



*Chase*

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

T . O . S M I T H

# CHASE

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DARK MC SECOND CHANCE ROMANCE

SATAN'S WORSHIPPERS MC

BOOK 2

T.O. SMITH

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*For Riley, my reason for everything that I do.*

*For every reader who has patiently been waiting for Chase's  
story after reading Scorpion.*

# CONTENTS

Note from the Author:

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Satan's Worshippers MC Book Three

Also by T.O. Smith

About the Author

## **NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:**

This book contains elements that some readers may not find enjoyable. These include MMC being with someone else during a split, graphic violence, murder, sexual assault, rape, and child abuse and neglect.

If any of the above is triggering for you, I advise against reading.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [authortosmith@gmail.com](mailto:authortosmith@gmail.com).



## *Chase*

I grimaced as I took a sip of the coffee one of the guys had made. Judging by the taste of it, this was all Reese's doing. Fucker couldn't make a good pot of coffee to save his life. He made it so strong, it hurt my damn stomach. I didn't know how anyone stomached this shit.

"Reese, I'm going to kick your ass," I rumbled, pouring the coffee down the drain. No amount of sugar would help that. That shit was strong enough to fuel an elephant for the day.

"Can't hang with the big boys, Chase?" he teased from his seat at the bar. He nodded his head toward the sink, where I was setting my now-empty mug. "You just wasted a perfectly good cup of coffee, by the way."

I grunted and rolled my eyes, not bothering to reply. I was normally pretty chilled out and laid back, but without caffeine in my system, I was a miserable fucker to be around.

Coffee was my fuel.

I pulled my bike keys from my pocket. "One of these days, that strong-ass coffee is going to give someone a heart attack," I warned him. "And it's *not* going to be me." He barked out a laugh that was way too loud for this early in the morning. "I'm going to get decent coffee."

He snorted. "You might as well give up on that chick while you're ahead, bro. She ain't the type for our life. She's as



clean-cut as they come. Only so much rejection a man can take.”

Sophia, the owner of Books & Brews, a small bookstore/coffee shop that opened in town a little while back, wanted nothing to do with the likes of us, though she served us and Scorpion’s wife, Jessica, since we were good-paying, loyal customers. But dating any of us? Apparently, that was a hard limit for her.

Sucked for her though. I was a determined man, and when I put my mind to something, I didn’t stop until I accomplished it. And I wanted her. She was curvy and thick in all the right places, and every time she happened to be wearing her blonde hair back in a ponytail, I just wanted to wrap it up in my fist and rail her from behind just so I could see that juicy ass of hers bounce with every thrust into her sweet pussy.

Fuck. Now my dick was hard. Goddammit. Just what I needed this morning.

“She’ll cave eventually,” I told Reese. “Enjoy your heart attack-inducing coffee.”

Nodding once at Scorpion as he stepped inside the clubhouse, I slipped past him and headed out. I had two things on my mind, and they had to happen before church could even be thought about: coffee and a sinfully hot blonde that I couldn’t get out of my head these days.

My infatuation with her had turned into an obsession.

Reese was probably right. I should probably quit while I was ahead. But I was a stubborn fool.

And I was practically a fucking stalker by this point anyway. There was no stopping me now. Especially when we handled all her security, and I could watch her on the camera feed all day while she was working.

Like I said: stalker.

And I wasn’t the least bit ashamed of it.



“Hi! Welcome to Books & Brews. I’ll be with you in just a...” Sophia’s head popped up from behind the checkout counter, her sweet voice trailing off when she saw it was me. “Oh, it’s you,” she griped, her sassy little tone making my dick awaken just when I got it to finally go soft on the way over here.

I smirked at her, ignoring my raging dick. “Yep, just me, cupcake. Take your time.”

I knew she was rolling her eyes at me. She *hated* it when I called her cupcake. But ever since that first day she opened and I found her practically having a mini-orgasm behind the coffee counter with a cupcake in her hand, the name had stuck. Her face had been absolutely orgasmic when she’d bitten into that sweet treat, and it had fueled many of my fantasies about her.

Besides, I’d seen how sweet she could be with other people in town. Cupcake suited her. It was just me and the club she seemed to particularly dislike. But she was new to our little town; her reaction to us was expected, so we didn’t take offense to it. One day, she would realize just how much we did for this place. Sure, we were criminals, and most of us had been to jail or prison at some point or another, but we didn’t let this shit come home and affect the people here.

I was pretty sure the only reason she allowed us to run her security was because we came highly recommended by *everyone* in town. She’d have been a fool to not seek us out. That wasn’t me tooting my own horn. We had the best equipment and were constantly doing free upgrades for our customers when new, better equipment came out.

We knew the dangers that lurked within society. We knew that the cop everyone trusted could be the shadiest mother fucker on the planet. We knew that the town’s mayor could be dealing in the skin trade.

We’d seen and heard about it all.

Those that were trusted the most were normally the ones that were the most dangerous.

And we protected our clients from everyone, including those they *thought* they could trust.

I walked over to the coffee counter and shoved my hands in my pockets, waiting for her to finish whatever she was doing. I wasn't ever in a rush when I came in here. Used to drive Scorpion, the president of our charter, nuts when he first had to start waiting for me to get back to the clubhouse to start church, but now, he was used to it.

But some days, I was pretty sure he wanted to come down here and beg Sophia to give me a chance so he could restore some order to me, his vice president. Even I had to admit, some days, my head was up in the clouds. But I was a hopeless romantic. Life might have hardened every other part of me, but it had never killed the guy who wanted to be in love. To be someone's purpose. To give someone a reason to smile.

The guys used to give me shit for it all the time, but I was pretty sure they were at the point they wanted it, too. We were all getting old, and we all had enough money to fill a fucking lake each, but we had no one to share it with. And watching Scorpion and Jessica raise a kid together left the rest of us wondering what the hell we were really doing with our lives.

“Regular?” Sophia asked, yanking me out of my head.

I blinked, then nodded as she rounded the counter. “Yeah, my regular is fine. Thanks.” I watched her, running my eyes over her curvy figure, lingering on her ass a little too long for decency. But fuck, it was a great ass. One of these days, I was going to get a handful of it, and I couldn't wait.

I was going to worship her like she was my own personal temple.

“Any chance you might agree to a date?” I asked her this every fucking day I came in here like a broken record, but I was hoping one of these days, she might cave or just finally have enough of me asking and give me what I wanted.

I knew I should've respected her answer the first time, but just because I was a hopeless romantic didn't mean I wasn't also a fucking caveman. Because I was. I would do just about anything in the world to get what I wanted.

And damn, if I didn't want her.

She scowled at me, her eyes darkening with a bit of anger. "Chase, how many times do I have to tell you no before you get it? I will *never* date you. I will *never* be interested in you. You're a *criminal*. I have no interest in the likes of you."

I grinned—couldn't fucking help it. That sassy attitude of hers would never fail to make me crave her like an addict.

I handed her a ten and grabbed my coffee off the counter when she set it down. "You'll change your mind one day, cupcake. I know you will." I winked at her and backed up from the counter as she glared at me. "Keep the change."

With that, I spun on my heel. My phone rang as I reached the door, Scorpion's name on the burner.

*Fuck.* He never disturbed my coffee time—or well, Sophia time—unless it wasn't important.

"Yeah?" I asked, pausing before I walked out the door.

"Need you at the clubhouse for church. Emergency meeting."

*Shit.*

"On my way."

I hung up the phone and shoved it in my pocket as I headed out the door to my bike. Emergency church wasn't ever good news. It usually meant some shit was happening with one of the charters, and if it was the mother charter, God help us all. We would *all* get dragged into a fucking war, whether it was our charter's beef or not.



“What’s going on?” I asked as soon as I walked into the chapel, my lukewarm coffee in my hands. I hated when I didn’t get to enjoy Sophia’s hard work when it was piping hot.

Scorpion scratched at his beard. It was badly in need of a trim. No doubt, Jessica was already haggling him about it.

“Johnston is facing trouble, and he needs extra guns quickly. Half of you are riding up there, and you need to fucking be careful. Chase, you and Halo are in charge. Clear the run route with him. You leave tonight. I expect you to be at the mother charter before sunrise. Understand?”

I nodded once. “Crystal clear, Prez. How many guns?”

“Johnston is requesting fifteen crates—six with guns, the rest with ammunition.” Christ, that was a lot.

I drummed my fingers on the old, oak table, doing the math in my head. “If we leave here at dusk, load up, and hit the road as soon as it turns dark, we can make it there about six in the morning,” I said. Halo nodded in agreement. I looked at Scorpion. “We got your approval to load up early?”

He nodded. “Be careful about it, you hear me? Stay under the radar.”

I nodded once. “Should we be worried if the mother charter is facing trouble?” Reese asked. “Should Mark and I be looking into finances?” Reese was our secretary, and Mark was our treasurer. They made sure we had funds for shit like this and any other thing we did as a club.

Scorpion nodded. “Be fucking worried. If Johnston gets into a mess, it hits all of us. Watch your backs. Get club funds ready. It’s going to be needed.”

*Shit.*

Wars were a goddamn hard thing to deal with. I’d seen the strain it put on other clubs, and now, we were about to feel its wrath.

Scorpion slammed his gavel on the table, adjourning church and sealing our fates.



