncle Mark threw me out. I loaded my stuff in my car and thought this might be a good time to meet my father. Not that I’m expecting you to take care of me or anything. I’ll figure things out on my own.”

I snorted and shook my head. “Stubborn. I’m afraid you get that from me. And hell no, I’m not letting you figure this shit out by yourself. While I might have thought you died with your mother all those years ago, it doesn’t change the fact you’re mine, Casey.”

Tears gathered in her eyes, and she pressed her lips together. My heart ached. How the fuck had those people treated her all this time? She’d been so certain I would turn her away. Had they told her I was some sort of monster? Maybe said I hadn’t wanted her? We’d lost so much time.

“Thanks... Dad.”

Hearing her call me that healed a piece of my broken heart. She was exactly what I’d needed all this time. Our family might never be whole, but as long as we had each other, then we’d be able to weather the storms.

“Come on. I’ll show you to your room.” I stood and held out my hand for her. Whatever it took, I’d make this work. I also planned to find the little shit who got her pregnant. She hadn’t said he wouldn’t take responsibility, but

why else would she have shown up on my doorstep? Not to mention, she wouldn't tell me who'd knocked her up. Once I found him, the fucker was going to learn a very painful lesson. No one screwed with my baby girl and got away with it.

Chapter One

Solena

Present Day

I didn't know why I was here. This wasn't my scene. The music was too loud, the women too wild, and the smoke nearly choked me. So why the hell hadn't I turned around and gone home? The man at the end of the bar was the only reason I hadn't run for the hills.

I'd seen him around town. In fact, he often came to the café where his daughter worked. The pregnant teen was working on her GED and waiting tables. I'd once been in her shoes, so I could sympathize. Except, I didn't get to keep my baby. I'd been fifteen when my boyfriend didn't take no for an answer. The result had been a little boy. One I'd never even gotten to hold. My parents had told the doctor to take him away before I even got a good look, and I had no idea where he was now.

I'd tried to find out, but I had had no luck. The place my parents supposedly used for the adoption had never existed. My stomach churned every time I thought about it. What had happened to my little boy? Was he okay? Did a loving family get him? Today he was especially on my mind, since it was his birthday. Which was the second reason I'd come here. I'd wanted a distraction so I wouldn't think about him. Obviously, it wasn't working.

I took a swallow of the cocktail I'd ordered and tried to

get the courage to speak to the President of the Savage Raptors. He'd always seemed nice when he'd stopped by to visit Casey. We'd exchanged a few words here and there. Every time I got close to him, my heart raced, and I fought the urge to reach out my hand and touch him. Something about him called to me. I'd never been the type to go for bad boys or rough men. Atilla looked like both, and yet, I'd seen how gentle he was with Casey. Perhaps it was that side of him I yearned for.

More than once, I'd gone to sleep hugging my pillow, wondering what it would be like to have Atilla lying next to me. I didn't know what I found so fascinating about him. I knew people would say he was too old for me. Their opinions didn't matter. I'd never been so drawn to someone before, and I found him to be the sexiest man in town. Possibly in the entire world.

"You going to keep staring at him or go make a move?" someone asked from beside me. I startled and glanced in the man's direction. *Spade* was on his leather cut, along with *Vice President*.

"Was I being that obvious?" I asked. Should I wipe my chin? Had I been drooling over the man? Wouldn't be the first time. One of my co-workers once threw a napkin at me after Atilla left the café. I'd literally been salivating over him like a dog after a bone.

"Oh, yeah. I'm sure you've seen him wave off every woman who approached so far. I have a feeling he won't turn you away. You're different from the other women here. I can't quite figure out *why* you came to a party at the clubhouse. You don't seem like the sort to do this kind of thing."

“I’m not. It’s my first time doing anything like this, and I’m extremely nervous.”

Spade smiled faintly. “You came for him, didn’t you?”

I nodded. I couldn’t deny it. The alcohol in my system hadn’t been enough to give me the courage to go up to him. I wasn’t sure anything could help me. What was I expecting from this, anyway? I wasn’t the one-night-stand type, and I didn’t think the man had come here to find a girlfriend. When I’d thought about getting a drink and possibly getting closer to Atilla, my brain hadn’t gone as far as the next step.

I yearned to speak with him. Get closer to him. If he kissed me, I might die from both pleasure and a shock to my system. In all this time, I’d never desired anyone. With Atilla, I found myself watching him whenever he was nearby, and wanting nothing more than to cuddle up to him. I couldn’t help but think if a man like him were part of my life, things would be different. It wouldn’t change my financial issues, but having someone to lean on, to give me their support and a little affection would have meant the world to me. Not just anyone... *him*. It had to be Atilla or no one.

Truth be told, I hadn’t slept with anyone since that one time. Then again, I didn’t consider what my boyfriend had done to me to be considered sex. He’d raped me. I knew it. He knew it. Everyone else thought I’d given consent, then changed my mind after the fact and made a fuss over nothing. Even my parents hadn’t believed me.

“Maybe I should just leave,” I said.

“Or you could follow me.” He snatched up my glass, and I hurried after him, keeping an eye on the open beverage. I knew nothing about these men, or what they were capable of.

He wouldn't put something in it, would he? I chased him down, only to come to a halt next to Atilla. Spade set my glass on the bar beside Atilla's beer, then motioned to the empty stool. "Sit. Talk. But stop staring at him like a creeper."

My cheeks warmed, and I wanted the floor to open up and swallow me. Atilla's lips kicked up on one corner and I saw the amusement in his eyes. I sat down and took another swallow of my drink. Then drained the glass. Atilla motioned to the guy behind the bar and before I knew it, I had a fresh drink sitting in front of me.

"You're Solena, right?" he asked.

He remembered my name? It pleased me more than it should have. It wasn't like he said I was special or anything. Just because he knew who I was didn't mean anything. For all I knew, he remembered every person he ever met.

"Yeah. I work with Casey at the café." *Way to state the obvious, idiot.*

"So, why did you come here?" Atilla asked.

"To see you." I winced. I hadn't meant to blurt it out. It seemed the alcohol was affecting me more than I'd realized.

"That right?" He grinned. "And what were you hoping to gain from it?"

"I don't know," I admitted.

He eyed me up and down. "Well, you're showing off more than you usually do, but you're still overdressed for a place like this."

I looked around the room and noticed most of the women were naked already. And the things they were doing...

I quickly turned my head. It felt like my face was on fire, and I knew I could never be like those women. Not that I condemned them for being so free. It just wasn't something I could ever do. I had stretch marks from my pregnancy, and a little extra around the middle. I'd be too embarrassed to strip naked in front of everyone.

“Come on. I'm getting a fucking headache. Grab your drink.” Atilla stood, picking up his beer.

I picked my cocktail up and followed him toward the back of the building. He entered a door at the end of the hall and flipped on the lights. It looked like a boardroom. Well, a rustic version of one. The wood table looked sturdy. He pulled out one of the leather chairs and motioned for me to sit.

“Is it okay for me to set my glass down?” I asked.

He snorted. “Not going to hurt anything.”

With the door closed, it was far quieter than it had been in the main room. The fact we were alone made butterflies riot in my stomach. I didn't know why he'd brought me in here. Did he expect something?

“Thanks for being so nice to Casey,” he said. “She talks about you quite a bit.”

“She's a good kid.” He chuckled and leaned back in his seat. “What? Why is that funny?”

“You calling her a kid. You look about two seconds older than my daughter,” he said.

“I'm twenty-three, and while I know that probably makes me young enough to be your daughter, my life hasn't been all sunshine and roses. Some days I feel more like a little

old lady.” I motioned to the other room. “All that is so far beyond what I’d ever consider doing. I meant what I said. I came here for you.”

He shook his head. “Honey, I’m far too old for you to be looking my way.”

“You’re what? Maybe fifty?” I asked.

“I’m in my sixties,” he said. “Biggest age gap I’ve ever had in a relationship was with Casey’s mom. She was in her late twenties and I’d been nearly fifty. Twenty years was bad enough. Forty? You must be fucking crazy.”

I took another swallow of my drink and contemplated his words. I knew people wouldn’t look favorably on a relationship between us. They’d put all the blame on him, not considering for a moment I’d been the one to chase after him. The man was a silver fox. Who cared how old he was? He was kind, had a gentle touch, and I found him to be rather sexy.

I wanted to tell him what happened to me. Talk about the son I never got to meet. But would he even care? It wasn’t like we were friends. Acquaintances at best. I didn’t want to go home, where I’d do nothing more than sink deeper and deeper into a depression. It happened every year on this day.

“I came here tonight to forget,” I said. “Today is a bad day for me. I thought you might understand, since Casey said the two of you hadn’t met until recently. Sorry if I was too presumptuous.”

His lips twitched. “Presumptuous. Big word.”

I shrugged. I might work in a café, but it didn’t mean I was stupid. After my parents gave my baby away, my grades had dropped to the point I barely graduated high school.

College hadn't been in the cards. In fact, by the time I was Casey's age, I'd had myself emancipated and moved out on my own. I'd been working at the café all this time. It might not be a glamorous job, but the manager had given me a chance when no one else would. For that, they had my loyalty.

“So, what exactly were you hoping to gain from tonight?” he asked. “Because a quick release is one thing. Forever? That's not something I can offer anyone. Pretty sure my heart died the same time Rebecca did. I have nothing to offer anyone.”

Right. And even if he did, it wouldn't be with someone my age. He'd made that clear already. Could I do a one-night stand? It would ease my pain right at this moment, but what about tomorrow? Something told me being intimate with this man would only make me want him more.

I finished my drink and stared at the empty glass. I knew Casey lived with her dad, which meant he probably wouldn't take me to his house. Did he want to go to mine? Or... I thought about the women in the other room. He didn't want us to go back out there, did he?

“You're hesitating, which means this isn't what you really want,” he said.

“I don't think I can put on a show like those other women,” I admitted.

“Can't take you home with me, honey. Casey is sleeping in the room next to mine.”

“I know.”

“Come on. We can use an empty room down the hall. Unless you've decided you want to leave?”

I stood and followed him from the room. He opened the second door we came to, and I saw a small bedroom with an attached bathroom. After I cleared the doorway, he shut us in and locked the door. At least I wouldn't have to worry about someone barging in. It set me at ease a little.

He shrugged out of his cut and set it on the dresser. I fiddled with the hem of my dress before lifting it over my head. Standing before him in nothing more than my heels, bra, and panties, I felt self-conscious. Wrapping my arms around my waist, I tried to hide my imperfections.

“When you said this wasn't your scene...” He paused. “You didn't mean you're a virgin, did you?”

“No. I'm not a virgin.”

He nodded. “You still sure you want to do this? I'm okay with getting another drink and just talking, or listening, if there's something you need to get off your chest.”

I couldn't pass up this opportunity. For one, I hoped he could help me feel more normal. Not having sex since getting pregnant at fifteen made me feel like a freak. I'd also lost two boyfriends because of my inability to have sex with someone. I needed to get over it.

“I'm sure I want this. I want *you*,” I corrected.

“Come here, pretty girl.”

I stepped closer, and he cupped the back of my head with one hand while placing the other on my waist. He tugged me against his body and lowered his lips to mine. Holy hell, the man could kiss! My legs trembled and I couldn't catch my breath. It felt like I'd fall if he released me.

Atilla slid his hand from my hip up my back and I felt him pop the clasp on my bra. He pulled away long enough to remove the garment, then stared at my breasts like a starving man. He cupped one, giving it a light squeeze before stroking the nipple. I gasped and arched into his touch, feeling pleasure zinging straight from the hardened peak to my clit. I'd never realized such a thing was possible. Sure, I'd read romances where the woman came multiple times. I'd thought it was pure fantasy. Now I had to wonder.

"You like that?" he asked.

I nodded mutely. He lifted me and placed me on my back on the bed. Kneeling on the floor, he removed my shoes, then slid my panties down my thighs and let them drop to the floor. Atilla dragged his hands up my calves to my knees and spread me open.

"When's the last time a man made you come?" he asked.

"Never," I admitted.

"Then I guess we better change that."

He stood and toed off his boots, then removed his shirt. He unfastened his pants but left them on as he placed a knee on either side of my hips. Looking up at him, I felt so tiny. Atilla seemed larger than life. For an older man, he'd kept in shape. I reached up and placed my hand on his chest, feeling his strength.

"If I do something you don't like, tell me. Otherwise, I might not pick up on the hint you aren't enjoying yourself. I know some women fake it, thinking that's what a man wants. It's not."

“All right.” I licked my lips. “So far, I like what you’ve been doing.”

He winked and leaned down, taking my nipple into his mouth. He sucked on it long and hard, making my toes curl and my heart race. I’d never known it would feel this incredible. He switched sides, and I felt my pussy grow slick. I’d be so embarrassed if he made me come just from this alone, but I was close. I could feel something building inside me, this burning need.

“Please, Atilla. More.”

He placed his hand between my legs and stroked my pussy. His fingers teased me, brushing over my clit several times. Even that slight amount of stimulation, plus his lips on my breast, was enough to make me come. I cried out, my body tensing as pleasure flooded me.

“That’s one,” he said.

One? One what? I didn’t understand what he meant until he eased a finger inside me and pressed the heel of his hand against my clit. I bucked against him, still sensitive from my orgasm. He worked my pussy like a pro, making me feel crazy. I wanted to latch on and never let him go. I came twice more and yearned for more.

He leaned down and kissed me. “Next time you come, it’s going to be on my cock.”

Atilla took out his wallet and pulled out a condom. I wasn’t sure how I felt about him keeping one with him. Did he do this sort of thing often? The night I’d gone to the clubhouse, he’d been alone and brushed off every woman who approached. I’d thought maybe he was different from the

others. How many of those women had he been with? My concern must have shown on my face. He leaned down, getting close enough I could feel his breath on my lips.

“Hey. I’m clean, okay? Haven’t been with anyone in a while and got tested after the last time. At my age, I don’t need sex all the damn time like those youngsters out there.”

“All right.” If he said so, then I’d believe him. Maybe I didn’t have a reason to, but he also hadn’t proven himself to be untrustworthy. My gut said he was an honorable man.

He stood and shoved his pants and underwear off. The sight of his cock made my breath catch. It wasn’t overly long or thick, but to me, it looked perfect. I’d never thought a man’s dick would be attractive. My cheeks warmed as I watched him roll the condom on.

He spread my legs wider and settled between them. I felt the head of his cock press against me, and the burn as he stretched me. He slid in slowly, taking his time. Reaching up, I held onto him.

“You okay?” he asked.

“I’m good. Just... need you to move or something.”

He smiled faintly and reached between us to play with my clit. By the time he was thrusting into me with long, deep strokes, I knew I was close to coming again. His strokes became erratic, and I felt the heat of his cum, even through the latex. He strummed my clit faster, and I screamed his name as I came again. Panting for breath, I looked up at him and wondered if he’d just ruined me for any other man.

Atilla reached down to hold the condom as he pulled out. He removed it, then carried it into the bathroom. I heard

the sink running, and he came back with a warm, wet rag. He used it to clean me up before kissing me softly.

He got back onto the bed and pulled me against his chest, holding me as he ran his hand up and down my back. Tears pricked my eyes, but I refused to cry. Why did he have to be so wonderful? It hurt knowing I couldn't keep him.

At least I'd have this one night to remember for the rest of my life.

Chapter Two

Atila

What the hell had I been thinking? It was one thing to have a clubhouse quickie with one of the sluts who came to party. Sleeping with Solena had been something else entirely, which was why I'd held her afterward. I didn't know what pain she'd been trying to chase away, and maybe I should have asked, but I hoped I'd given her what she needed. Although, I wasn't sure why I couldn't get her off my mind.

I hadn't formed an attachment to a woman since Rebecca, and I didn't plan to start now. Getting mixed up with a sweet young thing like Solena was all kinds of wrong. I knew it, and yet I'd done it anyway. I wondered what trauma she'd been repressing last night with alcohol and sex. She'd said she wasn't a virgin, but she'd still been as tight as one. Made me think she didn't sleep around. I'd thought she just didn't party. Perhaps it was more than that.

"Morning, Dad," Casey said as she wandered into the kitchen, still looking half asleep. I got up and poured her a glass of juice before making her some toast. I'd already learned she couldn't handle more than that first thing. Anything else made her throw up.

"Morning. You sleep okay?" I asked, noting the dark circles under her eyes.

"Not really."

I held out my hand, and she gave me her phone. If I

didn't have so much shit going on here, and a daughter who was going to pop at any moment, I'd have hauled my ass out of town to have a little chat with dear Aunt Su and Uncle Mark. I scrolled through the texts they'd sent her last night, getting more pissed off by the minute.

“Did these fuckers seriously call you a whore and demand you give your baby up?” I asked.

“Yeah. Said they had everything set for a private adoption.”

“You haven't lived with them for months. What the fuck are they thinking?” I asked.

“They know I'm due now. Although, why they care about my baby is a mystery. Like you said, I don't live with them anymore. Other than getting bombarded with their texts, I haven't spoken with them since I left.”

I finished making her toast, handed it off to her, then poured myself another cup of coffee. At my age, I should cut back on caffeine, but you only got to enjoy life once. Of course, I now had two reasons to stick around for a while. I not only had my daughter back, but a grandbaby on the way.

“Anything else you need for the nursery?” I asked.

“Dad, you've done enough. She'll have a bed, changing table, clothes, diapers, and any other necessities. Thanks to your club, she also has a baby seat and stroller.”

I kissed her on top of the head before I sat. “Can't help but worry. I have a lot of years to make up for.”

“It's not your fault. They lied and let you think I'd died with Mom. Since they never said much about you, I don't

know why they did that. If you'd been part of my life, then things might have turned out differently."

"True, but would you really change anything if it meant your daughter wouldn't exist?" I asked.

"No." She didn't even hesitate. "Her dad might be an asshole cheater, but I love my daughter."

"Good girl." I smiled. "Your mom would be really proud of you."

"One day I'll have a place of my own and will take care of my daughter without needing anyone's help," she said.

"Well, for now, keep saving your money."

She nibbled on her toast and sighed. I knew what she was about to ask. It was the same thing every day. I wish I had better news for her.

"Do you think Meredith will want to go shopping with me?" she asked.

"Casey, you know it's hard on her. She lost her baby. I promise she's not keeping her distance because she doesn't like you. Seeing you ready to give birth is painful for her. Lynx has her in therapy, and she's improving. Just give her a little more time."

Casey nodded. I knew she understood, even if she didn't like it. My girl was smart, and more mature than most girls her age. Which made me think about Solena again. She'd said she was twenty-three, and yet, I'd never thought she acted like someone in their early twenties. What the hell had the woman been through?