### *Chase*

**T**he ride to the mother charter was long and exhausting, and by the end of it, I was cursing Johnston and Scorpion for this bullshit. By the time we dropped the guns off at Johnston's warehouse, the sun was just beginning to break over the horizon, and we still had a forty-five-minute ride back to the mother charter clubhouse so I could crash.

Well, get pussy, a beer in my system, and *then* crash into a bed. In that order, too. I needed a fucking stress reliever. Constantly being overly aware of our surroundings was exhausting.

"Clubhouse?" I asked, looking at Blayke, Johnston's VP.

Blayke nodded. "Yeah, clubhouse. I know you guys need sleep, and we've got pussy lined up for you."

*Fuck yes.* I could always rely on my brothers to make sure I had what I needed.

I straddled my bike and strapped my helmet to my head before bringing the engine to life, loving the way the beast rumbled beneath me. One of these days, Sophia would give in, and maybe one day, I'd get to fuck her ass while she straddled my bike, her bare clit rubbing against the leather seat as the engine rumbled beneath her.

*Shit. Yeah.* That was a beautiful fantasy.

I fucking needed that in my future.

But until she gave in, no other woman would be on my bike. No other woman would *touch* this bike. But that didn't mean I would go fucking abstinent while waiting on something that might never happen. I wasn't a fucking saint. I also wasn't stupid. There might not ever be a day Sophia decided to give me a chance. I'd thought she was going to cave once, but nope. She did it as a build-up to an April Fool's joke.

I hadn't even been mad. It had been a damn good one.

When I got to the clubhouse, every member of the mother charter was up and ready to face the day. Lawson clapped me on my back, and Geek drew me into a quick, brotherly hug. Trigger slung an arm around my neck. "Got a surprise for you since I know how much you like to watch before you join the fun."

I arched a brow at him, nodding once in thanks at Drew when he handed me a beer. "Oh, yeah? Do tell."

Trigger cracked a grin. "Come on up to my apartment. They're waiting on the bed. Just need to grab Dom first."

I gripped his shoulder and shook it a little in thanks before heading up the stairs to his apartment. When I pushed open his door, I smirked at the two thick, curvy women laying naked in his bed, one a redhead, the other a brunette. They were already grinding against each other, moaning softly. Fuck yeah, this was my kind of scene. Trigger knew me so damn well.

They paid me no mind as I kicked off my boots and then took a seat in the chair in the corner, splaying my legs wide, my beer dangling from my fingertips. The redhead quickly moved down the bed between the brunette's thighs, licking at her sweet cunt like it was her last meal.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" Trigger asked as he stepped into the room, Dom on his heels. Dom was holding the hand of a busty blonde, and she was already naked and smiling at me, her heavy tits swaying with each step she took.

"She's yours," Dom told me. He pressed a kiss to her lips. "Go on, darlin'. Chase will take good care of you, I promise."

I hummed and set my beer on the table next to me before patting my lap with an inviting smile thrown in her direction. She quickly made her way to me, her generous tits jiggling with every step she took. "Turn around," I gently ordered when she moved to straddle me. Once her backside faced me, I gripped her hips and leaned forward, pressing a kiss to each perfect, juicy globe. Fuck, I loved worshipping a beautiful ass. "Good girl. Now sit," I murmured, gently tugging on her hips.

Once she was seated on my lap, I spread her thick thighs so her legs were hooked over mine, keeping her open for my wandering fingers. Her pulse was fluttering at the base of her neck in response to my touch and the air of sex lingering in the room. "Watch them," I murmured in her ear before nipping at the soft lobe.

She sucked in a sharp breath when Trigger didn't waste a beat, sliding inside of the redhead's cunt with ease. She moaned into the brunette's pussy. Trigger smacked the redhead's ass. "Don't stop now, girl. I want to see her squirt all over your face so I can lick it off."

The blonde on my lap moaned, her head falling back against my shoulder, her eyes half-lidded as she watched the scene in front of her. I cupped one of her heavy breasts in my hand, plucking and pulling at her nipple as I slid my other hand between her thighs, cupping her slick heat. She was drenched already, dripping down into the crack of her ass.

"Like that?" I whispered, licking a path up her neck.

She softly whimpered and nodded. I nipped at her jaw before circling my forefinger over her clit. She jerked and gasped, her hands grasping my thighs, her nails digging in through my jeans. My cock prodded her backside, hard as fuck and wanting to sink into her. And I would. But not yet. I liked to play first. Enjoy the scene. Let it sink into me. And I liked to make the women half-delirious with the need to fuck before I slid into them.

The brunette gagged on Dom's cock when he shoved it down her throat. He was straddling her face, fucking into her throat, barely giving her time to breathe before he choked her



on his dick again. The blonde in my lap moaned as she watched, writhing the slightest bit. Picking up on her cues easily enough, I shoved my fingers in her mouth and sank the fingers of my other hand into her cunt. She choked around my fingers, saliva quickly building in her mouth. But she sucked on them greedily, riding my fingers all at the same time.

“Such a good girl,” I crooned, nipping at the skin of her shoulder. “The quicker you get yourself off, the quicker I’ll let you ride this thick cock. You want that, don’t you?”

She eagerly nodded her head, riding my fingers faster, chasing her orgasm. Her body was tightening, and finally, she cried out, coming all over my fingers. I traded hands, forcing her to clean her juices off my fingers before I patted her thigh. “Stand up for a minute,” I ordered.

She stood on shaky legs, and I unbuckled my belt before unsnapping my jeans, sliding them down my legs with my boxers just enough to free my aching dick. I grabbed a condom out of my wallet, and once it was rolled on, I beckoned the blonde back down, still forcing her to face the bed. She sank onto my shaft with a loud moan, her arms shaking as she lowered herself onto my thick girth.

“Fuck yes. Just like that,” I praised. “Ride me and watch them.”

I leaned back in my chair, enjoying the blonde bouncing on my cock as I watched Dom flip the brunette over and sink into her ass with ease. Trigger flipped the redhead over, and she buried her face back in the brunette’s cunt while Trigger slid back inside of her. All three women in the room were loud, whining and moaning and screaming in ecstasy as they came over and over.

Finally, my balls drew up tight while I watched the hot as fuck scene like it was my own personal porno, and I shot into the condom, groaning as I did so. The blonde slumped back, her chest heaving, her eyes falling shut. I grunted. “Can’t sleep here, girly,” I warned her. They always wanted to, even though they knew the rules. “Come on. Up.”

She whined but stood to her feet, barely able to hold herself up, but that wasn't my problem. I got what I wanted, and she did what she was no doubt paid for. I had no other use for her, and I didn't care for her comfort.

I pulled my jeans back up my legs, and holding my condom in my hand, I left the room, nodding once at Dom in thanks as I left. After wandering outside and burning the condom so no bitch could try to get knocked up with my kid, I headed to the usual room I stayed in while I was here and crashed straight into bed, not even remembering I left my damn boots upstairs in Trigger's room.

Hell, I didn't even finish my beer.

*Chase*

**M**y phone was blaring beside me, and I was going to slit the throat of whoever was fucking bothering me. It was too goddamn early; I could tell it was barely daylight by the light filtering in through the curtains over my windows. I'd slept a long fucking time, and it still didn't feel like I'd slept enough.

"Someone better be fucking dying," I growled as I put the phone on speaker, burying my face back in the pillow.

"Might be if we don't get a handle on this," Scorpion said. I opened my gritty eyes, staring at the wall across from me. Sleep wasn't going to happen—not with that ominous shit he just said. "Mark was going over the security footage from last night and found two guys snooping around the bookstore."

Well, now I was fucking awake. That woke me up faster than coffee ever could. The thought of Sophia being in danger sent ice running through my veins all while lighting a fire in my gut.

I sat up and rubbed my eyes, anger sliding through my veins like poison, rapidly warming the ice that had just settled there. I didn't like the idea of someone targeting Sophia or her store. I was protective as fuck of her, and if Scorpion was calling me, it was too serious to ignore.

"Any facial features to identify them?"

“None,” Scorpion told me. I cursed. Of fucking course, it would be difficult. “They covered themselves from head to toe. Didn’t touch anything. Only looked. Seemed like they were making note of security cameras and points of entry.”

*Fuck.*

“Goddammit,” I swore. I swung my legs over the side of the bed. “We’re riding back early. Might be grumpy as hell when we get home. Warn the others.”

“Will do. Drive safe. I’ll get in touch with Johnston and let him know what’s going on.”

We ended the call. I shrugged my cut on, then cursed when I realized I didn’t bring my boots down with me. Muttering under my breath, I walked out of the room and jogged up the stairs to Trigger’s room. He yanked the door open with a growl when I knocked on it. His brown hair was a mess on the top of his head, and his eyes were clouded with sleep.

“You bleeding out?”

I blinked at the weird question. “What? No,” I snapped. “I need my fucking boots.”

He grumbled something I couldn’t understand and stepped back to let me in. Dom was passed out on the right side of the bed, and Trigger crawled in on the left side, the two girls from last night sandwiched between them.

*Lucky fucks.* They probably kept them around so they could have round two this morning.

I didn’t do seconds. There was only one woman I wanted seconds and thirds and fourths—however many times she would let me inside of her. And currently, she thought I was nothing more than the scum on the bottom of her shoe.

I snatched up my boots and quietly left his room, shutting his door behind me with a soft click. Sitting on the top step of the stairs, I pulled my boots on and then headed down the stairs, going back down the hall to wake up Halo so he could get the other guys up.