And now I was thinking about her again.

“You have plans for today?” Casey asked.

“Not really. Why? Need help with something?”

She shook her head. “Thought maybe you could stop by the café and have lunch. I should be able to take my fifteen-minute break then, so I could sit with you for a little bit.”

“You should take time off. It’s getting so close to your due date.”

“I don’t want to risk losing my job, Dad. Besides, when it’s not busy, the manager gives me tasks I can do sitting down, like stuffing the napkin holders or refilling the salt and pepper shakers.”

“Just don’t overdo it.”

“I won’t.” She stood and carried her dishes to the sink. “I need to shower and study a little before I go to work.”

“Why don’t you let me drive you? What if you go into labor while you’re on the road between here and work?” I asked.

“Fine, but I think you’re worrying too much.”

I winked. “That’s my job. Soon as that baby gets here, you’ll understand.”

Casey rolled her eyes and walked out of the kitchen. I finished my coffee and read the news on my phone. Since Casey had left hers behind, I unlocked it and read through the messages from Su and Mark again. What were these fuckers up to?

Sure, I got it on some level. They must have felt like Casey’s parents since they took her in after her grandparents were gone. But they’d thrown her out, and she hadn’t lived

with them for the last three months. What did it matter to them if she kept her baby or not? If I didn't know better, it was almost like...

“Son of a bitch,” I muttered. They wouldn't have, would they?

I called Outlaw, hoping he could find some information for me, or at least ask one of his hacker friends to do it. I knew he wasn't able to do as much as he once could. Not since some asshole nearly crushed his hands.

“What's up, Atilla?” he asked the moment the call connected.

“I'm hoping like fuck I'm wrong, but I need you to look into some people for me. They lived down the street from my daughter's grandparents and took her in. I just know them as Aunt Su and Uncle Mark. Casey never gave me their last name. I know they aren't her actual aunt and uncle.”

“And I'm looking into them because why?” he asked.

“They're pushing for Casey to give the baby up for adoption. Since she hasn't lived there for about three months, and they have no claim on the child, it made me wonder what was in it for them.”

“Shit,” he muttered. “All right. Text me any info you have, like an address, phone number, or something, and I'll narrow things down a bit. I'll most likely hand this off to Wire and Lavender once I have more details. I hope you're wrong, though.”

“Me too, brother. Me too.”

As soon as the call ended, I sent them the last known

address I had for Rebecca's parents, as well as their names and the number they texted from. I didn't know if he'd be able to find Su and Mark or not, but I hoped so. I didn't like the fact they were messaging Casey. In fact, I needed to get her a new phone with a number those assholes didn't have. She didn't enjoy speaking to them, so there was no reason she couldn't cut them out of her life.

I got up and stuck my head in Casey's room, catching her attention. "I'm going to head out for a bit. I'll be back before you go to work."

"All right. If I need anything, I'll find Spade," she said.

"Just don't go to the clubhouse. If he's not at his house, then look for Rebel or one of the Prospects."

"Got it, Dad. I'll be fine."

I went to my room to get my cut, as well as my wallet and keys. I got on my bike and headed for the front gate. Ben waved as I went through, and I drove to the nearest phone store. Once I had a new one, along with a new number, for Casey, I picked out a sturdy case for it and paid for everything. I'd brought her old one with me, and they were able to transfer everything to the new device.

I stored it in the saddlebag on my bike and scanned the street. I felt someone's eyes on me. It wasn't an unusual occurrence. People around town noticed the men in my club. The curvy woman trying to hide behind a potted tree caught my attention. I nearly smiled when I realized it was Solena. What was she doing? Did she really think I couldn't see her?

Clearly, she didn't want my attention, so I didn't wave or call out to her. Instead, I got on my bike and drove home.

When I walked in the door, I found my daughter frantically tearing apart the house.

“Whoa! What’s missing?” I asked.

“My phone. I know I had it in the kitchen with you. Now I can’t find it.”

I winced. “Sorry. That’s my fault. I took it with me.”

I pulled out both phones and handed her the new one first. Her brow furrowed as she checked it over, then I gave her the old one.

“Why do I have two?” she asked.

“New phone and new number. Everything should have transferred. Once you’ve checked the new one to make sure there isn’t anything missing, I’m going to have the old one wiped and send it somewhere to be refurbished.” I folded my arms. “I don’t want to chance those fuckers having a way to track your every move.”

I knew I should tell her my concerns about Su and Mark, but I didn’t want her to worry. The stress would be bad for the baby. Right now, she just needed to get her GED, have a healthy baby, and get her life on track. I’d give her whatever support she needed in the meantime. With some luck, Outlaw could tell me I’d been completely wrong about the assholes who wanted to hand my grandbaby over to someone else. My gut was telling me that wasn’t the case.

“What time do you go to work today?” I asked, glancing at my watch.

“In about...” Her eyes went wide and her jaw dropped. Right about that time, I noticed a puddle at her feet.

“Shit. Hold tight. I’ll get your bag.” And something to put down on the seat of the SUV. After I picked up her hospital bag, I snatched a trash bag from the pantry and a towel from the laundry room. I shoved the bag into the back seat, tucked the trash bag and towel into the seat, and helped my daughter to the vehicle.

I paused only long enough to text Spade. *Casey’s in labor.*

I didn’t wait to see if he’d respond. Instead, I got behind the wheel and backed down the driveway. The Prospect at the gate barely got it open before I was barreling through it. Thankfully, St. Mary’s wasn’t very far.

“How far apart are your contractions?” I asked.

She stared at me blankly. “What?”

“Are you feeling any pain? Maybe it feels like cramps, or does your lower back hurt?” I tried to think of things I’d heard about over the years. Since I hadn’t been through this before, it was all new to me.

“Oh. Well, I get a sharp pain across my stomach, but it’s not anything I can’t handle. I didn’t want to whine about it.”

I tried to process her words and just shook my head. If there was ever a time to bitch and moan, this was it. I pulled up to the ER and helped her from the car. A nurse came out with a wheelchair.

“We’ve been expecting you. A Mr. Spade called,” she said.

Looked like my VP had gotten my text. Good. I

handed my daughter off to her and parked the SUV before hurrying inside. It looked like I'd be meeting my granddaughter soon. I couldn't wait.

Since we'd pre-registered, there wasn't much to be done. I double-checked with the front desk to make sure they had my credit card on file, as well as the insurance I'd purchased for Casey. Once that was done, all I could do was sit and wait. My ass barely hit the chair before the same nurse came over to me.

"Your daughter is asking for you," she said. "Usually the baby's father would be the one to go back with her, or perhaps her mother, but she said neither is in the picture."

"Her mom is dead, and the baby's father..." I shrugged. I wasn't about to go down that road right now. I'd left the little punk alone so far, only because it's what Casey wanted. The moment she changed her mind, I'd be teaching the little fucker a lesson he'd never forget.

"Come on. I'll walk you through everything. I'm sure a few things have changed since your daughter was born."

No way was I going to admit I hadn't been there for her birth. It hadn't been my choice. I followed the nurse and washed up before pulling on sterile scrubs. Once I was ready, she led me into the delivery room, where my daughter looked far too chill for someone about to give birth.

"You doing okay, Casey?" I asked.

She held out her hand. "I'm good. Ready to meet your granddaughter?"

"Yep."

I wrapped my fingers around hers, thinking she'd likely break my hand once it came time to push the baby out. Fuck if that little kid didn't pop out almost immediately. The doctor told her to push three times, and we had a baby.

"Congratulations! We'll get your little girl cleaned up, and then you can visit with her."

I focused on Casey's face while they delivered the afterbirth and got her cleaned up. By the time they handed the baby to her, she looked ready to take a nap.

"Is this normal?" I asked the nurse in a low voice, not wanting Casey to hear me. "It just seemed too easy."

The nurse shook her head. "Not the least bit normal. It happens from time to time, but first babies usually take longer to deliver. Your daughter had to have been in labor for hours, if not for the last few days. She never said anything?"

"Not one word."

"That one is a trooper." The nurse patted my shoulder. "You've raised a good one."

I liked how she said nothing about Casey being only seventeen and now a mom. No one had made her feel bad for having a kid when she was still one herself. Everyone we'd met during this process had been supportive, and always had a smile on their faces.

"Dad," Casey called out.

"What is it?" I went back over and looked down at the pink wrapped bundle in her arms. My granddaughter was a beauty with thick, dark hair. It curled a bit on the ends. I reached out my hand and she curled her little fingers around

my pinky. And just like that, the little girl owned me heart and soul.

“I want to name her after Mom. I thought we could call her Becca for short,” she said. “Rebecca Ivy Cutler.”

That had been the first thing we’d done when my daughter showed up. I’d had a paternity test done to prove she was mine, then we’d had her last name changed. Thanks to a local judge, I’d also become her official guardian. Which meant no one was going to take my daughter from me.

“I think your mom would have really liked that,” I said. I leaned down to kiss Casey on the forehead, then did the same to little Becca.

My family was expanding, and I couldn’t have been happier. I knew having a baby in the house would mean sleepless nights. Didn’t matter. Little Becca could scream or cry as much as she wanted. I only wished I could have done all this with my own child. I hope Rebecca’s parents were rotting in hell for what they’d done.

Chapter Three

Solena

I'd hidden from him. Why? I wanted to smack my head against the wall. The second I saw him across the street, I'd panicked. When I'd slept with him, I'd known I'd see him around town, and at the café. If I couldn't handle keeping things casual, I shouldn't have taken off my damn clothes. Besides, it hadn't really solved anything. I still missed my son and worried about him. The only thing I'd gained was a memorable night, my crush skyrocketing into severe lust territory, and a slight hangover this morning.

I felt like an idiot.

“Hey, Solena. Can you cover Casey's shift today?”
Dave asked.

Was something wrong? I wiped my hands on a rag and nodded. “Of course.”

“Thanks. I'll get coverage for the rest of her shifts that are already on the schedule. I just didn't have anything planned for today,” he said. “She went into labor this morning. Someone from the club called when she was on her way to the hospital.”

It must have happened after I saw Atilla. There was no way that overprotective Papa Bear had been out shopping while his daughter was in labor. I'd heard she was having a little girl. I hoped everything went okay. My fingers itched to grab my phone and check on her. We worked together and

nothing more. She might find it odd if I sent her a text. We'd exchanged numbers the first week she started working, in case anything came up. Of course, I didn't blame her for not reaching out when she went into labor. I still remembered the pain of giving birth to my son.

I envied her a little. She had someone supportive who was letting her keep her baby. Maybe if my parents hadn't been complete assholes, I'd have been able to keep my son. They'd nearly thrown me out of the house when I told them I was having a baby. Instead, they'd shown the community how much they cared about me by "helping" me stay in school and get the prenatal care I needed. Then they'd given my baby away without my consent. Since I'd only been fifteen, I hadn't had a say in the matter. If I'd been emancipated, then I'd have kept my son. Maybe it was something I should have attempted, but there weren't too many places that would hire someone who was only fifteen.

Instead, I'd let my parents force me to sign away my rights. I'd given them control over the fate of my child, and I'd paid the price for it every day since. They'd made me feel like I didn't have a choice in the matter. I'd had nowhere to go. They'd said they were going to kick me out if I didn't give up my baby. Why couldn't they have at least let me hold him just once?

"You okay?" Dave asked.

I realized I'd been staring into space and reminiscing about my child. I gave him a smile and got back to work. As far as managers went, Dave was pretty great. He always made sure we got our breaks, tried to give us the schedule we needed, and was understanding if someone got sick and

couldn't make it in. Not a lot of places were so lenient.

"I'm going to take up a donation for Casey. Thought we could give her some cash for whatever baby items she may need. Will you let her regular customers know there's a jar by the register?" Dave asked.

"Sure. I can do that."

Why couldn't I have known Dave back then? I'd felt so alone during my pregnancy. My parents made me feel ashamed, even though I hadn't been at fault. They'd called me names, made sure I knew how disappointed they were, and I'd even lost what few friends I'd had.

You will not wallow in self-pity! Snap out of it!

Last night had been a terrible idea. Would this have hit me as hard if I hadn't handed myself to Atilla on a silver platter? Being with him had been wonderful, and also heartbreaking. I knew he'd never want me the way I wanted him. No, I *needed* him. I'd been a quick release and nothing more. He'd made it clear he couldn't offer me anything. Had asked multiple times if I was sure I wanted to go through with it. Like a fool, I'd said yes.

Part of me regretted it. Only part. I'd had no idea sex could be like that. I felt sore this morning. Even though Atilla's cock wasn't the size of a porn star's, it had felt big to me. Every step I took was a reminder of what we'd done last night. I hoped it was the *only* reminder I'd have. He'd used a condom, but I knew those weren't foolproof. Not having a boyfriend, or planning to have sex anytime soon, meant I wasn't on birth control. Honestly, I'd never used it. It had seemed like an added expense I didn't need.

Sunny, one of my co-workers, came over with a bright smile on her face. “I’m going by the hospital after my shift to take a look at the baby. Want to come?”

My heart ached at the thought. I didn’t begrudge Casey her sweet baby, but I wasn’t sure I wanted to see her. Not yet anyway. I felt too raw after last night. Between thoughts of my son dragging me down, and knowing I’d never have a shot with the one man I wanted, I wasn’t in a good place today.

“I think I’ll wait a bit. I’m sure all the Savage Raptors will visit throughout the day. I don’t want to overwhelm her.”

“Hmm. I didn’t think of that.” Sunny shrugged. “Well, I have a little gift for the baby. I can always drop it off and leave it with one of the men if she isn’t up for company.”

“Did Dave tell you about the donation jar?” I asked.

“Yeah. I think it’s a great idea. I bet a lot of customers will shove a few dollars in there, if not more. Casey is such a sweetheart. Everyone loves her.”

She wasn’t wrong. Even I liked Casey. The girl seemed to always have a positive attitude, no matter what life threw her way. I’d heard a little about the people who’d taken her in. They didn’t seem very nice. Then again, they weren’t worse than my own parents. The difference was Casey had the courage to walk away. I hadn’t done that.

“You sure you’re okay?” Sunny asked. “You seem off today.”

“I’ll be fine. Yesterday was a rough day for me. I guess I’m still in a bit of a fog.”

“Well, if you need anything, just give me a shout.”

My co-workers were all wonderful. We didn't hang out as friends, but they checked on me if I missed a shift. It was the closest thing I had to a support system. The bell over the door jingled, and I looked up, my heart racing when I saw a few of the Savage Raptors come in. Atilla wasn't among them. Not that it surprised me. He would probably stay at the hospital with Casey until she could go home.

"Who wants to see baby pictures?" one of them asked, waving his phone around.

"I do!" Sunny practically bounced over to them. "Oh my gosh! She's so cute. What did Casey decide to name her?"

"Becca. After her mom."

And that's when my knees nearly gave out. I gripped the counter hard to remain upright. Atilla had already said there wasn't a future for us. Why did it matter that his daughter named her child Becca? Besides, it wasn't like the big biker picked out the name. It made me wonder if he'd think about his lost love even more now that he not only had Casey living with him, but his granddaughter shared a name with her.

I forced myself to walk over and see the baby pictures. I made all the appropriate remarks, even held a smile, but inside I felt like I was dying a little. Somehow, I made it through the day with no mishaps. I left work and went straight home. It made me feel a little petty, since everyone at the café had talked about going to see Casey and little Becca. I'd been the only one to bow out, aside from those who had to work the dinner shift.

My phone rang with an out-of-state number. One I didn't recognize. I almost didn't answer, but something made

me hesitate for a second. I clicked the *accept* button.

“Hello?”

“You don’t know me, but my name is Lavender.” Hearing a woman’s voice set me at ease a little. “I have some information I think you might want.”

“Um, I’m sorry, but what’s this about?” I asked.

I kicked off my shoes and unfastened my braid, massaging my scalp. If this woman was trying to sell something, she’d dialed the wrong number. I made do. I could pay for my apartment and other necessities. Anything else wasn’t going to happen. Not anytime soon.

“You gave birth to a little boy at St. Mary’s hospital in Bryson Corners, Oklahoma, eight years ago, correct?” the woman asked.

My breath caught, and my heart nearly stopped. “How do you know about my son?”

“Oh, good. I have the right number. Your name is Solena, right?”

“Yeah. But again, how do you know about my son? Is this some sort of joke? What do you want?” I asked, feeling my panic and anger rise.

“I’m a hacker. You have a motorcycle club in your town. Savage Raptors. My husband and I were looking into something for their President. It ended up being a much bigger problem than anyone expected. I ran across your name and the information for your little boy.”

My throat grew tight. “He’s alive?”

“Yes. Your parents attended a small rural church,

correct?”

“They did. I haven’t spoken to them since I moved out. What does that have to do with anything? Are you saying the church facilitated the adoption?”

She snorted. “That’s one way of putting it. Anyway, I’ll call back when I have more information. Right now, we’re still trying to connect all the dots.”

“Wait! My son... what’s his name?” I needed something. Anything. A tiny crumb of information. After going without my son for so long, this was the most hope I’d had since the day he was born.

“Santiago.”

Before I could ask for anything else, the call ended. I stared at the phone in my hand as tears slipped down my cheeks. I had so many questions. What did the church have to do with anything? Why had Atilla asked them to look into something that ended up being tied to my son? And what were the odds?

I’d never believed in coincidences. Only fate. Had it been fate that I’d met Atilla? Was there something bigger at play?

“Santiago,” I murmured. Knowing my son’s name filled me with joy. Would I be able to meet him one day? He’d be eight now. Attending elementary school. Making friends. Did he like to play catch or chase a soccer ball? What sorts of movies and books did he like?

One little piece of information, and now I had a thirst to learn everything about my little boy. I almost dialed the woman back, but something told me it wouldn’t do me any

good. If she'd wanted me to know more, she'd have said so. The way she'd been somewhat abrupt and stuck to facts and questions told me she was a professional. A hacker? I knew what that meant, of course. Or at least, I knew what TV told me that entailed.

“What are you looking for, Atilla?” I murmured. I needed to know.

Taking off my sweaty work clothes, I rinsed off in the shower, put my hair up in a messy bun, and threw on some black leggings and a pink tunic-style shirt with black and gray swirls across it. I slipped on my black canvas slides and grabbed my keys before hurrying out the door.

I hadn't planned to go to the hospital to see Casey and the baby, but now I needed to. Or, more accurately, I needed to go see Attila. I didn't know if I could convince him to talk to me or not. But I had to try. This was the closest I'd ever been to locating my little boy and finding out if he'd had a happy life. I couldn't just sit and wait, hoping that the woman — Lavender — would call again.

I drove to the hospital and parked near the entrance. It felt like it took forever to reach the maternity ward, and the second I entered the waiting room, I saw a half dozen Savage Raptors. Attila wasn't among them. However, Spade was there, and he came over right away.

“You here to see the baby?” he asked.

“Um. Yes and no. I want to see little Becca, but I need to ask Atilla something.”

He rocked back on his heels. “Sorry, but with the way things went down last night, I don't think it was more than just

the one time.”

My cheeks warmed. “It’s not about that. A woman named Lavender called me. I have some questions I need answered. She mentioned Atilla specifically.”

“Right. Okay, then. Wait here and I’ll go get him. I’m sure he could use a coffee break, anyway.”

Spade walked off, leaving me with the other men in his club. They stared at me before going back to their conversation. Had they heard everything? Probably. Great. That meant even if they hadn’t seen me last night, they now knew I’d slept with their President.

Spade returned a few minutes later with Atilla right behind him. The big man didn’t seem amused. If anything, I saw a storm brewing in his eyes. Shit. Maybe I should have held off and at least waited until he’d gone home.

“Outside. Now,” he said.

I swallowed hard and meekly followed him. I’d thought he literally meant outside, as in the parking lot, but he surprised me by going to the cafeteria. He motioned to the various food items.

“Get something to eat. You look like you’re going to pass out.” His tone seemed softer than before, and I reached out to grab the first thing I saw — a turkey sandwich. I also got a bottle of juice and a yogurt cup. Atilla walked over to the hot food area and ordered a burger with fries. He gently placed his hand on my lower back and led me to the cashier, where he paid for our food.

“You don’t have to do this,” I said.

“Hush, woman. When’s the last time you ate?”

I shrugged. I honestly didn’t remember. While I’d worked all of my shift and Casey’s, it was a bit of a blur. He chose a table against the wall on the far side of the cafeteria, away from the other people. At least it would be quiet, and I wouldn’t have to worry about people listening to our conversation.

“Now, you told Spade someone named Lavender called you?” he asked.

“Yes. I’d just gotten home from work when my phone rang. I didn’t recognize the number and almost didn’t answer. I’m glad I did. She said she was a hacker and was looking into something for you when she ran across information on my son.”

He held up a hand. “Wait. What son?”

“That’s a long conversation,” I said. And one I wasn’t sure he deserved to know. He’d made it clear we didn’t have a future. Why did he care if I had a son?

“Do I look like I’m going anywhere? Casey and Becca are fine. They can do without me for a short while. Talk to me, Solena.”

“Can I ask what she was looking for?”

The way he leaned back in his seat and folded his arms made me feel like I’d done something wrong. Was it bad that I’d asked such a question? It seemed logical to me. A woman I’d never met called me out of the blue, mentioned Atilla’s name and said she’d found my son, and I was supposed to what? Sit at home and wait patiently for someone to possibly give me more information?

Not likely.

I stared back, waiting to see what he'd do.

Chapter Four

Atila

Why the fuck had Lavender called her? And why didn't I know Solena had a kid? We weren't exactly friends, but we'd talked here and there. I didn't remember hearing anything about a child. Most people brought up their kids when they talked to Casey. I didn't know why my daughter's pregnant belly made them think she needed to hear all their stories of when their kid was a baby and stayed up all night.

It wasn't technically club business. After all, I'd called Outlaw, who had called Wire and Lavender, to dig up dirt on Su and Mark. I needed to know why they wanted my grandbaby so badly. Or rather, why they wanted Casey to give up her daughter. If they'd run across something while looking into that couple...

"My daughter was staying with two people she called Aunt Su and Uncle Mark, even though they weren't related. For some reason, they kept texting her, wanting her to give her baby up for adoption. Since she doesn't live with them anymore, I thought it was strange." My name was called, and I went to pick up my order. When I got back, I took a bite of my burger before I continued. "I called a friend who happens to be a hacker. Or he was. He then reached out to Lavender and her husband, to see if they could find anything suspicious on the couple."

Solena paled and tensed. Interesting. Was it their names that brought on that reaction? The part about adoption?

She'd mentioned a son, but again, I didn't recall her ever talking about one. Had she given her baby up for adoption? And if so, how long ago? She'd said she was only twenty-three. Was it somewhat recent?

“Solena, you said Lavender called about your son. Talk to me. What's going on?”

The stubborn set of her chin told me plenty. I'd hurt her by being so adamant I'd never settle down. Rebecca had been my one and only. Or so I'd thought. But if that was true, why had I woken up thinking about Solena first thing this morning? Not to mention the mere thought someone might have hurt her, or something nefarious might have happened to her boy, made me want to shelter and protect her. I'd never had that reaction to a woman. Not since Rebecca. Well, I felt that way with Casey, but she was my daughter, so it was different.

I waited to see if she'd talk to me. I wasn't sure how much I should say about what Lavender and Wire were working on. If her boy had gotten mixed up in this somehow, then she had a right to know. And if not... it might not be club business, but it *was* personal. I wasn't sure how much I wanted to let her in. What would Casey think about it? I'd only recently gotten my daughter back. I didn't know if I was ready to risk driving her away by bringing a woman home, especially one closer to her age than mine.

“When I was fifteen, my boyfriend raped me. No one believed me. They said I'd consented and changed my mind later. It's what my boyfriend claimed happened. I don't know why they all took his side.” Her eyes darkened and her lower lip trembled. “I got pregnant. I was still fifteen when my son was born. My parents never gave me a chance to hold him or

even see his face. He was taken away immediately and put up for adoption.”

I fisted my hand on the table, wanting to find the little shit and beat the hell out of him. It didn't matter if he'd only been a kid. He'd been old enough to know right and wrong. The thought of someone hurting her in such an awful way made me see red.

And that's when I knew I was fucked.

It didn't matter if I *wanted* to let her in, because she was already there, worming her way into my heart. I already cared. Wanted to protect her. Hold her and tell her everything would be fine.

Shit.

“Is that what you wanted?” I asked, trying to stay focused.

“No. I wanted my baby, despite everything. My parents didn't give me a choice. My boyfriend must have agreed with them because I remember his signature on the papers they forced me to sign. I've never known what happened to my little boy. Last night...” She looked away.

“What about last night?” I asked.

“It was a bad day for me. That's why I was at your clubhouse drinking. Or part of the reason. My son has been on my mind a lot lately. I've wondered if he's happy. If he's even still alive. What sort of life he's had. Lavender gave me the first hope I've ever had. I even know his name.” She smiled a little. “Santiago.”

“And Lavender found out about your boy while

looking into Su and Mark?” I asked.

“I guess so. She said she’d been working on something for you. The fact they wanted to put Becca up for adoption, and that led to Lavender finding Santiago, makes me think they’re part of the organization who took my baby.” She pressed her lips together. “She also mentioned something about the church my parents attended when they lived here. Both my family and the church have moved. I don’t know where because I cut all ties with my family when I moved out. I just know they put their house up for sale, and I noticed the church was vacant one day when I drove past it. Of course, it could have just shut down entirely and not changed location.”

I’d file the information away about the church. Had it really been a church? Or was something deeper going on? How were Solena’s parents involved? Instead of putting the puzzle together, I seemed to only end up with more pieces I couldn’t fit together.

“Was there anything off about the adoption with your son?” I asked.

“The adoption agency my parents mentioned didn’t handle the case. I’ve never known who put my baby in the hands of complete strangers. It’s possible my parents did it themselves. They’re awful enough.”

“I’m sorry, Solena. It seems we have more in common than I thought. Until Casey showed up at the clubhouse, I’d thought she was dead. I’d received the news her mother, Rebecca, died before she could give birth to our daughter. No one else told me Casey was still alive or had been safely delivered. The anniversary of what I assumed to be *their* death always hit me hard. Oddly enough, that’s the same day Casey

showed up. On her seventeenth birthday.”

“I always thought not knowing was the worst part. Now I know he’s alive, and have no idea if he’s healthy and happy, if his parents love him, or anything other than his name and he’s alive. I think it’s even worse.”

“Give me a minute. I’m going to finish this burger and fries, then I’ll see if Lavender or Wire will give me more info. I know what it’s like to need closure. Since she called you, I know you have her number. But you came to me instead of calling her back. Your reasons are your own, and I don’t need to know why you did it.” I cleared my throat. “And for what it’s worth, I’m sorry about what I said last night. It didn’t occur to me it might have made you feel like I was using you. I’m a guy. A biker. And admittedly, I can be an asshole. Usually, I’m only an asshole when I need to be one.”

She gave me a genuine smile that time, and I considered it a win. I finished my food, threw our trash away, and took her by the hand. The fact it felt so small in mine made my protective urges rise up even more. I didn’t know what Lavender had found, or why the fuck she’d call Solena and only give her a small piece of news about her son. She’d better have a damn good reason, because it pissed me the fuck off.

I led Solena out of the hospital and to a small courtyard I’d discovered when I’d taken a walk earlier. We sat on one of the park benches and I pulled out my phone. Even though I didn’t speak directly with Wire very often, I had his number. The phone rang three times before he answered.

“Wire speaking,” he said as the call connected.

“It’s Atilla.”

“We’re still looking into some things,” Wire said. “But we should have news for you soon. Lavender had a bit of luck earlier and it helped her connect a few pieces.”

“I’m aware.” I tried to keep the irritation from my voice. “Why the fuck did she call Solena and drop that kind of bomb on her?”

I could hear him breathing, but otherwise, the line was silent. I knew the fucker was still there. I gave him another minute, then hung up the phone. Instead of calling him back, I called Outlaw.

“Just got a text from Wire,” he said when the call connected.

“Hello to you too,” I muttered. “What did the asshole have to say for himself?”

“He wasn’t aware you knew Solena.”

I counted to ten. Then twenty. Nope. Still pissed.

“What the fuck does it matter if I know her? Why would Lavender do that to her? She’s a mom. Did she stop to think how it would have made her feel if their roles had been reversed? It was a hurtful thing to do, and I don’t fucking appreciate it.”

Outlaw whistled. “Damn. You have it bad. But noted. I’ll have a talk with him. I’m sure Lavender was in the zone and trying to tie things together. She probably didn’t stop long enough to consider how her actions would impact Solena.”

“I get it. I do, but it doesn’t make me any happier.”

“They’ve been sharing information with me as they find things. From what I’m looking at, it seemed like Solena’s

family handed off her son to their local church. The pastor then placed the child in a home. It's the same pastor who's been in contact with Su and Mark." I heard Outlaw's chair creak as he sighed. "If I had to guess, we're looking at a human trafficking ring. I can only hope the kids are all safe and are actually with loving parents, but after all the horrific things we've seen? I'm struggling a bit to hold on to the faith we'll find them in good health and still alive."

Motherfucker. I couldn't tell Solena that. No way in fucking hell. Lavender apparently told her that Santiago was alive. At least there was some small comfort in that. If the kid was still breathing, then we just needed to get him home to her. The rest would eventually work itself out — probably with a shit ton of therapy.

"What about Santiago?" I asked. "Did they send you anything on him?"

"Let me check." It took a few minutes of papers shuffling before he found what he was searching for. "Got it. Santiago is... Fuck."

"Not instilling a lot of confidence right now," I said.

"Yeah, sorry. It's just... he's bounced around. A lot. But Atilla... he's in Bryson Corners right now. I'm going to text you everything I can find on his location. You'll need to extract him. Fast."

"Got it."

"And, Atilla? Don't tell the mom what's going on yet. Now isn't the time."

Outlaw ended the call, and I stared at Solena, wondering what the hell I was going to do. Once I had the

information from Outlaw, I'd know a little more. Either way, it didn't sound like the kid was in a good place.

“What's going on?” she asked.

How the hell could I look her in the eye and lie to her face? I couldn't. Outlaw said not to tell her anything yet, but I could at least give her a little hope, right? I knew how much she'd missed her boy. If I could get him back for her... I thought over the years I'd had without Casey. I'd have given anything for someone to tell my daughter was alive.

“Well, I don't know for certain yet, but... how would you like to have your son back?” Tears gathered in her eyes, her lips trembled, and then she threw herself into my arms. I held her as she sobbed against my chest, and I knew I'd do whatever it took to bring her kid to her. “It's going to be okay, Solena. I'll get him back for you. Just promise me something.”

“Anything,” she said.

“Get him whatever help he may need. I have no idea what the kid has been through. Outlaw is going to tell me how to find him, but he said your boy has been bounced around some different homes.”

“He's only eight,” she said, wiping the tears from her cheeks.

“What do you need for him?” I asked.

“Everything.” She smiled. “I never thought I'd get to see him, much less hug him. Now you're telling me he can live with me?”

I nodded. “I'll make sure it happens. Whatever it takes.”

“I don’t know what size he wears or anything. What if I get something that doesn’t fit? Or toys he doesn’t like?”

I felt her trembling and knew she was both excited and scared. As much as I wanted to go back up to be with Casey and Becca, I knew they had plenty of people in their corner. Solena didn’t seem to have anyone. Who stood beside her during hard times? Who lent a hand when she was floundering?

“Come on. Let’s go see the baby, and I’ll make sure Spade stays with Casey. Then you and I can go make sure you have the basics for your boy.”

“Are you sure?” she asked.

“I’m positive.” I stood and held out my hand. She slid her palm against mine. I closed my fingers around hers and led her back into the hospital.

The fact my heart was slamming against my ribs wasn’t something I’d admit to anyone. It was like the first time I’d seen Rebecca. Excitement hummed in my veins, and her hand felt incredibly right in mine. I had too much going on and felt like I needed to be in twenty places at once. But knowing my daughter and granddaughter were in good hands gave a small measure of comfort.

I didn’t know what would happen with Solena, if anything. Maybe I’d get her kid back, and I wouldn’t see her again unless it was at the café. But I suddenly wondered what it would be like to have more with her. Casey was seventeen, and she was getting her life figured out. She had a kid of her own. One day, she’d move out.

“I know what I said before, but once you have your son

back, I'd like to talk some more and maybe re-evaluate things."

"Like what?" she asked.

"Us. I thought I was too old to find someone. I had Rebecca, but she's been gone seventeen years. There will never be a day I don't love her. I guess I always felt like letting someone else in would be the same as me trying to replace her."

She squeezed my hand. "Atilla, I would never presume to take her place. Not in your life or Casey's. Honestly, I'm jealous as hell. She's been gone all this time and still has your love and devotion. I can't even imagine what that's like. When I heard the baby's name, it felt like someone stabbed me in the heart."

"That was Casey's idea," I said. "I didn't name my granddaughter."

"I know. Even if you had, it's petty of me to be upset over something like that. The two of you had a life together. You knew her long before I came into the picture. I was only six years old when she died and gave birth to Casey. And yes, I know the age difference between us freaks you out a little. I can't say it didn't give me pause, but in the end, I don't care what anyone else thinks. We have a right to be happy."

"I know." I stopped her and leaned down to press my lips to hers in a brief kiss. "I can't make a lot of promises right now. Your life is about to change when Santiago comes home, and I'm still figuring out how to be a dad. Now I'm a grandpa too. Let's just take it one day at a time and see where things go. Are you all right with that?"

She smiled up at me. “Yeah. I can live with that.”

For all I knew, this would blow up in my face, but for the first time in seventeen years, I’d met a woman who made me want something more. I owed it to myself, and to Rebecca’s memory, to see where this went. I knew she wouldn’t have wanted me to be alone for the rest of my life. That wasn’t the sort of woman she’d been. So I’d honor her by doing whatever it took to be happy.

Chapter Five

Solena

If someone had said I'd be spending the evening running around town with Atilla, then having dinner together, I'd have called them a liar. And yet, here we were. I still didn't know where Santiago would sleep. My apartment was only a one-bedroom unit. It had been plenty big enough for me. Now that I was going to have my son with me, I'd need more room. Except I couldn't afford a bigger place.

"What else do we need to get?" Atilla asked, before taking a bite out of his taco.

"I don't think my apartment can hold anything else."

He paused with the taco halfway to his mouth for another bite. "Do you have room for your kid?"

My cheeks warmed. I dropped my gaze to the table, not wanting to admit I didn't know how I'd take care of him. Since he was old enough to attend school, I could work while he was in class. But what about the rest of the time? I was making do with things the way they were now. Adding the expense of having my son with me, and needing a larger apartment, would be nearly impossible to overcome.

"Solena, what's wrong?"

"I can barely take care of myself. How am I supposed to keep my son alive and give him all the things he needs? You said he might need help. Like a psychiatrist, right? That sounds expensive. What if coming to live with me isn't the

best thing for him?” I felt the tears brimming in my eyes, and I fought to hold them back. Had I only been fooling myself? Atilla had purchased nearly everything today. I hadn’t even been able to do that much, and there was so much more he’d need once Santiago was home. Clothes and shoes were things I couldn’t really purchase until I knew the right sizes. We’d gotten a few shirts and elastic waist pants in two different sizes so he’d at least have something. I knew he’d need a lot more.

“Hey.” He reached over and took my hand. “It will be okay, Solena.”

“How?” A tear slid down my cheek and I wiped it away. “I can’t do this, Atilla. I want to, so much. But...”

“Can you make it work for a few days? Maybe a week?” he asked.

“Why? What’s going to change in that short amount of time?”

“Just give me some time. I’ll help you figure something out. All right? Don’t give up.”

I nodded and went back to eating. He was right. I’d wanted this for so long. I couldn’t let fear hold me back. There were enough obstacles without creating new ones. For all I knew, my son thought I’d never wanted him. I didn’t know how to make him believe it hadn’t been my choice to give him up. From what Atilla said, it seemed like Santiago hadn’t lived an easy life. I didn’t know what to expect. Had they abused him? Or had no one ever wanted him, and that’s why he’d been bounced from home to home?

“What about Casey and Becca? Shouldn’t you go back to the hospital?”

Atilla waved me off. “It’s fine. The club is keeping an eye on her. I have a feeling Rebel and Maui are especially being watchful.”

“It doesn’t bother you? That they might like her?” I asked.

“Neither will make a move. She’s too young and has a lot to sort out. They know it and won’t cross a line. The fact they’re interested in her means they’re invested in her safety, as well as Becca’s. I know my club won’t let anything happen to them, but those two? They’ll be worse than a mother hen watching over her chicks.”

“She’s seventeen, right?” I asked.

“Yep. Turned seventeen three months ago. Why?”