He was already awake when I knocked on his door. “Scorpion called me. Coffee,” he grumbled, moving past me. “I already got the others up.”

I clapped my hand to his shoulder in thanks and then headed to the chapel to see if I could find Johnston. Sure enough, he was sitting at the table, a cup of coffee in one hand as he scrolled through his phone with the other. He looked up when I lightly knocked and entered.

“Scorpion call you?” I asked him.

He nodded once. “That woman mean something to you?” he asked me.

I grunted. Straight to the point. Anything else wasn’t Johnston’s style. “Yeah, but she’s being stubborn as hell.”

He snorted. “The best ones are usually a right pain in your fucking ass.”

“Come again?” his wife, Aaliyah, asked as she poked her head into the chapel, fake sweetness tingeing her tone. Johnston groaned and leaned his head back against his seat, shutting his eyes. I rolled my lips into my mouth to bite back my laugh.

There was only one person in this world who could bring Johnston to heel, and her name was Aaliyah—his wife.

“Woman, don’t start with me. It’s barely eight o’clock,” he grumbled.

She arched a perfect eyebrow at him. “Guess you’ll be using your hand tonight,” she snipped before she left the room, tossing her red hair over her shoulder. I had to fight not to grin or laugh. Johnston had his hands full with her, that was for sure.

“Only person in the world who can get away with that shit,” he muttered, setting his coffee down. He looked at me. “You sure that’s the kind of shit you want to put up with for the rest of your life?”

I nodded. “Yeah, I’m sure. We good here?”

He stood to his feet and held his hand out to me. I clasped his hand in mine, firmly shaking it. “We’re good,” he told me. “Keep your ear pinned to the ground. Got a feeling we’re all about to face a shit storm.”

“Great,” I muttered.

Johnston snorted a laugh of agreement.



The bell above the door jingled as I stepped inside Books & Brews, announcing my arrival to the staff—and Sophia. While the rest of the members, aside from Halo, had ridden straight back to the clubhouse, I came here. Halo, not wanting me to ride alone with shit being in the air like it was, had come with me and was chilling outside on his bike while I came to warn Sophia about the men we found snooping on her cameras.

She looked up with a smile, getting ready to greet me. But when she saw it was just me, the smile fell from her face, replaced with a scowl. I just shoved my hands in my pockets, and for once, I didn’t smile despite her animosity toward me.

“You got a moment to talk?” I asked her.

She sighed, and the sound was filled with exasperation. “Chase, if this is another tactic to try to get me to go out with you—”

“It’s not,” I assured her. “It’s about your security. We can talk in your office or wherever, but this may be a conversation you don’t want out in the open.”

She frowned, worry filtering into her eyes, and I decided right then I didn’t like the look of her being unsure. She could scowl at me, be angry, even be happy at the sight of another customer—as long as he wasn’t male. But the frown, that little bit of confusion glimmering in her eyes, and that concern—it made her seem too vulnerable.

It left me feeling itchy and uncomfortable inside. And volatile. Real fucking volatile.

“We can talk in my office,” she finally said.

She set down the bookmarks she’d been holding and walked through a door behind the checkout counter. I followed her into a small office. Her brown desk was neat and organized, a small laptop open on top with a notepad and a pen next to it. Her phone was on the other side of the laptop connected to a charger. Bookshelves lined her walls filled with what looked to be personal collections.

“What is it, Chase?” she asked, dragging my eyes over to her and away from her office set-up. She crossed her arms over her chest. I recognized it for what it was—a defensive gesture.

Against me.

I was the last damn person she needed to worry about hurting her.

“Mark caught two men snooping around your building last night on the cameras.” She narrowed her eyes at me like she didn’t believe me. “They were covered head to toe—can’t identify them. Looked like they were making note of cameras and entrances.”

She scowled at me. “And I’m supposed to believe this? Why didn’t Scorpion or Mark come tell me?” she demanded. Stiff-armed, she pointed her finger at the door. “Get the fuck out of my office, Chase.”

*She had to be fucking kidding me.*

“Goddammit, Sophia, this isn’t a fucking game,” I growled, stepping closer to her. She grabbed a pair of scissors off her desk, ready to stab me with them. I barked out a humorless laugh, shaking my head, but I stopped in my steps. I didn’t care about being stabbed, but she was afraid of me. *Me.*

Fucking hell. “You know what? Be goddamn stubborn. But I’m telling the damn truth.”

With that, I turned on my heel, too tired and worried about her to argue with her. It was obvious she thought I was trying to plan some elaborate trap to get her to agree to a date. In reality, I just wanted her *safe*. Even if I never got to have her

as my woman in this lifetime, I would still do everything I could to protect her.

I stormed out of the shop and straddled my bike. Halo winced at the look on my face. “Want me to go talk to her?”

I shook my head. “No. We’ll put protection on her store and leave her be. Hopefully, having protection on the store will keep her safe.”

He nodded in agreement. Worry for me glimmered in his eyes, but I ignored it and revved my engine before tearing off through downtown, heading for the clubhouse.



## TWO WEEKS LATER

“Brother, there’s been no activity,” Scorpion told me. I clenched my hands together on the tabletop. “I think they’ve decided her store isn’t worth the hassle. I say we pull the protection.” I glowered at him. I didn’t fucking like the idea, but I knew we couldn’t keep personal security on her building forever.

Fuck, just to try to show her how serious this was, I’d kept my distance. I hadn’t been in her store in two fucking weeks. It had been slowly killing me inside to not be able to smell her, to see that beautiful scowl, and I was in a piss-ass mood most of the time because of it. The only time I saw her was through the security feeds inside her store, and dammit, it wasn’t *enough*.

“Look, we’ll keep a close eye on her,” Scorpion assured me. “But I’ve got to put the man hours to something else.”

I sighed but nodded my head. “Do what you have to,” I grumbled, getting up from the table. “I’m going to find one of the girls.”

Scorpion nodded. Everyone was worried about me, but fuck, I was just a fucker head over heels for a woman who would never see me in the same light. Pussy was my only reprieve, even if I only ever saw her face.



But at least my balls weren't suffering, too.

I pulled up the cameras inside her store as I made my way down the hall to my room. She was stocking books and talking happily with an older man, pointing at the book in his hand. I couldn't hear what she was saying, but it didn't matter.

My chest still ached at the sight of her.

"Goddammit, woman," I whispered, closing the app.  
"You're driving me mad."



### *Chase*

I scrubbed my hands down my face before looking back at my laptop screen where all of the security feeds for Sophia's store were pulled up. I couldn't fucking sleep. Sophia was still at the bookstore well past dark, alternating between stocking shelves and doing paperwork. She never worked this late, and I was worried as fuck that something was going to go wrong.

Why couldn't she do that shit in the morning? When it was light out and she wasn't such an easy target? Or hell, if she was going to stock at night, why the hell couldn't she do it when we had around-the-clock protection on her store?

Grunting, I almost closed my laptop, determined to ignore whatever she was doing and not make myself fucking crazier than I already was. But then, two shadowed figures popped up at the camera to her backdoor, and before I could even get to my feet, they were inside, breaking the lock.

*No!*

"Scorpion!" I yelled, already rushing out of the room, trying to dial Sophia's number. I'd had it since she booked our security services, but I'd never used it, determined to get her to agree to go out with me without letting her know how much of a fucking stalker I was.

But she didn't fucking answer. The phone just rang and rang before going to voicemail, her cheery voice coming

through the line, telling me to leave my name and number and she would get back to me as soon as possible.

We all got the message at the same time, our phones blaring, letting us know which location had been broken into. Scorpion looked up at me, and he didn't even have to ask. I was breathing hard, my lungs on the verge of collapsing. Fear slithered through my veins, but I shoved that shit back, refusing to let it infect me.

Sophia needed me, and I was *not* fucking letting her down. I just prayed I got there fast enough.

"Let's go," he snapped, but I was already rushing out the door, my bike keys in my hand. Gidget and Mark jumped into the van, and we all tore out of the lot, heading toward Books & Brews, doing way over the speed limit.

I dared a fucking cop to pull me over right then. It'd be the last goddamn day they did anything. Even breathe. *Nothing* was keeping me away from my woman.

The alarms weren't blaring when we got there, and I cursed. That meant they'd cut off the signal to the police force in town, which was the only reason the street wasn't lit up with blue and red lights. The lights inside the shop were all off, but there was no doubt in my mind that they heard us pulling up if they were inside, which meant they'd had time to escape.

I quickly got off my bike and pulled my gun from its holster. Scorpion and I took the back door, and Halo and Elias took the front. Scorpion silently held his fingers up, and when he got down to zero, essentially making a fist, we went in quietly.

The silence in the building was almost deafening. I couldn't even hear the hum of the air conditioning or her coffee machines whirring.

Dread filled my stomach.

*Please fucking be here, cupcake.*

We scoured the place but didn't come up with anything. Didn't even find Sophia. I wanted to vomit. Fuck, it threatened

to choke me. But by a miracle, I held the bile back.

“They’re gone,” I muttered, my heart pounding with adrenaline. “We need to find Sophia.”

“I’m looking, brother,” Scorpion muttered. “Got her,” he finally said, the security feed zoomed in on his phone. “Coffee area.”

We rushed over there, Scorpion barking out orders to the rest of the crew now that we knew we were alone—aside from Sophia.