“Then in less than a year, she’s legally an adult. What about then?” I noticed the way his jaw tensed. Yeah, he wasn’t as laid back about as he’d made it seem. No matter how much he trusted those men, that was still his little girl. “She’s lucky to have you. All of you. Not all girls are loved by their families.”

He finished off his food, shoved his plate aside, and leaned forward, bracing his forearms on the table. “Want to talk about it?”

“My parents were... different. Strict. Conservative. When I got pregnant, I thought for sure they’d abandon me. They didn’t. However, they did use it to their advantage. They made it seem like they were benevolent, letting me remain at home while they cared for me. Then they forced me to sign away my rights to my child before I even got to see him. They never once showed him to me or let me hold him.”

“Your name, and your son’s, are Hispanic. But you have green eyes and...”

“I’m super pale?” I smiled. “My mother was a Latina. My dad had red hair and green eyes. His family was Irish. My name is Solena Murphy. It’s probably just luck that Santiago has a Latino name.”

“Do you speak Spanish?” he asked.

“No. My father didn’t approve of my mother teaching it to me, and he made me take French in school. I never met my dad’s family. One time, I heard him talking to my mother about them. I think they were rich and didn’t approve of him marrying my mom. At least, that’s how it sounded.”

“Why do you think they didn’t love you?” he asked.

“I can’t remember ever getting a hug or kiss from either of them. Only criticism. They weren’t just strict. It went beyond that. I’m not really sure how to explain it.” I took a sip of my drink. “When I graduated high school, I left and never looked back. I couldn’t forgive them for what they’d done. I was so wrecked after giving birth to my son my grades suffered. I barely graduated from high school. College wasn’t even an option. If I hadn’t left on my own, they would have forced me out. A less than perfect daughter didn’t have a place in their home.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. Every parent should love and cherish their child. I wish like hell I’d known about Casey before now. I’d have loved to have had her with me all these years. I feel like I missed out on a lot.”

“I don’t know a lot about her situation, or how she was raised, but it’s clear how much she loves you. She knows

you're there for her, and nothing else matters. When she needed help, she came to find you. The fact you welcomed her was probably a great comfort to her."

He reached over to take my hand. "You've never had anyone, have you?"

I shook my head. I wasn't looking for his sympathy. Soon, I'd have my son back. I wouldn't be alone anymore. No matter what it took, I had to make this work. I'd let my boy down once already. At fifteen, I hadn't felt like I had any other option than to go along with my parents' wishes, especially since Santiago's father had signed the forms. Everyone had been against me.

Now that I was older, I knew there were programs in place to help teen mothers. If I'd heard about them back then, maybe things would have turned out differently. For one, I would have known I had the right to keep my baby. Second, those programs would have given me the tools I needed to not only hold on to my child, but to give him a decent life.

It was too late to go back and change things, but I could do better. Since I didn't know Santiago's current situation, or how Atilla planned to get him for me, I wasn't sure it would be safe to check into those sorts of places right now. What if I reached out, and some loophole gave the state the right to take my son away? No, I couldn't risk it.

* * *

Atilla

I saw the determination in her eyes and knew, whatever her thoughts had been just now, she'd decided she'd do

whatever it took to make a good life for her boy. I couldn't have been prouder of her. I also knew she couldn't do it all on her own, not without any sort of support system. Going to the government wouldn't be an option right off. Not until I had Wire do some work on his end.

How did I tell her what her little boy had been through? Outlaw might not have spelled things out, but I could read between the lines. If he thought the kid had gotten mixed up in a human trafficking ring, I could imagine the horrors he'd faced. That boy was going to need a lot of help. Mentally and emotionally. What the fuck had her parents been thinking?

I needed to pay a visit to Su and Mark before it was too late. Once Wire had all the dirt he needed on them, the club would most likely make them disappear. I knew all the kids involved would be taken care of because that's just the sort of thing the Reapers lived for. Taking in abused women and children seemed to be their calling. If someone at the club didn't adopt those kids, they'd find others who would. Hell, even their President had adopted a teenager at one point.

I leaned back in the booth and wondered what it would be like to raise a kid. Casey was too mature to need me for much but emotional and financial support at this point. In fact, I'd already spoken with the club officers about adding a few tiny homes to the compound. The first of which would be right across the road from my house and would be given to Casey.

Solena was right about one thing. Once Casey was old enough, one of the guys might make a move on her. I didn't have any right to stand in her way. If she fell in love with one of them, all I could do was give her my support. If whatever guy she ended up with ever hurt her or cheat on her, I didn't

give a shit who he was, I'd bury the fucker. I could be both supportive and protective whether or not she liked it.

Not to mention, I didn't see a reason Solena and Santiago couldn't stay in one of the other tiny homes while she got her feet under her. It would allow her to save money, give the kid an extra layer of protection, and Solena would have the support she'd been lacking all her life. It would give the compound a more family-oriented feel as well. Perhaps it would help Meredith in the long run. I had seen little of her lately, but Lynx watched her like a hawk.

I didn't want to say anything to Solena just yet. Spade had checked into the kits for the tiny homes that would match the cabin style of the other houses. We'd still have to wire them, put up sheetrock, get the appliances in, run plumbing and all that fun stuff. It would just save time as far as the basic structure went. The thought was to use one for Casey for however long she needed it and put in at least three others in case we ever needed to put up guests.

It would have been nice to have them when Meredith first arrived. Instead, I'd had her staying at the clubhouse and told her not to come out of her room when a party was going on. It hadn't been ideal, and I wanted to avoid the same situation if at all possible. If another club asked for help again, I wouldn't turn them away. Better to be prepared for anything.

"Let's get the stuff over to your apartment. I need to check in with Spade, say goodnight to Casey, and then I have some work to do at home." I gave her hand a squeeze. "But if you need anything, call me, all right?"

"I feel like I'm getting whiplash," she mumbled.

I couldn't blame her. I'd gone from keeping her at

arm's length to paying more attention to her. I knew she had to be confused. Hell, I was too. The thought of allowing myself to have something more still felt foreign. All these years, I'd thought I didn't have room in my life for anyone other than Rebecca. Maybe I'd just needed the right woman to come along. The age difference still bothered me a little. Not because I saw her as a child — because I didn't — but I didn't want the people around town to speak poorly of her or make her feel bad when they made comments. I knew someone would at some point. No one ever minded their own business these days.

“Sure. I need to organize the things we bought anyway.” She stood and I dropped some cash on the table to cover the meals plus tip. I placed my hand on her lower back as I led her out to the parking lot.

It was a good thing I'd had the SUV. Of course, I'd had to throw out the trash bag and towel I'd put down for Casey, but they'd done their job and the seat remained clean and dry. I helped her into the vehicle then asked for directions to her apartment. I wasn't thrilled to see where she'd been living.

“What about my car?” she asked. “It's still at the hospital.”

“I'll ask one of my brothers to come get the keys. They'll bring the car here for you.”

She smiled, but it didn't quite reach her eyes. I could still see the worry in them, and she looked more than a little tired. I needed to get home and see what Outlaw had sent so I could start planning the extraction. The sooner I got Santiago back to his mom, the better off they'd both be.

“You have my number?” I asked.

“No. Only Casey’s, since we work together. But I think it’s a cell phone and not a landline.”

“All right. Hand me your phone.” She unlocked it and passed it over. I entered my information, then added hers to my phone as well before handing it back. “Remember what I said. You need something, you call me.”

“Thank you, Atilla. I know you don’t owe me anything. I really appreciate everything you’re doing.”

I cupped her cheek. “Solena, I will get your son back, no matter what.”

With those parting words, I left and went home. I’d keep my word. I had no idea what I’d be walking into, but those fuckers made a big mistake coming to my town. If they thought I’d look the other way, they were wrong. I was going to get Santiago out safely, and then I was going to make them pay.

Should probably ask the law to look the other way. It was time to call my favorite police officer, or rather his kindhearted wife, Peaches. Wouldn’t be the first time she’d helped us out, and I doubted it would be the last. Good thing she had that man of hers wrapped tight around her little finger.

Chapter Six

Atila

“According to Outlaw, there are four children inside. One of them is Santiago. I’m going to personally deliver him to his mother. The others don’t have anywhere to go,” I said.

“One of them does,” Lynx said. “Meredith is worried about passing her issues onto a kid, so she wants to hold off on having a baby. She also wants a family, so if those kids need a home, we’ll take one of them.”

I nodded. It hadn’t occurred to me to ask Meredith and Lynx since I knew she’d been having a hard time after losing her baby. Everyone else at the club was single. I wasn’t sure any of them would want to adopt a kid, especially one who’d been through something traumatic. I was up for it, though. I’d missed out on most of Casey’s life. My little girl was all grown up and wouldn’t need her dad for much longer. Then I’d be alone. Not really a good reason to adopt a kid, but I wanted to experience all the stuff I’d missed.

“According to the papers Outlaw sent me, there’s a set of twins in there. Fraternal ones. They’re four years old. Boy’s name is Finn and his sister is Amelia. Then there’s Santiago, who is eight. He’s Solena’s child, and I’m going to make sure she gets him back. The fourth one is a girl. Nora. She’s seven.” I looked at the men who’d come with me. “We get the kids out safe. I don’t give a shit if every adult in that place dies a gruesome death and burns in hell for all eternity, but don’t let the kids see it happen.”

“I’ll handle the adults,” General said.

“I’ll help extract the kids.” Lynx said. “I bet Merry would love the twins.”

“You clear it with her psychiatrist?” Truth asked. “And that’s not being an asshole. It’s me being concerned she might lose her shit when you bring two kids home.”

“No, we didn’t, and how the fuck do we bring that up? I can just see it now. Walk into the office and start off with, ‘Hey, Doc! We rescued these two kids from human traffickers and kept them. That’s cool, right?’”

General snorted. “Truth, you’re with me. I think Lynx and the Pres can handle the kids on their own.”

I shook my head. “No. I’m going to put those fuckers in the ground. I need someone to haul Santiago out of there. I’ll deliver him to his mom, but first I want to look her in the eye and assure her I’ve killed the monsters who hurt her boy.”

“I’ll help Lynx,” Stinger said. “He can grab the twins, and I’ll get Santiago and Nora.”

“How many adults have you confirmed, General?” I asked.

“I see two adults inside the building and three outside. The two inside are together and keeping watch over the kids. The ones outside are scattered. I say we split up to hit the easy ones first, then we can take out the men inside while Lynx and Stinger get the kids out.”

I nodded. “Take the children straight to the SUV and get the hell out of here. Just park at the compound and I’ll be right behind you.”

Lynx tossed me his keys, and I gave him mine. Since I'd driven my SUV here, and I planned to stay until I was certain none of these fuckers were breathing, it would mean someone else had to drive the children out of here.

“Give us time to handle the men outside,” General said. “Once we're in the building, we'll subdue the two men watching the kids. Then Lynx and Stinger can pull the children out. We'll see what we can get out of them once there aren't little eyes watching us.”

“Or ears to hear the screaming,” Truth said.

I pulled a large bowie knife, knowing we needed to move fast and keep it silent. We split up, each of us tackling one of the men. I kept low to the ground and crept forward, sticking to the shadows. The guy leaned against the side of the building and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. I watched him light up and waited for him to look in the other direction.

I lunged at him, placing my hand over his mouth as I stabbed him in the gut twice. There wasn't much point in keeping everyone alive. All we needed was one rat out of the five. I dragged my knife up and across his throat, then lowered him to the ground. Since I knew Truth and General wouldn't let their targets slip past them, I didn't need to hide the body.

Lynx and Stinger approached me, keeping their voices low.

“I saw General tying up the guy he went after,” Lynx said.

“Truth left a bloody mess.” Stinger winced. “Think he has some anger issues to work through?”

“So we've got at least one alive,” I said. “Unless the

two inside don't give us a choice, we'll keep one or both alive. Two dead isn't so bad. By the end of the night, none of them will breathe anymore."

"Think your woman knows about this side of you?" Lynx asked.

"My what?" My voice came out a little louder than I'd intended, and I glared at him. "Who the fuck are you calling my woman?"

He smirked and simply pointed to the building. I knew what he meant. Solena's kid was in there, and in his eyes, she was mine. Did everyone draw that conclusion when I brought up this mission? Since she worked with Casey, I hadn't thought much of it when I told the club about Santiago.

"We know you had someone at some point since Casey showed up and you said she's your daughter. Was her mother your one true love or something?" Stinger asked. "Because no one seems to know anything about her. Why didn't you introduce her to the club, or talk about her if she was your one and only?"

I didn't like his questions, but I understood why he'd asked them. "First off, it's none of your fucking business, or anyone else's. Except Casey's. If she wants to know, I'll talk to her about Rebecca."

"And second?" Lynx asked. "Because I have to say, he brings up a good point. Even if you loved her more than anything in the world, you know you're allowed to be happy, right? If something happened to me, I wouldn't want Meredith to be alone forever. Would Rebecca have wanted that for you?"

“No,” I admitted. “I know she wouldn’t have, but I’ve never found a woman I wanted to hold on to except for her.”

Until now.

“Let’s head inside,” General said coming up behind me.

We entered the building and went up the stairs. If both men weren’t still guarding the kids, we’d handle the issue. I didn’t think they were expecting trouble, or they’d have been more on guard. I heard the whimpers of the children and the voices of the two men. At least we could pinpoint their exact location since the fuckers were being loud as shit.

“Stinger and I will wait in the hall. Once the three of you have subdued the men, we’ll run in to get the kids, but I don’t want to scare the hell out of them.” Lynx’s brow furrowed. “How likely is it they’ll come with us without a fight?”

“Don’t know,” I said. “The fight might have been drained out of them already. I bet they’ve trained the kids to obey.”

And God did it fucking kill me to say those words. The people responsible for the hell those kids had been through all needed to be put through a wood chipper — while they were still alive.

“Ready?” General asked.

“Yep.”

Truth nodded and gripped his knife tighter. With Lynx and Stinger remaining outside the room, we burst through the doors and rushed the men. The kids screamed, and I hated that

we'd scared them. Both men went down. General put his knee in the back of one, pinning his wrists behind him. Truth landed blow after blow on the other man's face. I placed my hand on his shoulder.

“Ease up. Don't kill him.”

Lynx and Stinger approached the kids, moving slowly and holding their hands up so the children would see they didn't have weapons. I knew Lynx had one hidden somewhere, but Stinger didn't need one. He'd have a syringe on him somewhere, filled with enough drugs to knock out a horse.

I walked over to the kids and caught Santiago's gaze. He stared at me, his little jaw tense and his hands fisted. This one was a fighter, and it looked like he'd been doing his best to protect the other kids. Good. I knew Solena would be proud of him. I was too.

“Santiago, it's time to go home.” His nose scrunched, and he didn't say anything. “To your mom. She's been looking for you for a long time.”

Some of the tension left him. “You're lying.”

“Nope. It's not my story to tell, but I hope you'll give her a chance to explain everything. That woman loves you more than anything, and she's at home right now, waiting for you.”

He glanced at Lynx and Stinger, then the other children. “What about them?”

Lynx kneeled down near the twins. “My name is Lynx. You're Finn and Amelia, right?”

The four-year-olds nodded. The girl stuck her thumb in

her mouth and watched him with wide eyes while clutching her brother's shirt.

“Lynx, let's get them all to safety. We can figure out where everyone is going once we reach the compound.” I eyed the children. “All of you are safe now. No one's going to hurt you again.”

“And them?” Santiago asked, pointing to the two men on the ground.

“I'll take care of them.”

He seemed to understand what I meant and gave me a nod. And fuck if it didn't hurt that an eight-year-old would know I meant those men were going to die. Even worse, he was more than okay with it. What the hell had these bastards done to the children?

“We'll go with Lynx,” Santiago said. “But I'm not meeting my mother until I know the others are going to be okay.”

“That's fine. I'm going to finish up here, and when I get to the compound, we'll sort everything out. If any of you are hungry, just tell Lynx. He can stop on the way to the compound and get some food for you.”

Stinger cleared this throat. “Um, if any of you know what size clothes you wear, we passed a Dollar General on the way that should still be open. It won't be anything fancy, but I'd like to get each of you something clean to wear. Shoes too, if they have some in your sizes.”

“Lynx, ask Meredith to meet you in the parking lot of the compound. I know she's had a rough time of it, but I think the kids might feel better if she's there. Besides, don't you

want her to meet the twins?” I asked.

“Why?” Santiago demanded.

“Because I want to adopt them,” Lynx said. “Meredith and I do. She lost our baby and has been hurting. When she found out about all of you, she agreed we’d offer some of you a home if you needed one.”

Little Nora approached me. She didn’t meet my gaze or look up from the floor. When she reached my side, she wrapped her fingers around the bottom of my cut and held on. I gently patted her on the back.

“It’s all right now, Nora. Go with Lynx and Stinger. I promise they won’t hurt you.”

I didn’t know why the little girl had latched onto me. Shouldn’t she fear me? What about me made her feel like it was okay to come over like that? I looked over at Santiago again and noticed the soft expression on his face as he observed Nora. It seemed the two were close. Did Nora think I had any say in whether she got to stay with Santiago? Because I didn’t. That was Solena’s call, and since she was already stressed over being able to properly take care of her son, I doubted she wanted a second kid right now.

She still didn’t release me. Santiago had to pry her fingers loose and then took her hand as he followed Lynx and Stinger from the room with the twins. I turned back to Truth and General, only to find both men watching intently. What the hell were those fuckers thinking now?

“Guess we should grab the man from outside and see who wants to talk first,” I said.

“I’ll get him.” Truth cracked his knuckles as he walked

out of the room. Something told me the guy would be sporting more bruises when he got here.

“Sit those two upright,” I said. General hauled two chairs over, then dumped the men into them. While he secured them to the frames, I found a third chair for our other guest.

“We ain’t tellin’ you shit,” one man said before spitting at me.

I let my fist fly, landing a blow right across his cheek. The chair rocked from the force and almost toppled over. The asshole spit at me again, then had the audacity to smile about it.

“Take off his shoes,” I told General.

He kneeled down and did as I said, pulling off the man’s socks too. While General held tight to the man’s leg, I pulled out my knife and taught the bastard a lesson. I sliced the bottom of his foot with multiple shallow cuts. He cursed and struggled to break free, but no matter how much he thrashed, he couldn’t shake off General’s grip. When I’d done the same to the other foot, General tied his ankles to the chair legs.

“Next time you spit at me, I’ll take my knife to another part of your body. Understood?” The man glared but didn’t speak. Good enough. It seemed we understood one another. I looked at the other one. “What about you? You plan to talk?”