My heart dropped to my feet as soon as I rounded the counter.

She was naked, her clothes ripped to shreds and lying all over the floor. Blood trailed from her head and down her neck before dripping to the floor. She was face down, her head turned to the side, her nose looking broken and bleeding.

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck,” I rasped, quickly putting my gun away and kneeling next to her. “Sophia?” I gently turned her over and supported her to sit her up, but her head just flopped back. She didn’t make a single sound. The only sign of her being alive was the warmth of her skin and the slow rise and fall of her chest.

“We’ve got a fucking problem,” Tango announced, walking into the store. I glanced up at him for a moment to see that he was holding a slip of paper in his hand. I looked back down at Sophia, letting Scorpion handle it.

Scorpion snatched it from him, his jaw clenching as he read it. “Fuck,” he snarled. “Goddamn Johnston.” He looked at me. “Note says to tell Johnston to back the fuck down or they’ll continue targeting our shit.”

I clenched my jaw, anger pulsing through me, but I swallowed it down. I wanted nothing more than to put a bullet through Johnston’s skull, but that wouldn’t solve a goddamn thing, even if Sophia had been targeted because of him.

“This happened because of us,” I snarled. I wouldn’t be the one to say what everyone else was thinking. But what I said

wasn't wrong. If someone was targeting Johnston, they were targeting all of us.

Scorpion nodded once.

“Safe is broken into and empty,” Reese announced. He tossed me a blanket. “Cover her up. Let’s get her to the clubhouse.”

“I’ll make a call to Grim—see if we can’t get Doc to travel down and take a look at her,” he told me. Grim was Scorpion’s old president from when he was a member of the Savage Crows MC’s Texas charter. Grim was a force to be reckoned with and damn near as dangerous as Johnston. “Taking her to the hospital will involve the cops.”

I wanted to rage, to say fuck the goddamn cops and protecting this club, but that went against my oath, against the very grain of my being. So, instead, I nodded my head and worked on wrapping her up before lifting her against my chest.

“They’re going to fucking pay for this,” I quietly told Scorpion as we walked out of the backdoor of the bookstore. Sophia didn’t make a single sound as I gently shifted her to place her into the back of the van.

Scorpion grunted. “We’ll fucking make sure of it,” he promised.

*Chase*

**S**ophia was just coming awake when we neared the clubhouse. Instantly, she moaned in pain, tears sliding down her pale cheeks. I cuddled her closer to me, wishing I could take away what happened to her. But I couldn't.

Not being able to only left me wanting to slaughter whoever the fuck did this to her. I wanted to violate them like they'd violated her. I wanted to rip away whatever shred of innocence they had left in their bodies so their souls could fucking rot like the scum they truly were.

Had they targeted Sophia because I was always in her shop? Or was it because she was tied to us through our security company?

"It hurts," she whimpered, her fingers curling into my cut. They trembled, and I could tell her grip was weak.

I buried my face in her dark hair, curling my body around hers as if I could shield her from the horrors of her mind and the pain in her body. "I know, cupcake. I fucking know. I'm so goddamn sorry I wasn't there in time," I rasped. "I'm so fucking sorry we pulled the protection on your shop."

That regret and that guilt would sit with me for the rest of my life. I could've tried harder to get Scorpion to keep protection on her shop. And even if he hadn't caved, I could've spent the night outside her store. Because as soon as

we took that extra protection away, she was targeted again. And that time, they got what they wanted.

Sophia hiccupped, sobs wracking her chest as she trembled in my arms. It made me want to bash Scorpion's face in for pulling the protection because as soon as we had, she'd been attacked. Raped. Beaten.

I had made sure she was safe, and Scorpion thought it wasn't fucking needed anymore. Goddammit.

"Brother, we're here," Tango, who was driving the van, called. I looked up, and sure enough, we were passing through the gates of the clubhouse. I noticed Gidget standing at the gate, ready to shove it back closed as soon as we rode through. We weren't dumb. We knew a locked gate wouldn't keep out someone who wanted to get in, but it would slow them down.

And that was all we needed to retaliate.

We were going under a small lockdown. When Scorpion had told me, I'd almost scoffed. *Now* Scorpion wanted to fucking do something to protect her after she was already goddamn attacked? It was a little too damn late for that.

Mark slid open the van door, and I eased out of the backseat. Sophia protested at the movement, her face screwing up with pain. "I'm sorry, cupcake," I whispered, agony slicing through my chest like someone had just stabbed me. "Just a little longer, okay? You can have a shower. We have a doctor coming to see you. Everything's going to be alright."

I strode into the clubhouse as she softly cried, nodding her head, her eyes squeezed tightly shut. Scorpion stepped into my path, and I glared at him, clenching my jaw, my hold on Sophia tightening.

"We need to call church," he told me.

I shook my head, anger flaring. "Church can fucking wait," I growled. The muscle in his jaw ticked with annoyance at my defiance, but I didn't give a fuck. "She needs me right now. Fuck off, Scorpion."

He stepped closer to me. "Brother—"

“Prez,” Halo called, coming up to grip Scorpion’s shoulder, “I know you’re on edge, but Chase and Sophia need some time. Give them that. He’s right; church can wait.”

Scorpion narrowed his eyes at me. “We’ll be fucking talking about this later,” he warned me.

Oh, we certainly fucking would, and he had better hope I was calm enough by then to handle the matter civilly.

I snorted, and without another word, I marched up the stairs to my apartment. The rest of the members gave me a wide berth and probably for good reason. I was always the jokester of the club. I never let shit get to me. But today, for the first time since Scorpion had become president and he’d built the Texas Charter back up to something great, I hadn’t backed down to him.

If it had been Jessica, Scorpion never would have pulled the protection. He would have kept it on her, no matter how much time, money, or man-hours it cost us. And the fact that he hadn’t extended that same courtesy to Sophia, knowing how I felt about her...

It pissed me the fuck off.

“I don’t want to be alone,” Sophia confessed in a whisper as I opened the door to my apartment. It was a bit messy—dirty clothes on the floor, a towel hanging on my bedpost, a pile of clean laundry piled up on my couch. But she didn’t even glance at any of it. Her eyes remained locked on my face, fear pooling in the dark depths.

“I’ll be right here while you shower,” I promised her as I carried her into my en-suite bathroom. “You won’t be alone.”

She shook her head, clinging to me when I tried to set her on her feet. “No. No,” she choked out. “Please don’t leave me.” Sobs wracked her chest, more tears sliding down her face. I almost crumbled. “They—I—”

I set her on her feet and then pulled her into my arms, holding her as she fell apart again. She clutched at the blanket wrapped around her, her smaller body shaking in my hold. “Calm down,” I pleaded. “Please, cupcake. I’ll stay in here



with you. I'll even shower with you," I added when she shook her head. "I won't leave. I promise. I'm right here as long as you need me."

It was a vow I'd take to my fucking grave. Of that, I knew without a shred of a doubt.

She hiccupped and nodded her head. Leaning her back a little, I reached up and swiped at her cheeks with my thumbs. She was so fucking pretty when she cried, but I never wanted her tears to be out of fear. *Never* out of fear.

"I need to get undressed," I told her. "Can you sit on the counter for me while I do that and get the shower started?"

Hiccupping again, she nodded, swiping at her cheeks. I grasped her hips and lifted her onto the counter. She kept the blanket wrapped around her, shivering now. No doubt, the adrenaline was wearing off. She would be exhausted in a bit.

I stripped out of my clothes and turned the shower on, changing the setting on the shower head to a softer one. I had no doubt her body would already be discoloring, her muscles and skin sore and throbbing. I wanted to make this as gentle and easy as possible for her.

"You ready?" I asked, moving toward her.

She released a shaky breath before she let the blanket fall from her shoulders. I bit back a growl at the sight of her. I hated that my first time seeing her naked was because she'd been attacked. I hated that I wasn't seeing her unmarred, though that didn't make her any less fucking beautiful in my eyes.

I just hated that the special moment had been ripped away from us by greedy, careless monsters.

Her skin, as I had predicted, was already discoloring, turning different shades of purple and black. Bite marks littered her skin, and fingertip-shaped bruises were scattered across her breasts, hips, and thighs. A hand-shaped bruise wrapped around her throat.

No doubt in my mind that she'd taken that beating and rape for the fucking club. It took everything in me not to fall to

my knees.

This was all my fucking fault.

“Come here, cupcake,” I murmured, drawing her into my arms. “Let’s get a shower, and then we can rest until Doc gets here. Sound good?”

She nodded, allowing me to help her down from the counter. “Who’s Doc?” she asked me, a yawn falling from her lips as we stepped into the shower.

“He’s a doctor for a club Scorpion was part of before he became the president of this club,” I informed her. “He’s trustworthy, and we call him for everything we need if a hospital can be avoided.”

She looked up at me. “Thank you for not taking me to the hospital,” she whispered. She closed her eyes, and a tear ran down her cheek. “I can’t take the questions, the cops—”

I drew her into my arms, ignoring the way her soft body felt against mine, the way her curves seemed to mold to me.

“I know, cupcake. I know,” I rasped.

And for the first time tonight, I was thankful for Scorpion. He’d done *one* thing right, which was to not allow me to take her to the hospital. Because that was exactly where I’d wanted to fucking take her.



Sophia was curled up in my arms on the couch, her lips slightly parted as she slept. She was wearing a pair of my boxers and one of my t-shirts with one of my plain black hoodies on over it. She’d refused to leave my arms after the shower, and I sure as hell wasn’t going to complain.

Tragedy had brought us together, but I’d do everything I could to help her through this. Even if she ended up pushing me away again when it was all over.

The pain afterward would be worth all the comfort she received from me now.

“Come in,” I grunted when a light knock sounded on the door. Scorpion pushed it open and walked in, Doc behind him. Doc was an aging man with tired, blue eyes and gray hair. One look at him and I could tell he’d seen way too much in all his years of living.

Doc sighed at the bruises on her face and around her throat, but he wasn’t surprised.

“Can you wake her up for me?” he quietly asked me.

I nodded, standing up from the couch with her cradled in my arms. She groaned and slowly opened her eyes. “Chase?” she mumbled, her sleepy eyes quickly filling with pain.

“I’m still here, cupcake. Doc is here to look at you.”

She looked over my shoulder and then clutched at my cut, shaking her head. “Chase—”

The terror that completely clouded over her eyes, wiping away the sleepiness, when she looked at another man, one I trusted at that, made me want to vomit.

“It’s okay,” I soothed, laying her on my bed. “I won’t leave. I promise. I’m right here.”

Her lips trembled but she nodded her head. Scorpion leaned against the wall, crossing his arms over his chest. I shot him a dark look, wanting him to fucking leave and give Sophia some privacy, but he just shook his head once at me.

“Mother fu—”

Doc arched a brow at me in surprise. He knew how close Scorpion and I were. He was my president, but he was also my best friend. We didn’t go at each other like that, and I knew the vehemence in my voice surprised him.

Scorpion pushed off the wall, narrowing his eyes at me. Sophia clutched at me. Ripping my eyes away from Scorpion, I looked down at Sophia. She shook her head at me, and I blew out a harsh breath, nodding my head once at her.

I wouldn’t do something stupid. At least, not where she could witness it.

“Can you tell me what happened to you?” Doc gently asked Sophia as he opened his bag.

Sophia’s lips trembled. “I was stocking some coffee, and they attacked me from behind.” Her voice wobbled, tears tracking down her pretty face again. I brushed them away, but they just kept coming. Rage curled in my gut, tightening around my lungs like a vice. “There were two of them. They beat me, knocked me unconscious. I woke up to one of them inside me—” She broke off on a sob.

And I fucking lost it.

Scorpion yanked me back, but I shoved him off of me, swinging on him, landing a solid punch to his jaw. He shoved me back against the wall with his forearm against my throat. I could vaguely hear Sophia screaming my name, begging for me to stop, but I was *seething*.

“This is on you, brother!” I yelled at him, shoving him off of me. He narrowed his eyes at me. “*You* pulled the fucking protection on her, Scorpion! And the goddamn moment you did, she was *attacked!* Beaten! Fucking *raped!*” I roared.

“Chase—”

“No!” I barked at him. “Get the *fuck* out, do you goddamn hear me? *GET OUT!*” I roared.

Sophia crashed into me, knocking me back against the wall again. I circled my arms around her, my body trembling with rage as I glared at my president over her head. He shook his head and stormed out of the room, slamming my door shut behind him so hard, I heard something crack.

I squeezed her to me, dropping my face into her hair. My chest was being crushed under the weight of my guilt. “I’m sorry, cupcake,” I rasped. “I’m so goddamn sorry I failed you.”

She just sobbed into my chest.



Doc left shortly after finishing Sophia's examination. The guys that attacked her didn't leave any semen in her body, so there wasn't a chance of a pregnancy, though Doc gave her a morning-after pill anyway just to be on the safe side. Then, he gave her some pain medication, which put her to sleep almost immediately after she took it.

I hadn't been asleep yet. I'd just been sitting in a chair beside my bed, staring at her as she slept.

I'd fucking failed her.

Because this shit didn't just lie with Scorpion, though that was where I wanted to put all the blame. It lied with me, too. I could have protected her store—protected her. Kept watch overnight instead of giving her the space she needed.

She might have been pissed with me, never talked to me again, but goddammit, at least she would have been *safe*.

The door quietly opened, and I glowered up at Scorpion. "What?" I muttered. "Knockin' ain't a fuckin' thing anymore?" I was tired, and my southern drawl was more prominent because of it.

He sighed and held out a cup of coffee to me. I grunted and took it from him. I took it for what I knew it was—a peace offering. Neither of us was going to say sorry, but the apology was in the gesture.

"We need to talk. Halo and Gidget have information."

That was all it took for me to get up and follow him down the stairs. I was still in only a pair of sweats and a t-shirt, which I'd changed into after Doc had finished his examination of Sophia. Normally, I was dressed before I went into the chapel, but I wasn't leaving this clubhouse today.

I took my seat at the table, and Scorpion took his at the head, nodding once at Gidget and Halo to take the floor. Gidget cleared his throat.

"Rival club—Ghosts of Chaos—" I cursed, "has moved their targets to us, too. I talked to Trigger this morning." Trigger was Johnston's Sergeant at Arms, and he and Gidget often worked together when it came to shit like this since they

wore the same officer patch. “That’s who they’re having problems with. And he called me this morning to let me know that word on the street is they got their hands on Chase’s new bitch. Their words—not mine.”

*Chase’s new bitch.*

I wanted to fucking slaughter someone.

Scorpion gripped my shoulder. “Level head,” he reminded me. I grunted and swallowed a mouthful of coffee, the scalding liquid clearing my head of the rage a bit.

“So, this shit is because of Johnston?” I muttered.

Scorpion nodded once. “Both charters are going to be in this war. I warned you all it might come to this.” Scorpion looked at me. “And I’m sorry your girl took the brunt of the first attack. Nothing I do can ever make that up to either of you. I shouldn’t have pulled the protection.”

I shook my head. “Nothing we can do about that now,” I muttered. And dwelling on all the what-ifs and different moves we could’ve made would just drive me insane. “I’m doing what I can for her.” Everyone at the table grunted or nodded in acknowledgment. “What we need to do is work on properly protecting the other businesses in the area that are attached to us because of their security. I know they’re claiming they targeted her because they think she’s mine, but we don’t know what their next move is.”

Scorpion nodded once. “Mark and Elias are already on it,” he told me. “In the meantime, everyone sticks close together. No one rides alone. Clear?”

“Clear,” we all murmured.

Scorpion banged his gavel on the table, officially bringing us into Johnston’s war.

*Chase*

I quietly slipped back into my apartment, shutting the door behind me with a soft click once I was inside. Sophia was still asleep, the blankets tucked tightly around her body, and she was curled into a ball, like she was trying to protect herself from the monsters she now knew lurked within her world.

No doubt, they now lurked within her mind, too.

I clenched my jaw, my teeth grinding together. I hated that I hadn't protected her well enough. There were so many things I could have done differently to save her, and now all those other scenarios, all the things I should have done instead, were running through my head, tormenting me to the point I couldn't even sleep if I wanted to.

It was one of the reasons I'd still been awake when Scorpion had come to bring me downstairs for church.

I was just glad Sophia could sleep after the hell she'd just endured. And I hoped she wouldn't be tormented with nightmares. So far, everything seemed okay—no nightmares yet—and maybe it would stay that way.

One could only hope anyway.

She would be extremely lucky if it did. But it could also mean that her mind wasn't letting her deal with it, was suppressing her memories, which would just lead to other issues down the road when those memories resurfaced and

dragged her down into a deep, dark pit that would no doubt end up suffocating her and dimming the light in her eyes further.

I walked into the bathroom and grabbed the pain pills Doc had prescribed her and a cup of water. After setting two tablets on the nightstand with the cup of water, I slipped from the room, going to get some more coffee and maybe something to eat. I sure as fuck wasn't hungry, but I needed my strength.

Being in the middle of a war like this meant we had to be on our Ps and Qs at all times.

Reese and Gidget were walking out of the clubhouse when I reached the bottom of the stairs. I frowned at their backs until the door shut behind them, then glanced at Scorpion. "Where are they going?"

"To let everyone we run security for know what happened and warn them that they'll be seeing increased activity from our company until we can stop this bullshit and end this war."

Not a bad idea, honestly. At least they would be more self-aware, which could help prevent shit like what happened to Sophia.

"Think we'll lose business?" I asked him in all seriousness as I headed to the bar to pour me a cup of coffee.

"Nah," Scorpion told me. "They trust us. Trust goes a long way. And we're not hiding what's going on. We're warning them and upping man hours. It shows them we're serious about protecting them. I'm sure we'll be fine."

I lifted my mug to my lips, and then Sophia's blood-curdling scream rang out through the clubhouse, almost making me drop the coffee cup to the floor. Every member of the club shot to their feet, and Jessica came running out of the kitchen. But I had already tossed my mug into the sink and was sprinting for the stairs, almost busting my ass on my sock-covered feet by the time anyone really began to move.

I didn't even have the door fully open before Sophia crashed into me, sobs wracking her chest. My back slammed against the wall on the other side of the hall as I caught her,



my hands gripping the back of her thighs as she wrapped herself around me. Her tears quickly began to soak my shirt. Her face was buried in the curve of my neck, her entire body shaking.

“I’m here,” I rasped, moving one of my hands so I could wrap my arm tightly around her. “I’m here, cupcake. Everything’s going to be okay now. I promise.”