“I don’t know anything,” he mumbled. “Got paid to watch the kids. That’s all.”

General shrugged. “He may be telling the truth. This other one clearly knows more.”

“Where the fuck is Truth?” I asked.

“Either he’s interrogating the man outside, or...”

Or the dipshit pissed off Truth, and he was already dead. Great. We needed information from these men. Although, if I didn’t get it, there was a good chance Wire and the other hackers would find what they needed, eventually.

“I say we end it,” General said. “I know those kids are ready to get settled for the night. Can’t keep them waiting while we screw around with these two.”

“Fine.” I stepped over to the more compliant one. “Last chance to tell me anything. Give me something useful and maybe I’ll just dump you at the police station.”

“I swear. I just took the job for the money. I didn’t know anyone else here. Got paid half this morning, and they said I’d get the other half once the kids were shipped off elsewhere. None of them talked much around me.” Snot and tears ran down his face. “I’m so fucking sorry. Please. I’ll do the time, just... don’t kill me.”

I pinched the bridge of my nose before sighing. “Fine. I’ll see if Officer Benson will come pick up this trash. But you listen well... not one word to the cops about my club or any part we played in this. If they ask, you didn’t see the men who took out the trash. Got it?”

“Yeah. I won’t say a word,” he mumbled.

“Stop doing stupid shit before you fuck up your life even more,” I said.

“You sure about this, Pres?” General asked. “What if he’s lying?”

“Then we’ll handle it. For now, I’ll give him a chance

to prove he's not a complete piece of shit. The other one is another matter. Gut that fucker."

General used his knife to carve the other man like a Christmas goose. When he'd drawn his last breath, I sent a text to Officer Benson and exited the building. I knew he'd have questions, and one hell of a mess to deal with... but when he found out they'd been trafficking children, I knew he'd look the other way.

Truth was outside smoking a cigarette. The body at his feet didn't even look human. I didn't even want to know what the hell he'd done to the man. I had no doubt he'd deserved every bit of pain, and then some.

"Saw a hose around back," Truth said. "We should clean up a little before heading home. Might scare the kids."

He wasn't wrong. We quickly rinsed any blood off our bodies before getting on our bikes and heading out. I probably had blood on my jeans and shirt, but I'd worn black ones so it wouldn't be easy to see blood spatter.

The second I pulled through the gates of the compound, I heard crying and a frantic Santiago trying to calm Nora down. Shit. I hadn't been around kids in... well, ever really. I didn't have a damn clue how to handle this situation. Texting Solena, I told her to drive over so she could meet her son. Maybe she'd be able to console little Nora.

I turned off the engine and got off the bike. The moment both boots were firmly on the ground, Nora ran for me. I braced for impact and held her against me. What the hell was up with this kid?

"Is this normal for her?" I asked Santiago.

“No. But...”

“But what?” I asked.

Nora sniffled and I kneeled down so I’d be at eye level with her. She blinked at me. A tear rolled down her cheek and her lower lip quivered.

“Daddy.”

What. The. Fuck. I opened my mouth to say something, then snapped it shut. I heard a muffled *oh shit* from behind me but couldn’t tell who’d said it.

“Nora, do you think I’m your daddy?” I asked.

She nodded and burrowed into me. I hoped like hell I wasn’t getting blood on her. What was I supposed to do now? And why did she think I was her dad? From what I’d read on each of the kids, the only one easily traced had been Santiago. The twins were abandoned at a church. As for Nora, I couldn’t remember anything that stood out about her, except it said she didn’t have any living family.

I needed to ask Wire who her parents were. Had she been a biker’s daughter? Even if that was the case, why me and no one else here? I stood, lifting her into my arms. Her tears stopped, and her breathing evened out. The next time I looked at her, I saw she’d fallen asleep.

“We should get them inside and cleaned up,” I said.

Lynx started shaking his head. “Can’t go in there. Not with them.”

“Why the f... Um. Why not?” I asked.

“Someone didn’t follow the rules. Had some girls over, and the place is trashed.” Lynx looked pissed, and I

understood why. This had been an important night for us. These kids didn't need to deal with this shit.

“Fine. Let's take them to my house.”

I didn't know if that was the right decision or not. I had Casey there with her new baby. But at the moment, it was the best idea I had.

Chapter Seven

Solena

I didn't know why the plan changed. I'd thought Atilla was bringing Santiago to me. Now he wanted me to go to the compound? Something felt off about this. Had my little boy been hurt? Or perhaps one of the other children? I didn't understand why he couldn't leave long enough to bring my child home.

When I pulled up to the gate, someone waved me through. At least they'd been expecting me. Only one problem. I had no idea where Atilla lived. I rolled down the window to ask the man standing near the gate.

"Excuse me. Can you tell me how to get to Atilla's house?"

He pointed off to the left. "Just head that way and look for his SUV and motorcycle. You'll see some other vehicles as well. Casey is home with the baby, and Meredith is there with Lynx."

Sounded like Atilla had a full house. It only left me more confused. Why had he taken Santiago to his house? The man had been correct about finding the house easily. I parked on the street, grabbed the small tote of Santiago's things, and hurried up to the door. Before I even had a chance to knock, Casey opened it, looking beyond exhausted.

"Should you be up?" I asked.

"Becca is asleep, and Dad said you were on your way

here. Figured I could at least open the door for you.”

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“The kids needed baths. Some idiot brought girls into the clubhouse, so Dad had everyone bring the kids here. Meredith and Lynx are washing the twins right now. Dad let Santiago use his shower.”

Casey slowly walked over to the couch and gingerly sat. She winced a little, and I knew she had to be sore from giving birth. Movement caught my eye and my breath caught when I saw Atilla step into the room with a little girl clutched in his arms. She looked like an angel and seemed incredibly at ease with him.

“How many daughters do you have?” I asked, then bit my lip, wishing I could recall the words.

His lips tipped up on one side in a half-smile. “This is Nora. She seems to think I’m her daddy. I’ve got a call in to Wire and Lavender to see what they can find out about her. Only thing her file said was that she didn’t have any living relatives.”

“And my son is in the shower?” I asked. “That’s what Casey said. What about clothes?”

“The guys stopped at Dollar General and picked up some underwear and something comfortable for all the kids to change into. Got them each a cheap pair of shoes for now, and a package of socks. They were filthy.”

“I had to help Nora wash,” Casey said. “Dad didn’t feel right doing it, but he had to stand in the doorway with his back to us. Nora nearly came unglued when she couldn’t see him.”

“Wow.” I eyed the little girl. “She really thinks you’re her dad, huh?”

“I think he should keep her,” Casey said. “It’s not like I’ll be living here much longer.”

I blinked and tried to process her words. She was only seventeen. Where was she going? I knew Atilla hadn’t kicked her out. He’d never do something like that.

Atilla nodded toward the front door. “Did you see the construction across the street?”

“I didn’t pay much attention,” I admitted.

“Have some tiny homes going in. Casey is getting a two-bedroom, but both rooms are only large enough for a full bed and small set of drawers. It’s not ideal,” Atilla said.

“It’s a home of my own,” Casey said. “And Becca will have her own bedroom. I don’t need fancy, Dad. It’s safe because it’s here at the compound, and you’re right across the street if I need you. Not to mention all your brothers are here too. I have plenty of people to reach out to.”

He nodded. “And that’s why they’re being built.”

“Why more than one?” I asked.

“Well... I was going to talk to you about that. The one next to Casey is for you. Assuming you want it. Santiago will have a loft bedroom. Your room will be like Casey’s, and downstairs. You’ll have a kitchen with a fridge, dishwasher, cooktop, and oven. There’s counter space for a microwave and coffeepot. In the bathroom, there’s a closet for towels and linens, and another for a stackable washer and dryer.” Atilla shifted Nora in his arms. “Like I said. It’s not huge, or ideal,

but it would give you and Santiago a safe place to live. You'd also be able to save some money so you could buy a house or get a larger apartment than you have now."

Why had he done something like that for me? He'd insisted he couldn't offer me anything. Then he'd gone and kissed me while we'd shopped for Santiago's things. I felt so confused right now. What exactly did Atilla want from me?

"I think the two of you need to talk," Casey said. "I'm going to go lie down until Becca wakes up."

Casey struggled to get up and I walked over to lend her a hand. She gave me a tired smile and a quick thanks. When she reached the doorway, she paused and studied me.

"I know you're not much older than me. If you like my dad, I'm okay with that." My cheeks warmed. Was I that obvious? "That being said... I think you should let Santiago and Nora share the room next to mine today, and you and Dad should talk things out. Sleep beside him. If you can live through the snoring, you have my blessing."

"You little shit," Atilla grumbled, but I saw the laughter in his eyes.

After Casey left, I shifted from foot to foot. Had she really meant all that? Atilla didn't seem bothered by her words. Is that what he wanted to do? We hadn't been able to spend a lot of time together, aside from the one night I'd gotten drunk at the clubhouse.

"Santiago is protective of Nora," he said. "She's right about letting them stay together tonight. While Santiago might go with you willingly, Nora doesn't want me out of her sight. You'll never get her to leave the compound."

“So you want me to sleep with you for the children’s sake?” I asked.

He snorted. “All you have to do is sleep, Solena. I’m not asking for more. The house next to Casey’s really is being built with you in mind. I want to keep you and your son safe.”

A little boy entered the room, and tears filled my eyes. My son. He had my green eyes and dark hair. The rest of him looked like his father. The distrust in his eyes nearly gutted me. Did he think I’d give him up willingly?

“Santiago,” I murmured.

“So you’re her?” he asked. “The woman who didn’t want me?”

A tear slid down my cheek. Then another. I sniffled, trying to hold back the flood. I couldn’t blame him for feeling that way.

“I was fifteen when I had you,” I mumbled. “My parents forced me to give you up. I was too stupid to know what rights I had as a teen mother. Your dad had signed the papers already. My parents said I had to leave if I kept you, except I had nowhere else to go. I was scared and felt like they had backed me into a corner.”

“Am I supposed to feel sorry for you?” he asked, his eyes narrowing.

He didn’t sound eight. He was acting more like a teenager. Then again, depending on what he’d survived, he’d probably had to grow up fast. My heart broke for him.

“No,” I said. “I only wanted you to understand I didn’t willingly give you up. I wanted you, more than anything.”

“But my dad didn’t,” he muttered.

I glanced at Atilla. I wasn’t sure what to tell my son. The last thing I wanted was for him to find out how he’d been conceived. At the same time, I hoped he never went looking for his birth father. He’d seen enough ugliness in the world already.

“Your parents were only seven years older than you are now,” Atilla said. “They were still kids. Didn’t have a clue what they were doing. Nor did they have the ability to raise a child. Your mom didn’t realize what would happen when she signed those papers. Try not to be too hard on her.”

“I don’t want to go with her,” Santiago said. “I want to stay with Nora.”

Atilla nodded. “We figured as much. For tonight, the two of you will sleep in the room next to Casey’s. Your mom will stay here tonight.”

“And after that?” Santiago asked.

“I have an apartment in town,” I said.

“I’m not leaving Nora.” He folded his little arms across his chest and glared at me. I bit my lip so I wouldn’t smile, but he looked rather cute. I liked that he was protective of the little girl.

“There’s some homes being built across the street,” Atilla asked. “I was going to offer one to your mom.”

“Where’s Nora staying?” Santiago asked.

“With my dad,” Casey said as she passed by and went through another doorway. I heard the fridge open and close, then a cabinet. When she went back down the hall, she had a

glass of juice in her hand.

Atilla looked up at the ceiling, as if he were praying for patience. Although, the fact he hadn't put the little girl down yet meant he might he really be considering it.

"Then I'm staying here too," Santiago said. "Why can't we live here?"

My cheeks warmed and I couldn't meet Atilla's gaze. I certainly wouldn't mind playing house with him, but I didn't think he was ready for that step yet. He'd barely reached the point where he was willing to give me a chance at all.

"Right now, let's get the two of you settled for the night," Atilla said. "We can discuss everything else after we've all had some sleep."

"Fine." Santiago turned around and walked down the hall. Atilla followed with Nora, and I fell in step behind him. Santiago climbed into the empty bed, and Atilla eased Nora down beside him. He pulled the covers over the kids and smoothed Nora's hair back from her face. The tender look on his face nearly made my ovaries explode. If anyone was meant to be a father, it was this man.

"Good night," I said. "Have sweet dreams."

I backed up and Atilla stepped out of the room, pulling the door partially shut. Then he took my hand and led me to his bedroom. Closing the door behind us, he motioned to the bed.

"Have a seat. Unless you want to get comfortable first?"

"I didn't really plan for a sleepover. And don't you

have other people in your house?”

“When you weren’t looking, Meredith and Lynx slipped out with the twins. Finn and Amelia took to Meredith right away. They should be fine.”

I looked around the room. “That still doesn’t change the fact I hadn’t planned to stay over.”

“You can sleep in one of my shirts. Do you want to shower?” He rummaged in his dresser and tossed a blue shirt to me. I caught it, admiring how soft it felt.

“What are we doing, Atilla?” I asked.

“Nothing. Talking.” He ran a hand over his beard. “Hell, I don’t know, Solena. I haven’t had a relationship since Casey’s mom. And certainly not with someone so much younger than me. I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing.”

“Do you even want me to stay?” I asked.

“Yeah, I think I do. The last day or two has been...”

I knew what he was trying to say. His daughter had a baby. He helped me shop for things for Santiago, and it felt like we’d taken a step in the right direction. Now he had a little girl who insisted he was her father. Maybe there was too much going on. Should I take a step back and give him space? I had my own issues to deal with, like a son who clearly didn’t like me.

“I should go home,” I said.

“I want you to stay,” he said, his voice lower than usual. “I have no idea what the future looks like. Not for me, you, Casey... I’ve never felt so uncertain about anything in my entire life, and it scares the hell out of me, Lena.”

Lena? I smiled a little. Did he even realize he'd just give me a nickname? I liked it. No one had ever called me that before.

“Atilla, no one knows what tomorrow will bring. We aren't guaranteed anything in life. The best we can do is take a leap of faith, decide if we can trust each other, and see where things go. I'm not asking you for a ring and forever. I just want the chance to see if we can make a relationship work.” I dropped my tote bag on the floor and sighed. “Santiago hates me, but he likes Nora. And that little girl doesn't want to leave your side.”

“What are you getting at?” he asked.

“I have a proposal for you. Not the marriage kind.” He motioned for me to continue. “You said the tiny homes across the street were already under construction and you intended to offer one to me, right?”

“Yeah. Shouldn't take more than a week or two. Depends on the electrical, plumbing, and getting it through the city's inspection process.”

“Would it be okay for me and Santiago to stay here until it's finished? Or at least stay a few nights? I don't want to separate him from Nora. I think it will also be easier to get to know him if he's comfortable, and he clearly feels safe here.”

“I don't have a problem with that. You'll need to get some of your things. We can grab them in the morning.”

“Thank you, Atilla. I know it was a big ask.” I moved closer and put my arms around him, hugging him tight. The moment he hugged me back, I melted into him. He really did give great hugs.

“Go change for bed. I’ll let Casey know you’ll be here for a few days.” He kissed the top of my head before leaving the bedroom.

I had a few days to get to know my son better and find out whether or not there was really something between me and Atilla. I hoped this didn’t blow up in my face.

Chapter Eight

Atila

I knocked on Casey's door and then went inside. She'd leaned back in her bed with a book while little Becca slept in the crib nearby. I was so damn proud of my girl. At seventeen, she was more mature than I'd been even twenty years ago. Hell, some days she was doing better than I was right now.

"You okay with Solena staying here a few days with Santiago? The kid isn't ready to give her a chance, and he doesn't want to be parted from Nora." I leaned against the doorframe. "This is your home too, so I can tell her it won't work if you don't want her here."

Casey set her book down and stared at me. Damn. She reminded me so much of her mother right now. Rebecca used to give me that same look, usually when I was being a dumbass. Guess that meant my daughter thought I was one too.

"Dad, I love you. I really do, but... you're an idiot."

"Don't sugarcoat it," I muttered.

"You like Solena, right?"

I shrugged. I did. The age thing bothered me a little. Not because I didn't see her as a woman, because I certainly did, but I knew people could be harsh when it came to things they didn't understand. Some might consider our relationship disgusting, and I knew they wouldn't necessarily hold back. The last thing I wanted was to cause her more pain than she'd

already experienced.

“Dad.” She sighed and closed her eyes. “Tell me the truth. Why aren’t you willing to give her a chance?”

I glanced at the bedroom door and saw it was still shut. I didn’t hear any noise from the kids’ room either. The last thing I needed was anyone hearing this conversation.

“You don’t have an issue with her being so much younger than me? She’s only six years older than you.”

“So what?”

“Things are complicated, Casey.”

She held my gaze. “So uncomplicate them. Her age is just a number, Dad. You know that. Mom was younger than you, right? And what about me? If I fell in love with someone here at the club, and they were twenty years older than me, would you stop us from being together?”

“Um...”

She rolled her eyes. “I meant because of the age difference.”

“No. I get your point. It’s more than just the age thing. She has a son she’s meeting for the first time. I’ve got you and a new grandbaby. Little Nora in there seems to think I’m her dad. And then there’s the club... What if Solena can’t handle the shit we deal with sometimes? Your mom wouldn’t have been able to.”

Casey struggled to get out of bed and peeked into the crib before coming closer to me. “Dad, she’s not Mom. No one will ever be Mom, and that’s okay. You can love more than one person. She’d want you to be happy. It’s what I want too.

Stop keeping distance between the two of you and coming up with excuses about why things won't work. You haven't even tried yet!"

Seeing my daughter so upset really drove home how badly I was fucking up. I still didn't know if I could make this work. Right now, the house was packed to the gills with my daughter, two kids, a baby, and... the woman I wanted but felt I shouldn't hold onto.

"Can I ask you something?" Casey went back to the bed and leaned against her pillows again, wincing a little as she got situated. "What are you going to do if someone else comes along and sweeps her off her feet?"

Beat the hell out of him. Something must have shown on my face, because she smirked at me. She really was a little shit sometimes. Too much of her mom's attitude.

"You're right, okay? I don't want Solena to slip through my fingers. Right now, she needs to focus on her son, and I need to find out what's going on with Nora. I don't think this is a good time to start a relationship."

"If you wait for the *right* time, you may miss your window of opportunity, Dad. Kind of like with Mom. Except this time, Solena will leave because it's what she wants to do. She'll give up on waiting for you to make up your mind. I love you, and I think she'd be good for you. Besides, those kids deserve two parents. Would it be so wrong to raise Santiago and Nora together? Be one big happy family?"