Ignoring Mark and Elias standing there, no doubt concerned, I walked back into my apartment, shutting the door behind us to give her some privacy to fall apart. She didn’t need a fucking audience. I knew everyone was freaked out after hearing her scream like that, but I already knew what it was from.

She’d had a nightmare. Or a flashback. Hell, couldn’t a flashback be considered a fucking nightmare?

Easing down into the chair I’d dragged beside the bed last night, I continued holding her. I didn’t say a word. Sometimes, women just needed to cry, and I knew this was one of those moments. Even if she hadn’t been a virgin last night, innocence had been ripped from her. Her world had been tainted, and I knew from experience that all those colors she used to see were slowly turning black.

She had a lot to work through. Anyone would—man or woman. But even when she worked through it all and came out on the other side, she wouldn’t be the same woman she’d been.

No one ever was. Not after their world had been tainted with vileness.

Her sobs eventually slowed, and finally, her tears stopped. Sniffing, she leaned up and swiped at her cheeks, looking around the room like she was seeing it for the first time. She hiccupped and then looked down at me, finally meeting my eyes.

“I wet your shirt,” she whispered, plucking the fabric from my damp shoulder.

I shrugged. “It’s just a shirt, cupcake.” I brushed my fingers over her bruised neck. Fuck, I hated the discoloration there. Hated that they’d marred her beautiful skin like this. “You okay now?”

She nodded. “For now,” she whispered. She swallowed thickly, pain flickering across her face for a moment. Her throat would hurt for a while, no doubt. The bruises were dark and covered most of her neck. “Is there a chance I can get into the shop today?” She scrubbed her hands over her bruised face, hissing after and quickly yanking them away. She’d probably forgotten about the bruises lingering on her face. A deep frown pulled at her lips. “God, there must be so many repairs—”

“Don’t,” I quietly stopped her. I gripped her hips and tugged her closer to me. Tears welled in her eyes, but I shook my head at her. “Sophia, this falls on the club. You took that hit because of us.” She opened her mouth to protest, but I placed a finger over her lips, shushing her. “We already looked into it, Sophia. You were targeted because a rival club thinks you’re my woman.”

Her lips trembled, and I fucking hated myself. Closing her eyes, she drew in a deep breath. When she opened them again, the tears were still there, but she didn’t let any fall. “I won’t let you blame yourself, Chase.”

I sighed and leaned my head back, staring up at the ceiling. She grasped my face in her hands, pulling my head back up so I was forced to look at her.

God, her beautiful face was fucking wrecking me right now.

She shook her head at me. “Don’t,” she pleaded. “Maybe if I had remembered there were true monsters in the world,” her voice wobbled, “this wouldn’t have happened to me. You put protection on my store, Chase. You protected me, and despite you being extremely persistent, you never did anything to me.” She closed her eyes. “Not like they did.” She drew in a shaky breath. “I let myself get too comfortable.”

What the fuck was that supposed to mean? Too comfortable?

“Sophia—” I rasped, but she shook her head again.

“Chase, this isn’t on you or me. We did everything we could. And Scorpion obviously thought it was safe, or he wouldn’t have pulled the protection off my store. Off me,” she added. I sighed, not agreeing with her, but I wasn’t going to argue. She didn’t have the strength for it. “This lies with the fuckers who did this to me.” She brushed her lips to the corner of my mouth, and I groaned, my hands tightening on her already bruised hips. But she didn’t flinch. Leaning back up, she looked down at me, a tear running down her cheek. My chest ached when I drew in a ragged breath.

She was slowly killing me, and she didn’t even know it.

My cupcake was broken. Falling apart. All because I hadn’t handled this entire situation correctly. All because I hadn’t said fuck Scorpion and done what I wanted, what I should have.

“Just please make sure they can’t do this to another woman,” she pleaded with me.

Clenching my jaw, I nodded.

*That* I would be able to do.

She had my fucking word.

*Sophia*

I poked at the food on my plate, not really hungry. Before Chase left with Halo and Elias, he'd gone out of his way to make me scrambled eggs and had asked me to eat. But I wasn't sure if I could stomach anything.

I could still feel them touching me, and my stomach was rolling with nausea. My entire body ached from the beating I'd taken. I was just appreciative of everyone at the clubhouse still treating me as if everything was okay. They didn't treat me differently just because of the hell I'd endured. Here, I was just another woman.

If they walked around me like they were treading on eggshells, I might very well lose my mind. I needed some kind of normalcy. I already couldn't go back to my shop until all the repairs were made, and even then, Chase might make me wait until after they took care of whoever came after me before he let me out of the clubhouse. Here, he knew I would be safe. I could be protected. Out there, back in the real world, there were too many variables to consider.

It was clear Chase was protective over me, and I could see the blame he placed on himself in his eyes, even if he tried to hide it from me.

It wrecked my soul. It *hurt* me to know he was hurting, too. And no matter what reason those fuckers had for doing this to me, the blame would always lie with them for making the decision to rape and beat me.

Never with Chase. Never with this club.

I'd been a damn fool to ever think Chase was the bad guy here. Sure, I knew they didn't operate on the right side of the law. The whole fucking town knew that. But it didn't make them...bad.

Was there such a thing as decent criminals? Because, if so, that was the category Chase fell under.

"Hey."

I jerked my head up from my plate, blinking at Jessica, Scorpion's wife. She was child-free at the moment, and I took a random guess that her kid was with Scorpion. I hadn't laid my eyes on Destin yet, though I'd heard his chatter early this morning. No doubt, he was an adorable kid. I usually loved kids, but the thought of having to deal with one right now, when I was so vulnerable, made my skin itchy.

"Hi," I mumbled. I sighed, pushing my plate away. "I hate to waste this food, but I can't eat," I told her.

She gently laid her hand over my arm as she took a seat beside me. "Sophia, look at me please." I looked over at Jessica, a frown on my lips. "No one is expecting you to eat or sleep much so soon after what you went through." I swallowed thickly, tears burning in my eyes. I blinked them away. I refused to cry. Not again. My eyeballs literally hurt from how much crying I'd been doing. "But I know what you're going through."

"You do?" I rasped. My heart yearned to not be alone in this, though I didn't wish this on anyone. Not even my worst enemy. I rubbed at my forehead. "I don't know how to..."

"No one does," Jessica soothed, somehow understanding what I was trying to say. My throat worked as I struggled to swallow past the lump there. "The only thing that heals this is time. Because while those bruises might fade, the memories never do. You just have to be patient with it."

I blew out a soft breath. "Patience," I mumbled. I already didn't have much patience as it was.

She hummed and removed her hand from my arm. “Chase is worried about you,” she informed me. I swallowed again, trying to dislodge that lump, my bruised throat aching with the movement. “He cares a lot about you, Sophia.”

“This isn’t his fault,” I told her. I wanted her to know that, and it was important to me that everyone knew I didn’t blame him. He’d tried. God, how he had fucking tried to warn me. But I’d thought it was just another ploy for him to get into my pants.

I couldn’t have been more fucking wrong.

She sighed. “This is more than just him blaming himself for what happened to you.” My frown deepened. She let her eyes meet mine. “Chase hasn’t been pursuing you for months for something fun. He’s been in love with you for a very long time now.” My heart skipped a beat in my chest. I’d never even known that level of devotion existed. My dad had never even pursued my mom like that. But then again, their marriage had been rife with pain and abuse. I thought love was a bullshit notion. “And he’s terrified he may not be able to help you through this.”

I suddenly felt like the biggest bitch in the world. All those times he’d come into my shop, trying to get me to go out with him, I thought I was just a fun game for him to play. I’d seen and heard what the other men in the club talked about, the club women they fucked, the parties. The endless bachelorhood. I mean, hell, how many women had come in wanting biker romance books just because they’d finally gotten laid by one of the Satan’s Worshippers’ men?

I never thought he could’ve been different. That notion had been...impossible for me to even think of.

“Chase has somewhat of an old soul,” Jessica continued. “And he feels everything very deeply. He’ll do anything in the world for you, Sophia.” She drew in a deep breath. “Maybe it’s time to stop fighting him because you think you’ve got him all figured out and give him a chance to show you the man he really is. He’s more than the cut he wears on his back.”

With that, she stood up from the table and walked into the kitchen, leaving me to my thoughts. My hands trembled as I laced them together in front of me, my mind racing with her words.

*He'll do anything in the world for you.*

Would he be willing to erase the touch of those fuckers from my skin? Because that—I needed it more than anything in the fucking world.



Sleep was evading me. I envied people who could use sleep as an escape, no matter what they went through. Because every time I shut my eyes, those fuckers flashed through my mind. Them being masked didn't help matters a bit. I could still hear them. Still feel them. I knew the texture of their hands. I knew how tight their grip was. I knew how hard they could fucking hit.

I pushed myself into a sitting position and dropped my face into my hands with a long, loud groan. How the fuck was I going to do this? Move past this? Healing felt like a big joke people who didn't understand liked to say.

I wasn't sure I would *ever* heal from this.

I looked up when the apartment door quietly opened, and Chase stepped inside, quietly shutting it back behind him with a barely audible click. He jerked in surprise when he saw me sitting up in bed. "Jessica said you might be sleeping," he rumbled. He walked over to me, his boots thumping across the hardwood floor. And somehow, that sound soothed me a little. Because unlike the assholes who had ripped away something I would *never* get back, I knew Chase would never intentionally hurt me. "You okay, cupcake?"

Blowing out a soft breath, I shook my head. "Every time I shut my eyes, I see them," I told him, my voice low. Almost barely audible. I looked up at him, tears blurring my eyes. He frowned, showing he heard me. Groaning again, I pushed the

tips of my fingers against my eyelids, trying to hold the tears in. “I just wish I didn’t still feel them touching me,” I croaked. And that was the goddamn truth. Even if I couldn’t sleep again, I just wanted to lose that one damn memory.

“Sophia,” Chase rasped, sitting on the bed beside me. He drew me onto his lap so I was straddling him and wrapped his arms tightly around me. I sobbed, breaking down. Crying again even though I didn’t fucking want to. “I wish I could do something to help you, cupcake. God, I’d do anything to make sure you didn’t feel like this ever again.”

There were those words again.

*I’d do anything to make sure you didn’t feel like this ever again.*

I leaned back to look at him. “Would you?” I whispered. “Do anything, I mean,” I added when he arched a brow at me in question.

It felt like everything depended on his answer. Because if he wasn’t willing to help me with this, I didn’t know what I would do.

He cupped my cheek and brushed the pad of his thumb over my lower lip when it trembled. “Anything at fucking all, cupcake. There’s no limit.”

“Touch me?” I pleaded. His eyes widened in surprise at my words. Another tear slid down my cheek. He was going to reject me. Oh, God, I couldn’t take it if he said no. “Please, Chase,” I begged. “Maybe if you touch me and fuck me, I won’t feel them anymore.”

“*Sophia*,” he rasped, looking unsure. His hands tightened their hold on me, conflict raging in his eyes.

My chin wobbled. “You said anything,” I reminded him. I was desperate. I needed help, and I didn’t know what else to do. I would fucking beg if that was what it took. I needed *help*.

He grasped my jaw in his hands, and they shook as he held me. “You’re sure you want this?” he rasped.

I nodded. “Please,” I pleaded again.



He groaned and brought my mouth to his, sealing our lips together.

And another tear ran down my cheek.



### *Chase*

I didn't fucking feel right about this. God knew I loved this woman in my arms to pieces, but she'd just been raped. She was *struggling*. And I knew she was using my love for her to get me to give her what she thought she needed. But I couldn't deny her anything. Especially not when she looked at me with those big eyes and begged me to help her.

I would make this as quick as possible without hurting her. I didn't want to do this. Not while she still wasn't thinking straight. But I was terrified turning her away would do even more damage. What would she begin to think of herself if I told her no, I wouldn't have sex with her? That I wouldn't help her?

She'd start thinking she was ruined. Tainted. Undesirable. And fuck, even with bruises coloring her body, she was none of those things. She could *never* be any of those things.

No matter what she went through, what hell she endured, or what her body was put through, she was still the most precious, beautiful woman I'd ever laid my eyes on.

I gently laid her back on the bed, coming down on top of her. She sighed into the kiss, tears still streaming down her cheeks. Her broken expression was ripping my fucking soul apart. There'd be nothing left of me after this; I already knew that. She owned me, and she was using that ownership to destroy me.

But I'd never let her know that. Not while she was so fragile. So goddamn broken.

"I'm here, cupcake," I rasped, trailing my mouth down her slender neck. Pushing her shirt up, I pulled it over her head. I laved my tongue over one of her nipples before doing the same to the other. She hiccupped, and I looked up at her, wondering if she wanted me to stop. Reading the question in my gaze, she shook her head.

"Please continue," she whispered.

I swallowed thickly, my heart in my throat, and lowered my head, pulling one of her tight buds between my lips, suckling at her tender flesh before doing the same to the other. She was softly moaning, but she was still crying.

And I was hating myself more and more. Because while she was obviously feeling good, her mind was at war.

"Sophia..." I murmured.

"Please," she begged me, her fingers tugging at my shirt. "I need this, Chase."

Forcing myself to lock down what I was feeling, I continued down her body, removing the sweats she was wearing and baring her beautiful, curvy body to my eyes. Leaning up on my knees, I pushed my cut off and then pulled my shirt over my head. She watched through teary eyes as I unbuckled my belt and unsnapped my jeans.

"Sophia, if you don't want this, you can say the word at any time, even if I'm inside of you," I told her quietly. "I *will* stop," I promised her. I cupped her cheek. "I'll never do anything to fucking hurt you."

"I want this," she whispered.

*But she didn't say I want you,* I bitterly reminded myself. And fuck, that cut deep. That was a wound I knew would fester and get infected. And if it ever healed, it would scar—badly.

I was a means to an end. And I fucking hated it. Hated myself for allowing me to be one.

After pulling on a condom, I lowered my body to hers and eased inside of her. She winced in pain, and I stilled, but she shook her head at me. “Please, Chase,” she pleaded, her eyes glassy with tears and pain.

Groaning, I finished pushing inside of her. She was wet, but God, I knew she had to be hurting. Those men had ripped inside of her while she was dry. I already knew there would be blood on my condom when we were done. My fists clenched beside her head as I gently eased out of her and pushed back in.

But even though that condom could be thrown away, the blood I would see on my hands every fucking day would never fade. There would be no removing it.

She clung to me, sobbing into my neck as she came undone. I held her tightly through it, squeezing my own eyes shut to push back my own tears.

“It’s okay, cupcake,” I whispered. “It’s okay.” I gently eased out of her and then rolled to the side, holding her in my arms. “I’m here.”

“Th-thank you,” she sobbed, clinging to me.

I brushed my lips to the top of her head, my chest aching, my stomach in knots. She was thanking me, but I wasn’t sure if I’d really done anything to help. It seemed I’d only made it worse.

“I’ll do anything in the world for you,” I reminded her.

*Even if it might goddamn destroy me in the process.*



Once I was sure Sophia was asleep, I slowly slipped out of bed and covered her up before pacing to the bathroom. Sure enough, there was blood on the condom, and I gritted my teeth, throwing it in the trash. Then, I scrubbed my hands, but I was right.

Even though realistically, there was no blood coating my hands, I could still see it there. Her blood. My skin crawled, and my ears began to ring. Vomit rushed up my throat as my entire body began to tremble.

I pushed the bathroom door shut and threw up, hoping it wouldn't wake her. I'd killed so many men since being part of this club, I couldn't keep count. Their blood coated my hands, too, but her blood was the only red I saw.

And it was fucking horrifying.

I retched again, but my stomach was too empty to throw anything else up. After brushing my teeth, I got redressed and headed downstairs, aiming straight for the wall of liquor.

I had plans to get so fucked up, I forgot about what happened upstairs for a few hours. And maybe once I was well and truly drunk, I wouldn't see the red coating my hands anymore.



“Jesus fucking Christ, Chase,” Scorpion growled, catching me before I face-planted on the floor. I was swaying in my chair, too drunk to focus. I blinked at him, but his face was fucking blurry. I groaned and dropped my head to the table. “How much have you had to drink?”

“Dunno,” I mumbled, my words heavily slurred.

“*Shit*,” Scorpion muttered. He grabbed me beneath my arms and heaved me from the chair. I stumbled, slamming into him, but he managed to steady both of us. “Mark, help me get this fucker in a spare room,” Scorpion ordered. “Halo—coffee. Fucking STAT.”

My head was loopy, and the world was spinning as Mark and Scorpion dragged me to a spare room. My feet were too heavy to move them on my own. As soon as they deposited me on the bed, they pushed me into a sitting position. Halo put the steaming mug of coffee to my lips. “This is going to burn your

mouth, brother, but drink it,” Halo ordered. “You’ve had *way* too much to drink.”

“Not enough,” I mumbled, sipping at the coffee. I winced at the burn, but it cleared my head a little. “Don’t wanna be sober.”

Scorpion sighed. “Drink the fucking coffee, Chase. I can’t have my VP goddamn wasted.”

I groaned but did as he ordered, grimacing at the first sip. Fuck, that was hot as hell. I was pretty sure the scorching hot coffee had burned away most of the layers of skin on the roof of my mouth, but I was a little more awake now.

“Leave us,” Scorpion told Mark and Halo. As soon as they were out of the room, he stared down at me, his arms crossed over his chest. “It’s seven fucking A.M., Chase.” Damn, it was already that time? Shit. “Were you drinking all goddamn night?”

“Yep,” I mumbled, laying back against the pillows, sleep tugging at my brain.

“Why?” Scorpion demanded, anger coloring his words. I couldn’t bring myself to give a damn.

“Sophia asked me to fuck her,” I mumbled, already half-asleep. “She cried. Bled. And it was on my hands.”

I was pretty sure he said something else, but I was already passed out in a drunken sleep.

*Sophia*

Chase was missing when I woke up the next morning, and he hadn't come to me when I'd woken up screaming again from another nightmare. It left me wondering if maybe he'd gotten what he'd wanted from me after all and dipped, leaving me to deal with the aftermath of being associated with him.

It would be such a typical biker thing to do. After all, how many times had my dad come in and wrecked my mom's world, leaving her to pick up the pieces of his destruction? She'd believed him time and time again when he promised things would be different.

But all bikers seemed to be the same.

Yet when it came to Chase, that didn't feel right to me. Something else had to have happened because I'd seen the agony in his eyes when he let that guilt through. I saw how much he hated himself when he looked at what happened to me. I'd seen the worry and concern in his eyes as he'd wiped away my tears while he slowly rocked in and out of my body, doing his best to help me in the way I'd begged him to.