No, it wouldn't. "Are you saying I take a page out of Lynx's book and just keep her because it's what I want?"

"You're a biker dad. The President of this club. Since

when do you ever ask permission for anything? And did Lynx really keep her against her will? Do you think Solena wouldn't be happy if you said she was moving in permanently?" She huffed at me. "Seriously. Stop trying to be someone you aren't. If she can't handle the real you, then none of this matters, anyway. But for what it's worth, I think she'll do just fine."

My daughter had given me a lot to think about. I kissed her on the forehead and shut her door when I left the room. I checked on the kids before going back to my bedroom. I could hear the shower running in the bathroom, and only hesitated for a moment. Be true to myself, huh? All right. It was time to see if Solena could handle being mine.

I removed my cut and set it on the dresser before toeing off my boots and removing my clothes. She'd fogged the bathroom mirror from the steam pouring out of the shower. Hell, I couldn't even see her through the glass shower door. I pulled it open quietly and shut it without her even noticing I'd joined her. With her eyes closed, and her head tipped back, she looked at peace. The water sluiced over her hair, which seemed even longer now that it was wet.

I stood in front of her, placing my hands on her hips. Solena shrieked and opened her eyes, her body going stiff.

"Atilla?"

"Were you expecting someone else?" I asked.

"You surprised me. Why are you... I mean..." Her gaze dropped to my cock, which was quickly getting hard, before clashing with mine. "Why are you in here?"

"I had a talk with Casey. She's all for the two of us being together. In fact, she called me a dumbass for dragging

my feet.” I leaned down and pressed my forehead to hers. “What would you say if I told you I’d only shown you a small part of myself so far?”

“I’d ask to see the rest.”

“And if you can’t handle it?” I asked.

“That’s for me to decide, Atilla. And for what it’s worth, I don’t think I’ll have any issues. I’ve never wanted anyone the way I want you. We might have only had the one night together, but it was a night I’ll remember forever.”

“Want to add more memories to it?”

She reached up and placed her hand on my cheek. “I’d love to. Are you sure?”

“I’m done running. We’re going to figure everything out together. Santiago and Nora are already like siblings. Might as well make it the real deal.”

Her eyes widened. “What?”

I grinned and looked in the direction where I’d left my phone. “Hey, Siri! Message Wire.”

I cracked the shower door open and listened for her response. It was faint, but I caught it. *What do you want to say?*

“Do whatever it takes to make Solena, Santiago, and Nora mine. Make sure no one can ever question the fact they belong to me.” I heard Solena gasp as Siri recited the text back to me. *Send it?* “Yes.”

“What did you just do?” she asked.

“I believe I just made you Solena, Santiago, and Nora

Cutler. Too late to change it now.” She parted her lips, mostly likely about to protest, and I kissed the hell out of her. Casey was right. It was time to show Solena what it meant to be mine.

I backed her against the shower wall. She whimpered and gave in to me. I devoured her, taking what I wanted. It had been so long since I’d wanted someone this badly. The night we’d shared before had been about her. I’d given her what she needed. This time would be different. I wasn’t going to hold back. She was mine now, and I’d make damn sure she knew it. I didn’t give a shit who heard us. As long as she didn’t scream like I was killing her, then it should be fine. Last thing I wanted was for the kids to think I’d hurt her.

“You’re mine. Every single inch of you. And I’m going to make sure you never forget it.” I worked my hand between her thighs and stroked her clit with my thumb. Her nipples puckered and her eyes dilated. “That’s it. Come for me. Show me how much you want this.”

I rubbed the hard bud faster, and she screamed out my name. Before she had a chance to catch her breath, I eased her leg over my hip and thrust into her. She clawed at my shoulders as I fucked her hard and deep. I felt her pussy tighten on me and knew she was about to come again.

“I’m going to fill you so full of cum you’ll have a reminder of me for hours. You might still be dripping tomorrow.”

The heat of her release hit my cock and I couldn’t hold back. It seemed my woman liked it when I talked dirty. I’d remember that for next time. I pounded her pussy, not stopping until I’d emptied my balls and filled her up. She clung to me

as I kissed her. My cock started to soften, and I eased out of her.

“Why?” she asked. “Why now and not that night?”

“You mean admitting you’re mine?” She nodded. “I didn’t think I was what you needed. Decided it didn’t matter because you’re what I want.”

I helped her wash, taking my time to explore her body. I might not be able to have sex again anytime soon, but it didn’t mean I couldn’t please her some more. I teased her nipples and clit with light pinching and soft strokes until I’d wrung three more orgasms from her. By the time the water cooled, she could barely stand.

I shut off the water and dried her off, then helped her into my T-shirt. While she climbed into the bed, I ran a towel over my body, then pulled on a pair of sweats. Crawling into bed with her was one of the best feelings. She curled against me, and as I held her close, I remembered what it felt like that night at the clubhouse.

It had been hard to let her go. Harder than I’d been able to admit to even myself. Life was too short. I’d lost Rebecca all those years ago because of an accident. If I lost Solena now because I was too damn stupid to hold on to her, then I’d regret it until the day I died.

“What about the house across the street?” she whispered, nearly asleep.

“Casey will still move with Becca. The other one can remain empty until we need it for something. Your place is right here in my arms.”

A smile curved her lips, and for the first time in

forever, I felt a sense of peace wash over me. This was what I'd been missing. I knew a lot of guys enjoyed the club pussy and didn't look forward to settling down. Hell, some might never keep a woman. For me, it was the one thing I'd wanted for so very long. Not only me, but quite a few men in my club. We weren't the same as a lot of the others. Lynx hadn't hesitated to claim Meredith, and I knew either Rebel or Maui would end up asking for my daughter.

I didn't think either had the balls to outright take her. They could prove me wrong, though. Whatever the case, it was my daughter's decision. If she wanted one of them, I wouldn't stand in her way. But the second they hurt her, all bets were off. Same for little Nora. She was only seven now, but one day she'd want to date or get married.

I only hoped I lived long enough to see it happen. I didn't exactly live a safe lifestyle. A stray bullet could take me out, or a bomb. Shit, a fucking driver on the road not paying attention could kill me. It was possible I'd live another twenty or so years, or I could breathe my last tomorrow. No one ever knew when their time would be up.

I watched Solena sleep for the longest time before finally shutting my eyes. Breathing in her scent, and feeling her soft curves against me, made me smile. I had no idea if heaven and hell really existed. If they did, this was probably the closest I'd ever get to being in heaven.

We'd need to talk to the kids tomorrow. Santiago seemed more concerned about Nora than his own circumstances. He'd already wanted to stay here instead of going to Solena's apartment. I didn't think it would bother him to discover he never had to move out of this house. I wondered

how long they'd been together. Had he been watching over her for a while? Or had the two just clicked?

Looked like we'd be shopping too. They'd both need clothes, shoes, and a ton of other shit children should have. I'd get someone to head over to Solena's place and pack up all their belongings. We'd already gotten quite a bit for Santiago, especially when it came to toys. I'd never had the chance to shop for Casey when she'd been little. Oddly enough, I looked forward to helping Nora pick out dolls and stuffed bears, or whatever else she might want.

I wanted those kids to be happy, to know this was their home, and to feel secure. Picking up my phone, I read Wire's response to my message from earlier.

It's done.

I shot back a reply, thanking him, and checking on any progress with Nora's background. The phone rang, and I answered it quickly, so it wouldn't wake Solena.

"Hello," I said, keeping my voice low.

"Nora's mom was a woman by the name of Wendy Roberts. The woman grew up in the system, and I haven't been able to track down her parents. On Nora's birth certificate, it lists her father as unknown. If she has a family out there, I have no idea who they are, and so far I haven't been able to track anyone down. The mother is currently in prison for a very lengthy sentence."

"Since I'm keeping her, I guess it doesn't matter. I just don't know why she thinks I'm her dad. If the father wasn't listed on the birth certificate, would she have ever met him?"

"Probably not," Wire said. "Doesn't mean the mother

didn't show her a picture at some point, though. The guy could have been a biker. Looking at Wendy's past financial records, she liked going to bars and drinking. I have a feeling Nora was the product of a one-night stand."

"In other words, we may never know."

"Right. Not to risk pissing you off, but have you thought of taking a paternity test with her? Wendy has been all over Oklahoma over the last decade. She may very well have been to a party at your clubhouse before."

"Any way you can hack into her phone records while you're at it? You can see any pictures she has, right?"

"If they're stored in the cloud," Wire said. "Give me a few minutes — I'll see if I can find anything. What am I looking for? Pictures of bikers?"

"I guess so, or anyone you think could be her dad."

"Nora is seven, so adding in the length of a pregnancy, I'm going to look back eight years. If I find anything interesting, I'll let you know. Assuming there's anything to find at all. She could also have only used burner phones."

"Why would she need one of those?" I asked.

"They're cheap, for one. It also looks like she's had a lot of issues with drugs. She's been to jail twice. In fact, that's how Nora ended up in her current situation. The mom signed her rights over to the same phony adoption people who took Santiago. It was right before she was sent to jail for possession with intent to distribute. Guess she didn't want her daughter in the system like she'd been."

"Thanks, Wire. Keep me posted."

I ended the call, set the phone aside, and finally let sleep pull me under.

Chapter Nine

Solena

I felt like I'd lost my damn mind. I'd given into him so easily, after everything he'd put me through. Maybe it was because I'd been on my own for so long. Even while I'd been living at home, I hadn't really had anyone to rely on. My parents had been distant. Even cold most of the time. I didn't know why they'd had me, but from what I'd overheard once, I thought my mother had gotten pregnant by accident. Since my parents had an unhappy marriage, they apparently wanted to make sure I'd been miserable too.

I didn't want that for Santiago. Now that I had him back, I wanted to give him a good life. The thought of taking care of him on my own had terrified me, but I'd wanted to do it. Knowing I'd now have someone by my side? It made all the difference. Since the moment I'd met Atilla, I'd wanted to be part of his life. To know more about him, see him laugh, share special moments with him. Now I'd get the chance.

I didn't know what had changed. He'd said he'd talked to Casey. Whatever she'd said to him, it was enough to make him stop holding back. For the first time, he'd shown me the real him. I was both excited and scared of what the future would hold for me. Not only me, but the children as well.

“Morning,” Atilla said.

I smiled and accepted the cup of coffee he'd handed me. “Good morning. The children still asleep?”

“Yeah. Checked on them when I got up. Nora was clinging to Santiago like he was her personal teddy bear. I heard Casey get up and down with Becca all night. I think they’re scheduled for another feeding pretty soon. Wish I could help her, but she’s breastfeeding. I’m not exactly equipped for that.”

I snickered. No, he certainly wasn’t. Even though he didn’t have the body of a twenty-year-old athlete, he’d kept in shape. The only sixty-year-old men I’d seen who looked anything like him were on TV.

“You all right this morning?” he asked, sliding a plate of toast with eggs in front of me. “Sorry about the lack of meat. I need to get some stuff from the store.”

“I’m fine. Still processing everything, I think. My son is really here, right? You brought him back to me?” I asked.

“I did, and he is. I had a conversation with Wire last night. He’s going to look into Nora’s past a bit more, or rather, he’s seeing what he can dig up on her mother. She’s been in and out of jail quite a bit. He’s hoping to hack into her phone records to figure out who Nora’s father is.”

“Does it really matter?” I asked. “She thinks you’re her dad. Since you said we all belonged to you now, why do you need to look into it more?”

“I don’t. Except what if Nora asks one day? What are we supposed to tell her?”

I reached over and took his hand. “That her dad loves her very much. Her *family* does. Honestly, I don’t think she’ll ever bring it up. She seemed quite content to latch onto you and never let go. I’m surprised you got her into the bed.”

A scream down the hall had him bolting out of his chair. I was right on his heels as he ran to the kids' room. Nora sat in the bed, tears running down her cheeks, and yelling until her face turned red.

“What the hell?” Atilla looked around the room before staring at Santiago. “What happened?”

“She woke up and thought you'd left her,” he said.

Atilla picked up Nora and held her close. “It's all right, little angel. I'm right here. No one left you, okay?”

“Daddy.” She buried her face against him and clutched at his shirt. I'd noticed he hadn't put on his cut this morning. Then again, he probably didn't wear it all the time. Not when he was at home anyway.

“That's right. Daddy is here. And your momma is here too.” He glanced at me. That's when it really hit me. I hadn't only gotten Santiago back, but I'd gained a daughter.

My son gave me a distrustful glare, but I ignored it and went over to Atilla and our new daughter. “Good morning, Nora. Are you hungry?”

She nodded against Atilla, still not looking up. I motioned for Santiago to stand up and follow me. Surprisingly, he did so without complaint. When we got to the kitchen, I started making a fresh batch of toast and took the eggs from the fridge.

“Santiago, do you want to help make the toast?” I asked.

He looked at Atilla before coming closer to me. He seemed fascinated by the four-slice toaster, and I wondered if

he'd ever seen one before. What kind of life had he led until now? There was so much I wanted to ask him.

“We missed your birthday. I thought we could have a party in a few days. There are a lot of people here for us to meet.” He didn't say anything. “We could bake a cake, and there would be presents. Do you like balloons? I bet we could get some.”

“You don't have to try so hard,” he mumbled. “I know you didn't want me.”

And there was my opening. “Why do you think that?”

He kept staring at the toaster. “Everyone said so. I'm stupid. Ugly. Worthless. None of them wanted to keep me.”

“And they told you I didn't want you?” I asked, fisting my hands at my sides. I wanted to strangle all of them! How could they tell my precious boy such awful lies? He might look a lot like his dad, but he wasn't ugly. In fact, his father had been one of the cutest boys in school. I turned Santiago to face me. “Santiago, you were very much wanted. What I told you last night wasn't a lie. I didn't have a choice but to give you up for adoption, but it was the last thing I wanted to do.”

“Your mom was a mess,” Atilla said. “She missed you. Wondered if you were safe. If you'd found a good home. Not knowing what happened to you was eating her up inside. It's why I promised to bring you home.”

“You called her Nora's mom,” Santiago said.

“Well, Atilla is her dad.” I wasn't sure how he'd take this next part. “And since Atilla and I are together, that means I'm her mom.”

“So, he’s my dad?” Santiago asked. For the first time since he’d been brought home, I heard hope in his voice.

“Yeah, son. I’m your dad,” Atilla said.

“What’s my job here?” Santiago asked.

I stopped what I was doing. Job? What the hell did he mean by that? Had the other families made him work? Or did he mean chores? We should probably assign both children something to do, like make their bed and keep their toys picked up. They could help set the table.

“Santi, what kind of jobs have you had before?” Atilla asked.

“Scrubbing floors and toilets, throwing out the empty bottles around the house, or helping package stuff. If I didn’t do a good job, I got punished.”

My heart slammed against my ribs as I stared in horror at Atilla. Packaged products? Like... drugs? And what sort of punishment?

“Did they put you in a timeout?” Atilla asked.

Santiago shook his head.

“Did you get a spanking?” I asked.

Santiago refused to speak. What had my poor boy been through? I didn’t know if this was something Atilla and I could handle on our own. Would Santiago speak with a stranger? A therapist, for instance. Nora might need one too.

“Atilla,” I murmured. He gave me a nod, and I knew he’d look into what the children had been through. “Santiago, how long have you and Nora been together? Was she your foster sister at your last home?”

He wouldn't answer me. It seemed he'd spoken as much as he'd planned to. Having my son back meant everything to me, even if we had a hard road ahead of us. Would he be able to go to school soon? I'd need to register him, but I didn't have any of his records. Same for Nora.

"Atilla, we need their school records," I said.

"I'll talk to Wire. I'm not sure if the kids will even have school records. May have to ask the school to test them before they start classes." He shifted Nora on his lap as I set a plate of eggs and toast down for her. Santiago took his and sat beside Atilla. "You don't have to call me Atilla when only the family is around. If anyone can use my actual name, it's you. Call me James."

"While I appreciate that, you seem more like an Atilla to me." I smiled at him. "James sounds more like someone who sits at a desk or manages a construction crew. It's not very biker-like."

"Call me whatever you want, Lena." Nora continued to sit in his lap while she ate, dropping crumbs all over both of them. He didn't seem to mind. He wiped a few off her mouth and gave her a warm smile. "Don't eat too fast, angel. You might choke."

"We haven't had anything in a few days, except what we were given last night after you found us," Santiago said. "She's worried the food will go away."

"We'll always have plenty for the two of you to eat. Your mom and I would go without before we'd ever let you suffer." Atilla patted Santiago on the back. "I know this is going to be a big adjustment for the two of you. Things are going to be different from before. This is your home. Not just

for right now, but for the rest of your lives. You will always have a spot here with me and your mom.”

“Is that our room?” Santiago asked.

“For now. Casey and the baby will move across the street once their home is ready. Once they’re settled in their new place, one of you can have the room she’s in now.” Atilla hugged Nora and kissed her cheek. The little girl cuddled against him, not saying a word. Other than *daddy*, she hadn’t spoken much. Not around me, anyway.

“Would the two of you like to go shopping today?” I asked. “I have some toys for you already, Santiago, but we don’t have anything for Nora. You’re both going to need more clothes and shoes too.”

“Are all of us going?” he asked.

“Not Casey and Becca,” Atilla said. “They need to stay here. It’s just going to be me, you, your mom, and Nora. Is that okay?”

Santiago nodded. “I don’t think she’s been shopping before. Neither have I.”

Another piece of the puzzle. What sort of parents never took their children to the store? Between the jobs Santiago had to do previously, the fact they punished him in a way he didn’t want to speak of, and now discovering he’d never been to a store... my mind was reeling. Who the hell had my parents given my baby to? Since Atilla said Santiago had been through many homes since then, it was clear the people hadn’t really wanted him. But still... how could so many people have neglected him?

“We’ll go to the nearest Target,” Atilla said. “It will

have everything they need, plus groceries. We should pick up a few meals and some snacks.”

“I guess we’d better all put our shoes on so we can head out,” I said.

“I need your apartment keys first.” Atilla held out his hand. “Going to have someone go pack up everything. It will be here when we get back.”

I went to get them from my purse and set them on the table in front of him. It felt surreal knowing I wouldn’t be going back to the apartment. It might not be much, but I’d worked hard for the few things I had. Wait.

“Um, does that mean they’re going to rifle through my panty drawer?” I whispered.

Atilla snorted. “Not unless they have a death wish. They’ll probably just dump everything from the drawers into bags. Only other women here are Casey and Meredith, and both are busy with kids. I’m afraid I can only send a man over there.”

“Fine.” My cheeks warmed. “But tell them to close their eyes when they open the top dresser drawer. I won’t be able to look at any of them ever again if I know they’ve seen my underwear.”

“They won’t look,” he assured me. “Now go get ready. First thing we’re buying at the store are booster seats. These two are probably still small enough to need them.”

Santiago puffed up. “I am not!”

Atilla chuckled. “Son, it’s the law. I’m not saying you aren’t a big boy. You’ve done a good job watching over your

sister. But there are rules we have to follow. One of them is making sure the two of you are safe when we're in the car."

"Fine," Santiago mumbled.

Casey stumbled into the kitchen, yawning widely. The dark circles under her eyes made me wince. Had she gotten any sleep at all? How many times had Becca woken up? I knew Atilla said he'd heard them off and on all night, but my heart broke for her. She looked exhausted.

"Y'all going somewhere?" she asked.

"Taking the kids shopping. If you need anything while I'm out, text me. Or if it's not something I can pick up at Target, ask one of the guys to go fetch it for you. Just not Stinger, Ravager, or Lucas. They're going to be putting your house together." Atilla stood with Nora still in his arms. "I'm going to grab my cut, then I'll meet everyone in the car. I'll take this little one with me."

"I'll bring her shoes out," I said.

"I hope you enjoy your time together," Casey said, giving us a tired smile. "I'm going to grab something to eat, then try to sleep while Becca does."

"Would you like us to pick up a breast pump while we're out?" I asked. "It would give you a break from having to take every single feeding. Your dad or I could feed her from her bottle. It would still be your milk."

Casey nodded. "That sounds great. I'll text you the bottles the hospital recommended. I don't want to switch her to one just yet, though. They said it was an important part of bonding with her, so I'd like to give this a try for another day or two. After that, I may be bawling my eyes out and begging

for a break.”

“We’d still let you feed her most of the time,” Atilla said. “But if Lena and I each took one feeding, that’s an extra four hours of sleep for you. Sounded like she was up every two hours last night.”

“She was. I don’t think I’m producing enough milk to fill her up to go longer than that.” Casey yawned again. “I may call the doctor’s office today and ask if there’s something I should do that might help.”

“Just let us know if you need anything,” I said.

“I take it Dad pulled his head out of his butt. Welcome to the family.” She paused. “Dad, can you check and see what happened to Su and Mark? Since they don’t have my new number, they can’t reach me, but I’m still uneasy about the entire thing.”

“I’ll ask Wire for an update later. I need to talk to him about something, anyway. Go get some sleep.”

Atilla walked out, my keys in his hand, and I heard him heading for the bedroom — Nora still clutched in his arms.

“Good thing she knows how to walk already,” Casey mumbled. “Otherwise, I don’t think Dad would ever let her learn.”

I couldn’t hold back my laughter. “I’d been thinking the same thing.”

Casey stumbled from the room, and I truly hoped she could sleep for a little while. I hadn’t been able to raise my baby, so I didn’t know a lot about what she was going through. Well, except for what I’d seen on TV or read in books. She

looked both happy and miserable at the same time.

“Go brush your teeth, Santi. I’ll put your dishes in the sink.”

He gave me a long look before leaving the table, and I realized it was the first time I’d shortened his name. I’d heard Atilla say it earlier, and it seemed to suit him. I hoped I hadn’t just made a big mistake with him. I wanted us to move forward, not go two steps backward.

Chapter Ten

Atila

I'd always wondered why parents let their kids run wild in stores. I now understood it was utter exhaustion. Although, our kids weren't bad. They hadn't pitched fits or fussed even a little. If anything, they were too damn quiet. I'd convinced Nora to walk once we reached the store, but she still held onto the bottom of my cut. Santiago stuck close to her, and Lena walked on my other side.

I knew it killed her to be so close yet feel so far away from Santiago. Part of me understood his attitude. It didn't mean I had to like it. When Lena took Nora to the bathroom, I pulled Santiago aside for a moment.

Kneeling down, I made sure I had his attention. "I know you're angry. You may not be ready to share everything you went through, and that's okay, but what I can't condone is the way you're treating your mother. She loves you more than you'll ever know. Can you try a little harder for me? Give her a chance to show you how much she wants to be part of your life?"

"Casey kept her baby."

I nodded. "She did, and that's because she had me standing in her corner. Your mom didn't have anyone. The entire world was against her keeping that baby, or that's how it felt to her at the time. Her parents wanted her to give you up. Your dad signed away his rights. If you want to blame

someone for what happened to you, then be angry with them. If they'd given your mother even a little support, she'd have held onto you."

"Are you Nora's real dad?" he asked softly.

"No. Blood doesn't make a family, though, Santi. The men who helped save you last night are my family. My brothers. We're part of the same club, and we've chosen to live and die for one another. Same as I did with you, your mom, and Nora. As of last night, the three of you are officially mine, and I will never let anyone hurt any of you again."

"What if she decides she likes Nora more?" he asked.

"She won't. She can love you both equally, same as me." I reached out and wrapped my fingers around the back of his neck. "You're my boy, Santi. Don't let anyone ever tell you different, okay? I love you and Nora the same amount. And I love Casey and little Becca the same too. I don't favor one of you over the others. You're all my family."

"I understand," he murmured.

"Do you sometimes need to vent your anger?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"Hmm. Then I guess we'd better find a healthy outlet for it. We'll get some sports equipment today and see if you like one more than another. Kicking a ball, throwing one, going for a run, or hitting a punching bag can all be good ways to let out your frustration and anger without the risk of hurting someone else."

Lena and Nora came out of the bathroom, and I stood. Santiago held up his hand for Lena. For a brief moment, a

startled expression crossed her face, but she smiled warmly as she clutched his hand in hers. Nora came back to me, grabbing hold of my hand.

We spent the next two hours buying clothes and shoes for both children, as well as toys for Nora. Even though we'd already picked out things for Santiago, I let him get a few things in the sports section. I'd also texted Spade and asked him to find a basketball net and have it installed by the street in the gap between my house and the one next door. Santiago could use it, or any other kids, as our club expanded.

Neither child seemed to know what foods they liked to eat and were hesitant to select snacks. I tossed in goldfish crackers, pretzel sticks, chocolate chip cookies, fruit cups, Jell-O cups, and fruit gummies. Even if they weren't the healthiest options, I wanted the kids to have things they'd enjoy. I stocked up on frozen chicken breasts to put in my small freezer, and let Lena select fresh meat too.

I knew Casey liked macaroni and cheese, as well as spaghetti, so I made sure we had what we needed to make both. Lena tossed in some canned vegetables and two boxes of rice. I'd stock up more at the grocery store, but once we added bacon, eggs, and biscuits to the cart, we at least had the basics covered for the next few days.

I paid for what ended up being two shopping carts full of items and then loaded everything into the SUV. Lena set up the booster seats and buckled the kids in. I didn't think Lena would feel like cooking when we got home, and it was nearly lunchtime. The kids hadn't eaten a lot at breakfast, and I'd already heard Santiago's stomach growling, even though he hadn't said a word about being hungry.

I swung through the drive-thru of a local chicken place and ordered a bucket of fried chicken, two large containers of mashed potatoes with gravy, and two of mac and cheese, and a box of biscuits. When we got home, I'd let Lena put everything where she wanted it, and I'd make a quick call to Wire. I hadn't heard anything yet, and since I knew he was looking into Nora's past, I found it odd I hadn't received an update of any sort. The man was typically quick when it came to this sort of thing.

"I'm going to get someone to come help you unload. The kids saw General last night, so he might be the safer bet," I said. "I'll be in the bedroom on the phone if you need me."

I kissed Lena's cheek and got out of the car. After a quick text to General, asking him to come help my woman and kids, I hurried into the house. Everything was quiet in Casey's room, and she had the door shut, so I didn't disturb her. I hoped she was sleeping. The bottles she'd requested had been out of stock, but I'd ordered some for a two-day delivery online. The breast pump was in the back of the car. I'd let Lena pick it since I didn't know a damn thing about them. I knew she didn't either, but she'd seemed excited about helping.

After I shut the bedroom door, I took out my phone and dialed Wire's number. The fucker didn't even so much as say hello when the call connected. He answered and hung up. I called again, but the same thing happened. The hairs on my nape stood up, so I checked in with Outlaw to see if he'd heard anything.

"This is Outlaw."

"It's Atilla. Have you heard from Wire? I tried calling.

He picked up and immediately hung up. Twice.”

“He’s busy.”

Uh-huh. Now I knew something was up. Outlaw was never this short with me. Not in all the years I’d known him.

“Talk to me. Does this have to do with my kids?” I asked.

“Did you really need to know where Nora came from?” he asked. “Because it’s opened a can of worms no one should have touched.”

“He said her mom was in and out of jail and the father was unknown. What’s the problem?” I asked.

“I’ve known you a long time, right?” Outlaw asked.

“Yeah.”

“And you’ve always been up front with me. Anything you think we should know? Maybe, like, say, a brother? A fucking identical twin, to be precise?” Outlaw asked, fury in every word.

“My brother is dead,” I said. “He died in 1987 while fighting in a war.”

“Ever see the body?” Outlaw asked.

“What the fuck kind of question is that? They shot his plane down over Iran. Government told me the Iranians blew it to pieces. There wasn’t anything left of him to send home, except his dog tags. What the hell does this have to do with anything?”

“You really don’t know?” Outlaw asked, his tone softer than before. “Atilla, I don’t know how to say this. Your brother

didn't die in 1987. He died three years ago.”

What the fuck was he saying? There was no way my brother had been alive all that time and he hadn't reached out to me. As he'd said, we were twins. John wouldn't have left me grieving all these years. He hadn't been gone a year before our parents died in a car crash. I'd been alone ever since until I'd started this club.

“Atilla, your brother was a secret government operative. Wire couldn't take your call because he was getting his ass chewed by some government person he works with sometimes. He poked his nose where it didn't belong, all because you'd asked him to. Thankfully, he's too valuable for them to lock him up.”

“Are you telling me that Nora is my brother's kid?” I asked.

“I am. John Cutler met Nora's mother at a bar. They had a one-week fling before he left to go overseas on a mission, and he never got in touch with her again. You can do a DNA test if you want, but it's the only thing Wire could find that would explain why Nora thinks you're her dad.”

“Back up because that didn't make sense,” I said. “If he never knew about Nora, then...”

“Nora's mom had a picture of him. A few, actually. We think she showed those to Nora, telling her the man was her daddy. Wire sent me everything he could find before the government shut him down.”

“And Su and Mark? The trafficking ring? What's happening with that?” I asked.

“The FBI has stepped in. Wire had to turn over all the

evidence he'd found so far, and everyone implicated. However, he made sure Nora and Santiago wouldn't be taken from you. Basically, he made a deal with them. He's going to help them with a few cases they haven't been able to crack by using his hacking skills, and they're going to look the other way regarding the four children you took to your compound. He assured them those children would be well taken care of."

Shit. I really owed him. But John had been alive all this time? I wanted to ask for more. How had he died? Where had he been living? Why the fuck hadn't he ever reached out to me?

Since he was gone, I'd probably never know.

So, little Nora was my niece. Knowing she was the last remaining piece of John, it made me love her even more. I only wished he'd known about her. I knew he'd have given her a good life. It didn't matter what path he'd chosen back then. Some things would never change, and I knew my brother had a soft spot for children.

"Can you tell me if Su, Mark, and Solena's parents will be caught up in the FBI's case for the human trafficking ring?" I asked. "My girls need some closure."

"Su and Mark are already in custody. Wire found evidence of them selling children, in addition to the adoption scheme through their church. Solena's parents are still free at the moment, but they are persons of interest. In other words, you can't touch them. If you do, the FBI will come looking for them."

"How likely is it they'll face any prison time?" I asked.

"Their daughter's baby isn't the only one they helped

adopt through the church's program. Those children were placed in homes that hadn't been vetted. In fact, the church sold them."

"Santiago said they punished him when he didn't do a good job. Not to mention it sounds like they had him bagging drugs as a fucking job."

Outlaw growled. "Yeah, they did. Wire found that while he was digging. You aren't going to like what I'm going to tell you. Santiago's punishment was to stand in the center of the room, undressed, and take a belt across his ass every fifteen minutes. It would last for hours. They took a few videos and some pictures of what happened. Wire already scrubbed them, so no one will ever find those again."

Son of a bitch!

"Before you get too pissed off, they didn't molest him. They didn't force him into anything sexual. Doesn't mean he didn't suffer. He's going to need some help of the professional variety."

"And Nora?" I asked.

"Wire couldn't find anything on the two families she had before being placed in the same home as Santiago. He'd take her punishments at the last place, so no one laid a finger on Nora. But she saw what happened to him. It probably traumatized her."

"Thanks for everything, Outlaw. Tell Wire I'm sorry this landed him in hot water. I'll talk to Solena and Casey so they won't worry about someone coming for the kids."

"Glad we could help," he said.

I ended the call and closed my eyes. I wanted to rip those fuckers to pieces, but I wouldn't risk the FBI knocking on my door. Casey was in the hall when I opened the door. The look on her face told me she'd heard more than just a little of my conversation.

“So it's over?” she asked. “And those people, they...”

“They were essentially selling kids. As to whether it's over, for you, yes. Solena's parents are probably going to be in trouble with the law, which means I can't touch them. And Nora... is my niece.” Casey's eyes went wide. “Had a twin brother. Thought he died when we were twenty-nine. Turns out he didn't.”

“And now?” she asked.

I shook my head. She wouldn't be meeting her Uncle John. Not in this lifetime. “Don't say anything to her. We were identical twins. She really thinks I'm her dad. We share the same DNA, so there's no reason to tell her otherwise.”

“Fine. I'll go sit with the kids so you can talk to Solena.”

I waved her off. “I'll tell her later, when everyone has gone to bed. How's Becca?”

“She's awake if you want to see her.”

I smiled and went into their room, lifting my granddaughter from her crib. I rocked her in my arms and marveled at how tiny she was. I wondered if Casey had looked like this when she'd been born. Since Casey rarely said anything about the baby's father, I had no idea what he looked like. She'd not once mentioned what he looked like or his name. Of course, that was probably to keep him safe since she

knew I was pissed at the little shit. If she ever wanted to talk to me about him, I'd listen. But I couldn't promise I wouldn't go rip his head off right afterward.

“Are you happy, Dad?” Casey asked.

“Yeah, honey. I am. Happiest I've ever been. Not taking away from what I had with your mom. There will always be a part of me that loves her, but you were right. She'd want me to be happy. I now have two daughters, a son, a precious granddaughter, and a woman to stand by me through all the ups and downs life throws our way.”

“Good. Then I think Mom can rest in peace.”

I hoped so. I thought Rebecca would have liked Solena if they'd had the chance to meet. The emptiness inside me was gone. My family had filled the space, and I couldn't wait to see what the future would hold for all of us.

Chapter Eleven

Solena

I hugged the toilet as I threw up what little I'd managed to eat for breakfast. This was the third morning in a row. Since the feeling always passed after lunch, I was almost certain I was pregnant. I didn't know how Atilla would take the news. It had been a little over three weeks since I'd moved in, and roughly a month since our first night together.

It hadn't happened in front of Atilla yet, so I'd been able to keep this secret. I didn't want to say anything until I knew for certain. Now that I lived with him, and we had two kids to take care of, he'd convinced me to quit my job at the diner. Which meant I was here all day, every day, except for taking the kids to and from school. They'd only started at the elementary school last week.

Both children were seeing a therapist. Nora seemed to open up more and didn't cling to Atilla quite so much. Santiago was actually speaking to me and would often give me a hug or hold my hand. They both had a way to go, but at least they'd improved a lot since coming home.

Someone knocked on the front door and I groaned, dreading the idea of getting up and walking that far. I stood and splashed some water on my face, then rinsed out my mouth. I really needed to brush my teeth, but whoever it was had already knocked twice more. If I didn't answer, someone would tell Atilla something was wrong at home, and he'd rush over here.

“I’m coming,” I yelled out.

“I hope not,” Casey yelled back. “That’s TMI.”

I snickered and opened the front door. She had little Becca in her carrier, and a plastic sack from the pharmacy in her other hand.

“Come on in. I need to go brush my teeth.”

“You might want to change your shirt too,” Casey said. “You have a little something on the front.”

I looked down and winced. It looked like I hadn’t managed to get everything into the toilet after all. After I’d cleaned up, I found Casey in the living room. She tossed the sack to me, and I opened it, shaking my head when I saw the two boxes of pregnancy tests inside.

“I didn’t know which one you’d prefer, so I got both brands. They’re early response tests. I used them when I thought I was pregnant. They were positive and were clearly accurate since Becca is right here in front of us.”

“Does anyone else know?” I asked.

“If you mean my dad, then no. Do you really think you’d be alone right now if he did? He’d have already taken you to the doctor, restricted your movements, and had someone watching you every second of the day for fear something bad might happen.” She smiled sadly. “My mom died when she was still pregnant with me. They cut me out of her stomach after the accident.”

When she put it that way, it made sense that Atilla would be overprotective if I was pregnant. He’d already bought me the top-of-the-line SUV with all the best safety

ratings, so I'd have a reliable car for toting the kids around. He'd kept his as well, even though I didn't know why we needed two of them.

I carried the tests to the bathroom and used one stick from each box. Even though the instructions said it was better to take them first thing in the morning, I didn't want to wait. If they both said negative, then I'd use the other sticks in the morning when I first woke up. And if they were positive...

I capped the sticks and set them on the counter, washed my hands, and set a timer. I paced the bathroom while I waited, glancing at the tests every fifteen seconds. One had a digital display, and the other would have colored lines. Two meant pregnant. I squinted as one line formed. Did that mean it was probably negative?

The timer went off and I checked the digital one first. *Pregnant*. My breath caught in my lungs as I stared at that word. Glancing at the other test, I saw the second line had formed. Holy crap!

In a daze, I went back to the living room and sat down, pressing a hand to my belly. Casey reached over and patted my leg.

"If it's any consolation, I think Dad will be thrilled. He missed out on raising me as a baby. Both your kids are already seven and eight. The two of you are going to be great parents for this little one." Casey smiled. "When are you going to tell him?"

"I don't know. We promised the kids pizza after school today. Maybe once they're in bed?"

She nodded. "Good idea. I'm not sure how they'll take

the news. They only gained a family three weeks ago. Everything is still so new for them, they may feel threatened by a baby.”

“What do we do?” Panic welled inside me. I couldn’t lose Santiago and Nora. What if they pulled away? What if Casey was right, and they hated the fact I was having a baby?

“First, I’m going to call my dad. I don’t think you need to wait. Talk to him now so the two of you can figure this out together. Second, I’ll pick the kids up from school.”

I shook my head. “No, Casey. You’re still exhausted from getting up all night with Becca. I can’t ask you to do that.”

“Then let one of the guys use your SUV. I’ll ask Maui to pick up the kids and drop them at my house. They can have pizza there.”

“Are you sure?” I asked.

“Positive. Now, sit tight. I’ll go back home and call Dad and Maui.”

“Thanks, Casey.”

She leaned in to hug me before standing and picking up Becca’s carrier. Casey left, and I stared into space. I didn’t know how Atilla would react. We hadn’t discussed having more children. He’d used a condom that first time, but since then he hadn’t always remembered one. He hadn’t gotten me pregnant on purpose, had he? No. That didn’t seem like something he’d do. Things had been so hectic we hadn’t really sat down to discuss the possibility of having a larger family. Neither of us had brought it up.

The front door opened, and Atilla hurried inside, kneeling in front of me. “Casey said you needed me. Is everything all right? Are you hurt?”

I reached out to cup his cheek. “I’m fine, just... rattled.”

“What happened, Lena?”

“Bathroom. Go look on the counter.” I couldn’t say the words *I’m pregnant*. My brain was still processing it.

“Holy shit!” I would have laughed under other circumstances. I heard his boots bang against the floor as he rushed back to the living room. “You’re pregnant?”

I nodded. I couldn’t bring myself to look at him. Was he excited? Angry? My heart raced and my hands trembled. Atilla sat beside me, pulling me into his arms.

“I’m so fucking happy right now,” he said.

“Really?” I looked up and saw the big smile on his face.

“Of course. Although, I think four kids is my limit. I’m going to go get snipped before this one is born.”

“I wasn’t sure how you’d react,” I admitted. “Since we didn’t always use protection, I briefly wondered if you’d done it on purpose. But seeing how shocked you were, I guess not.”

“If this had happened a month ago, my reaction would have been different. I was still trying to keep my distance from you. If I’d found out our first night together had resulted in a baby, I’d have been equal parts pissed and scared. Right now, I’m just excited that we get to raise this one together. And no, I didn’t do it on purpose. Can’t say I’m sorry it happened,

though.”

“What about the kids?” I asked. “Casey said they might feel threatened.”

He nodded. “It’s true. They could think we’re trying to replace them. I’ll talk to the therapist before their next session. For now, I think we should keep this to ourselves. Since you said Casey was worried about the kids, I’m going to assume that means she already knows.”

“She’s the one who gave me the tests.”

“I’ll ask her not to tell anyone. After the children know, then we can share the news with everyone else.”

I leaned into him. “Casey said she’d have Maui get the kids today and drop them at her place for pizza. So we have a little time together, unless you need to get back to work?”

“You have my undivided attention for the rest of the day,” he said. “We can do whatever you want.”

“Binge watch TV?” I asked.

“Which show?”

“*Supernatural*? I think it’s still on Netflix.”

He nodded and released me, standing up to get the remote. He tossed it onto the couch. “Go ahead and load it. I’m going to get you some crackers and ginger ale.”

“How did you know I have morning sickness?”

I wiped a hand over my shirt. I hadn’t thrown up again, so how had he known? Oh, no! Was my breath still stinky? Part of me dreaded his answer. What had I missed?

“Just a hunch. Unless you’d noticed your missed

period, I couldn't think of another reason you'd take those tests."

Huh. I hadn't even thought about my period. Then again, it was never regular. Some months I'd have one three weeks apart. Other times, I could go six to eight weeks without one. It had been that way all my life.

I picked up the remote and found the show, starting at season one episode one, and pressed play when Atilla came back into the room. He handed me the glass of soda and the package of crackers, then toed off his boots and sat down, putting his feet up on the table. I curled into his side and nibbled on the crackers. They really did help.

Since the kids were eating after school, I knew they wouldn't want a big meal for dinner. I'd make some snacks for them later. Maybe grilled cheese sandwiches. Bile rose in my throat at the thought of making them, and I wondered if I could convince Atilla to cook if my stomach was still iffy by then. It hadn't been so far, but I knew that could change.

Atilla laced our fingers together. I knew he didn't particularly love this show, but I did... so he watched it with me. Until him, I'd never known a man could be so supportive or loving. He may not have ever said the words *I love you*, but he showed me how much he cared every single day. It was enough. Maybe for some women it wouldn't be. I knew people would say I was settling. They didn't realize how amazing Atilla was.

At night, when he thought I was asleep, he'd kiss my forehead and I'd hear him whisper to me: *thank you for being mine*. I didn't know why he couldn't say the words when I was awake. I hadn't exactly confessed my feelings for him either.

Could he be waiting for me to make the first move? He'd lost Casey's mom. I knew he still had emotional scars from it. Anyone would.

At the risk of scaring him off, I knew I needed to tell him how I felt. It never seemed like the right time. What I knew for certain was that I'd regret not telling him if I lost my chance. If he left the house tomorrow and didn't come home, I'd wish I'd spoken up sooner.

"Atilla..."

"What is it, Lena? Feeling sick?"

"No. There's something I need to tell you." I shifted so I could see his face clearly. "I know we've only been together officially for three weeks, but it feels like I've known you much longer. Being with you makes me so incredibly happy."

"You make me happy too," he said.

"I love you. You don't have to say it back! But I felt like you needed to know."

He leaned in closer and softly brushed his lips against mine. "I love you too, Lena. There's no one more perfect for me. You came into my life, tearing down the walls I'd built around my heart, and before I realized it, you meant the world to me. I can't imagine living without you."

Tears slipped down my cheeks. I never thought I'd hear him say something like that. I threw my arms around him, hugging him tight.

I went from being alone to having this wonderful man by my side, and children I adored. While I didn't consider Casey my daughter because we were so close in age, I did

think of her as a friend.

“Let’s watch more of your show while the house is still quiet,” he said. “Then you can visit with the kids, and I’ll make dinner later.”

“I was thinking about grilled cheese sandwiches since they’re eating pizza right now.”

He nodded. “Sounds good. And if you can’t eat that, you let me know. Whatever you want, I’ll get it for you.”

I kissed him. “I’ll hold you to that.”

I cuddled against him again and we watched another episode of my show. He was right about one thing. The house *was* quiet. We were alone. How often would that happen, especially as our family grew? My nausea hadn’t come back, and I thought it was gone until tomorrow.

“You’re thinking awfully hard,” he murmured. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. I wondered if we should take advantage of having the house to ourselves,” I said.

He shifted to face me. “Are you saying you want to head to the bedroom?”

“Well, I’m not exactly eager to have sex on the couch where our kids will sit to watch TV. Unless you plan to throw a blanket over it.”

“I thought you weren’t feeling well.”

“I wasn’t. I’m fine now, though.” I ran my finger down the center of his chest. “We have at least another hour or two before the kids come back.”

“All right.” He stood and helped me off the couch. Before I could take a single step, he swung me up into his arms and carried me to our bedroom. I loved when he did things like this. I smiled, feeling like a princess in a fairy tale.

Atilla eased me down onto the bed and slowly undressed me. Once I lay bare, he quickly stripped out of his clothes and leaned over me. He stared at me with such hunger it made me shiver. I’d never had anyone look at me the way he did.

“You’re so incredibly beautiful,” he murmured. “And mine. Every single inch of you belongs to me. Isn’t that right?”

I didn’t know what brought on this caveman act, but I liked it. I nodded my head, but it seemed he didn’t accept my answer.

“Out loud, Lena. Tell me you’re mine.”

“I’m yours, Atilla. Only yours.” I swallowed hard. “You’re the only one I’ve ever belonged to.”

“Damn right.” He leaned in to kiss me, devouring my lips with his. When he drew back, he slid his hands down my thighs to my knees, then spread me open. Dropping to his knees beside the bed, he gently blew on my pussy.

“Atilla, I...”

“Hush.” He tapped my pussy. “This is mine, right? Then let me enjoy it.”

My heart raced in my chest. I wasn’t sure what he got out of this, but I knew I would certainly be happy. He rubbed my clit and I felt pleasure start to hum inside me. He made me

come twice before he put his mouth on me, his tongue lashing my clit before slipping inside me.

I fisted the bedding and fought for control. It felt so amazing I wanted to clamp my thighs around his head and hold him in place. He eased two fingers inside me, pumping them in and out. The next stroke across my clit had me screaming his name as my back arched off the bed. My legs trembled and I couldn't catch my breath.

“Please, Atilla. I need you inside me.”

He rose to his feet and flipped me onto my stomach. I got onto my hands and knees as I felt the bed dip from his weight. He gripped my hips and tugged me back toward him. Thrusting against me, he slid his cock along the lips of my pussy, teasing me even more.

“You sure this is what you want?” he asked.

“Yes! Please... I need it.”

“It? So any cock will do?” he asked.

“No.” I groaned. “Just yours.”

“Good answer.” He pressed a kiss to the center of my back, then he slowly pushed inside me. His cock stretched me in the most delicious way. The way his shaft slid against my inner walls made me want to beg for more. He shifted his angle and hit just the right spot. With every stroke, I got closer to orgasm.

“Yes! There, right there.” He hit the spot over and over, and I felt the gush of my release as I came.

Atilla tightened his hold on my hips and drove into me, taking me fast and hard. It didn't take long before I felt the

heat of his cum filling me. He pressed against me, his cock jerking inside me.

“You’re going to kill me with sex one day,” he said. “But it will be one hell of a way to go.”

“Don’t even joke about dying.” I glared at him over my shoulder. “You said I’m yours, but you’re also mine... and I don’t give you permission to leave this world anytime soon.”

He smirked. “Yes, ma’am.”

Oh, God. That did odd things to me. It felt like butterflies rioted in my stomach, and I knew I’d never love anyone as much as I loved him.

He pulled out and helped me stand. We took a shower together, and got dressed, then managed to watch another episode of my show before the kids came home. I helped Nora with her homework, while Atilla took Santiago outside to throw the ball. Our son liked baseball over the other sports so far, and we’d talked about finding him a team to join. We both thought it would be good for him.

I hoped we had many more nights like this one. We’d all found what was missing in our lives — family.

Epilogue

Atila

Four Months Later

I could hear the laughter in the living room and couldn't wait to rejoin my family. I'd already popped one bag of kettle corn, and I was waiting for a second one to finish. Once I'd poured both into a bowl, I grabbed the little plastic basket of drinks. On the nights Casey and Becca joined us, I'd found it easier to cart everything around at one time instead of making multiple trips to the kitchen.

Lena's ankles were swollen already, and she'd had a scare two weeks ago with some spotting. The doctor said she needed to take it easy, so I'd taken over most of the cooking and cleaning. Casey pitched in when she could, and even Meredith stopped by now and then with a casserole for dinner.

"Bottled water for everyone except me," I said, setting the basket down.

"Aww." Santiago pouted. "I wanted a soda."

"Not tonight. It's too close to bedtime," I said. "You can have one with lunch tomorrow."

"Yeah! No school tomorrow." Nora grinned. While she'd made a lot of progress, and even had friends at school, she still preferred being home with us. I didn't see that changing anytime soon.

"Dad, can you give Becca her bottle?" Casey asked,

shoving her hand into the bowl of popcorn.

I held my hands out for my little granddaughter. At five months, she could roll over, get up on her hands and knees, and babble at anyone who would listen. She rocked back and forth, and I held my breath, wondering if this would be the time she decided to crawl. Instead, she fell back to her belly.

I scooped Becca off the floor and took the bottle from Casey. Judging by the thickness, I knew this one had cereal mixed in. Little Becca had developed bad reflux, and this was the only way she could keep her food down. Once she'd reached a month old, Casey had switched her to formula at the doctor's recommendation. Since then, Becca had grown rapidly.

I held her in the crook of my arm and fed her while everyone laughed at the cartoon playing on the TV. Lena leaned against me and I smiled down at her. With her stomach starting to round, I found her more and more beautiful with every passing day. I couldn't wait for our family to expand.

"Mom, when can we find out if the baby is a boy or a girl?" Santiago asked.

I smirked, looking at my woman. We hadn't told anyone yet, but it seemed like tonight would be the perfect time.

"Actually, you're not getting a brother or sister," Lena said.

Casey snorted. "What is it? A puppy?"

"No, smartass," I muttered.

"It's one of each." Lena smiled. "We're having twins!"

“Are you kidding?” Casey’s eyes went wide. “Where are you going to put them?”

“Nora and I can share a room,” Santiago said.

“No. You’re both going to be too old for that. You’ll want your own space when you’re teenagers.” I burped Becca and handed her back to Casey, along with the empty bottle. “We’re going to move.”

“What?” Santiago looked stricken, and Nora reached over to grab his hand.

I’d known he wouldn’t handle the news well. Both of them didn’t need a lot of changes right now. This was the first home they’d had that was a truly safe space for them. I could understand why they wouldn’t want to give it up. And I knew Casey liked being across the street.

“We’re just going to have a new house built down the street. You know the empty spot in the curve of the road?” I asked, nodding my head in the general direction I meant. “We’ll put a house there for all of us.”

“What about Casey?” Nora asked.

“Well... I thought she might like to move into this house.” My oldest daughter’s eyes misted with tears and she gave me a smile. A quick nod was all I needed from her. It was the best way I could think of to not only take care of her and Becca, but also ensure Santiago and Nora wouldn’t feel like they’d lost this house. At least, not right now. If Casey settled down with someone later on, then things might change.

“I’ll even keep a room for you,” Casey said. “That way you can come spend the night whenever you want.”

“You get to decorate your new rooms however you want,” Lena said. “And you can help us decide on the layout of the new home. Your dad has a few sets of plans we can look at tomorrow.”

“All right.” Nora released Santiago’s hand and went back to eating popcorn. It seemed that was good enough for her. Our son, on the other hand...

“You okay, Santi?” I asked.

“Yeah. But what happens if you have more babies?” he asked.

“The doctor said there’s only two,” Lena assured him.

“Not now. I meant later,” he said.

“I’m going to make sure that doesn’t happen.” And I would, right after our babies were born safely. I didn’t want to get snipped before then, just in case anything went wrong. Especially after the spotting scare. If there was even a chance she could lose the babies, I’d hold off. Even though we hadn’t planned for the twins, I didn’t want to rob Lena of the opportunity to have more children if that’s what she wanted. “The five of you are more than enough for us.”

The kids went back to watching the movie. I felt Lena lean into me a little more and realized she’d fallen asleep. She did that frequently these days, just nodded off out of the blue. As for me, I watched Casey and little Becca. I couldn’t have been prouder of my family. I had an amazing woman who wrangled the kids like a pro, a daughter who was doing an incredible job raising her baby, and two little kids who surprised me every day with the things they learned.

It was my hope that one day every brother in my club

would know this sort of happiness. Even the ones who didn't seem eager to go find a woman would eventually fall for someone. I'd already scaled back on a lot of the shit the club had been involved in over the last few years. We'd also started several legit businesses around town, and I planned to open even more.

The Savage Raptors had been my family for a long time. I loved my brothers and wanted the best for each of them. Just like the family sitting in the living room with me... I only wanted good things for them.

We'd all had a rocky start, but every day was better than the last.

"Love you," I said to all the kids.

Casey smiled. "We love you too, Dad."

Santiago nodded, and little Nora came running. She climbed onto my lap, and I hugged her tight.

If every night was like this one, then I'd die a happy man... because I'd found exactly what I'd been looking for.

A Note from the Author

Dear Reader,

Thank you for purchasing a copy of *Atilla (Savage Raptors MC)*. I hope you enjoyed the story. If you have a moment, I'd really appreciate it if you'd leave a rating or review at the retailer of your choice, or over at Goodreads or BookBub.

Atilla's story touched on some hard subjects: adoption, death of a loved one, human trafficking, and teen pregnancy just to name a few. I hope that despite the darker undertones you were still able to enjoy the story. I'm sure there were times you wanted to smack Atilla over the head. Hopefully, he redeemed himself in your eyes by the end of the book. I know I crammed in a lot, and it may feel like some things weren't resolved. The bigger issues will continue in other books, not only *Savage Raptors*, but the other clubs as well.

For those of you who haven't read *Lynx*, which is Book 1 in the *Savage Raptor* series, you'll find out Meredith and Lynx's story there. Just be sure to have tissues handy! You'll need them. If you haven't read the *Dixie Reapers MC* series, Wire and Lavender's story can be found there (Book 13), and you can read more about Outlaw not only in Wire's book, but Outlaw also has a story in the *Devil's Fury MC* series.

Yes... I have a lot of connected clubs. However, I try to write the books so that you can jump in wherever and don't have to read in order.

Thanks again for picking up a copy of Atilla!

Until next time...

Harley

Dedication

For my sweet Tanto, who passed away while I was working on this book...

I'll never regret the years we had together. The cuddles, kisses, and even the love bites. I only wish we'd had more time. I'll miss you sleeping in your bed under my desk while I work on my stories, sitting on my feet when my toes were cold, or listening to you have conversations with the bird.

Rest in peace, my precious furbaby.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Changeling Press! From the owners to the proofers, my editor, the formatters, and my cover artist, Bryan, everyone at Changeling has been amazing, and I truly appreciate each and every one of you.

Thanks to my beta team — Shelby, Tami, Dawn, and Angie. Your feedback was incredibly helpful! Super big thanks to Shelby for helping with a research question even while she was on vacation.

Shout out to the Wydlings and my Patreon members! Y'all are awesome! Your support means so much to me. Special thanks to the Tier 3 Patreon crew: Candace, Ashley, Nicole, Arran, Michelle, Sagan, and Elizabeth.

[Harley Wylde](#)

Harley Wylde is the International Bestselling Author of MC Romances. When Harley's writing, her motto is the hotter the better — off-the-charts sex, commanding men, and the women who can't deny them. If you want men who talk dirty, are sexy as hell, and take what they want, then you've come to the right place. She doesn't shy away from the dangers and nastiness in the world, bringing those realities to the pages of her books, but always gives her characters a happily-ever-after and makes sure the bad guys get what they deserve.

The times Harley isn't writing, she's thinking up naughty things to do to her husband, drinking copious amounts of Starbucks, and reading. She loves to read and devours a book a day, sometimes more. She's also fond of TV shows and movies from the 1980s, as well as paranormal shows from the 1990s to today, even though she'd much rather be reading or writing. You can find out more about Harley or enter her monthly giveaway on her website. Be sure to join her newsletter while you're there to learn more about discounts, signing events, and other goodies!

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