Jessica was talking quietly to Scorpion when I made it down the stairs the next morning. Scorpion looked over at me with an unreadable look on his face, but his wife scowled. Instantly, I tensed, my guard going up.

*Something had happened.*

And for some reason, it had something to do with me.

“Jessica,” Scorpion called, but she ignored him, turning to face me. He settled his hands on her shoulders, keeping her from coming near me. I swallowed thickly, crossing my arms over my chest as if I could shield myself from her.

“Do you know what you did?” Jessica asked me, her temper barely in check. Anger laced her words, and under it, I could hear a note of concern.

I slowly shook my head, not understanding why she was attacking me. She clenched her jaw before forcing it to relax and crossed her arms over her chest as well. “Chase drank himself sick last night after you two apparently slept together.” I flinched. Had he hated touching me so much? “He was so inebriated, he could barely talk. And he woke up two hours ago throwing up so badly, we were worried we’d have to send him to the hospital.” Tears clouded my vision, but I blinked them back. “I told you he would do anything for you, Sophia, and I meant that. You know what that means?”

Sniffing, I shook my head. She sighed. “Sophia, it means he would even go as far as destroying himself if it made you feel okay again.”

*Oh, God.* Vomit rose in my throat. My stomach churned. I had to find Chase and talk to him. He couldn’t do this to himself.

It wasn’t *me* after all. Well, it was, but not in the way I’d been thinking it was. He was disgusted with himself for touching me when I was traumatized. It didn’t matter that I’d been the one begging him to do so.

“Where is he?” I croaked, begging her with my eyes to tell me so I could make this right.

“I sent him on a run about an hour ago,” Scorpion spoke up. I closed my eyes, a tear spilling down my cheek. “You two need some time apart before Chase does something that he can’t change—that he can’t come back from.”

Looking down at my feet, I nodded my head, understanding why Scorpion had done that and hating it all the



same. I needed to talk to him in person, not over a stupid phone call or a text. But what if that was my only option to get through to him?

I'd fucked everything up because instead of thinking about what last night might have done to Chase, I'd only been thinking about myself. Like usual. But I'd been so desperate to feel okay again, and he'd *helped*. God, he had helped me so fucking much because now I felt him instead of them. And now he had no way of knowing that until he came back home.

But despite how I now felt, I'd fucked Chase up inside. And I wasn't sure if that damage could be healed.

I was just as much of a monster as my father, just in a different way. Because I'd only cared about myself, and at the end of it all, I'd hurt Chase.



Scorpion let me out of the clubhouse later on that day, but I had Reese and Elias with me as shadows. They were in blatant site, daring anyone to come near me. People stopped in front of the bookstore, taking pictures of the damage and of some of the club guys working on repairs, but one look from Reese or Elias sent them scampering.

It was nice though, and I was thankful for it. It meant I wouldn't be bothered, wouldn't have to answer the inevitable questions no doubt everyone had. People would want to know what happened—why my bookstore was trashed, and why I looked like I'd been beaten to within an inch of my life.

And I wasn't ready to talk to anyone about it yet. I could barely go back through it in my own mind, much less openly speak about the horror of that night.

“You shouldn't be lifting these,” Elias gently scolded, reaching forward to take the books I'd just walked out of the backroom with.

I sighed. “I need to stock them.”

“Then we’ll do the heavy lifting for you. You just tell us where they go,” Reese butted in, his tone clear he wasn’t arguing on the matter.

I forced a smile to my lips and nodded, leading them over to the non-fiction section. We worked like that for the rest of the day until my body began to ache, the pain medicine no longer working like it should. Reese and Elias took me back to the clubhouse immediately, and I didn’t even bother arguing. I was too tired, and I knew it was pointless anyway.

After forcing some food down my throat, I tried calling Chase, but he didn’t answer. In fact, I was pretty sure he sent me to voicemail when the phone only rang twice before ending, which hurt me way more than the injuries I was currently contending with.

Tears in my eyes, I shot him a text, thinking it would be better than nothing.

I know a lot of things got fucked up last night, but please don’t shut me out. You helped me, Chase. I just wish I’d known it would have fucked you up, or I’d never have asked it of you. I’m here when you’re ready to talk to me.

Then, I set my phone down on his nightstand, curled up under his covers, and cried myself to sleep.



## *Chase*

**J**ohnston took one look at me when I got off my bike and shook his head. “Jesus Christ, it’s worse than what Scorpion said it was.”

*Dick.*

“Fuck off,” I muttered.

He gripped my shoulder when I moved past him, spinning me back around, a hard look on his face. I clenched my jaw. Yeah, I’d crossed a fucking line, but I couldn’t bring myself to care, even when he stepped toe-to-toe with me, his fingers digging into my collarbone. No doubt, I’d have bruises there later on.

“You want to fucking repeat that?” he asked me, his voice dangerously low. “I know you’re going through some shit, Chase, but I’ll knock you on your sorry ass right now.”

I clenched my jaw, biting back what I wanted to say. What I knew would start a fight. Neither of us needed that shit, and Johnston didn’t deserve my pissy-ass mood souring his. “Sorry,” I muttered.

He released me. “Watch what the fuck you say to me next time, you hear? Now get inside. I’ve got liquor and fresh pussy waiting on you down the hall in your usual room.”

Sounded fucking good to me. Maybe I could fuck Sophia out of my system this time. Hadn’t worked in the past, but maybe now that I was fucking wrecked, I could.

The mere thought of her name sent pain slicing through my chest, and I drew in a ragged breath, storming into the clubhouse. No one said a word to me, though I could see Aaliyah's worried gaze settle on Johnston, who was no doubt still pissed off at my small outburst.

Johnston wasn't the kind of man anyone wanted to cross. He wasn't feared for no reason. Even fuckers like Alejandro Garcia, the leader of the Mexican Cartel, kept their mouths shut around him for the most part. Johnston didn't like starting shit, but anyone who crossed him was a dumb mother fucker.

And just a minute ago, I'd almost been one of those dumbasses. The only reason he hadn't swung first and talked later was because I was a member of his club.

I pushed open the door to the room I usually stayed in when I had to come to the mother charter. On the desk, there were three liquor bottles and a single glass, and laying on the bed were three women, all of them slim and fit with big tits and curvy asses.

I kicked the door shut behind me and began stripping off my clothes, only two things on my mind: getting drunk and fucking Sophia out of my goddamn system.

Because she'd fucked me up in irreparable ways.



“Alright, brother, that’s enough,” Johnston said, bursting into my room. I groaned and slowly opened my eyes. A warm mouth was wrapped around my cock, and I was so fucking out of it, I hadn’t even noticed. I pushed her off of me before sitting up, rubbing the sleep from my eyes.

“What time is it?” I muttered. I was hungover as fuck.

“Fucking two in the afternoon on Friday,” Johnston snapped at me.

“Fuck,” I grunted. I’d been out of it for two goddamn days.

“You three—out,” Johnston ordered, pointing to the door. The girls quickly scrambled off my bed, rushing out of the room, their clothes clutched in their hands. Johnston slammed the door shut, and I winced, hissing a breath through my teeth. My fucking temples were pounding, and I was pretty sure I was going to vomit at any second now.

“Off the fucking bed, Chase,” Johnston ordered. I immediately began sliding to the edge of the mattress, swallowing vomit as I went. “You’re getting a shower, getting dressed, eating a fucking meal my wife has busted her ass to make for you, and then you’re helping me work on her car. Clear?”

“Crystal,” I grunted, pushing away from the bed. I stumbled, and Johnston watched as I gripped the bed frame. “What—going to let me hit the floor if I start falling?” I muttered, in a foul fucking mood.

“Yeah, I will. You’re the goddamn VP of my Texas charter, Chase. This shit is inexcusable. A few hours of binge drinking and some pussy, I excused. Let it go. You fucking needed it. But two fucking days, Chase? Uncalled for.”

I sighed, keeping my mouth shut. He was right. As the VP, I had an image to maintain, and this club came first. Always. I’d lost sight of that. “Give me ten minutes.”

“You have five,” Johnston told me before stepping out of the room and slamming the door shut behind him. I glared at it. No doubt, he’d done that shit on fucking purpose.

*Asshole.*



“You look like shit,” Aaliyah said as she set a plate in front of me. It was piled high with mashed potatoes, corn-on-the-cob, and a fried pork chop. “Eat that. Might put some color back in your cheeks.”

“I might throw it up,” I confessed.

She patted my cheek with a patronizing smile on her face. “Then I’ll just shove more food down your throat, Chase. Don’t waste my hard work like that.”

Jesus Christ, she and Johnston were a match made in fucking Heaven.

I grunted and began to eat, forcing myself to hold it down somehow. Johnston was watching with a keen eye.

“How do you put up with her?” I asked him.

Johnston barked out a laugh. “I’ve got the ability to fuck her into submission.”

Aaliyah flipped him off, and surprisingly, it made me laugh. Johnston just winked at her. “Hurry up and finish that, Chase. We’re burning daylight. Her car isn’t going to fix itself.”

I didn’t bother asking why he didn’t get one of the other guys to help him. It was obvious he was forcing me to help to get me sobered up and out of that bedroom. Wasn’t like it had helped any. Sophia was still pumping through my bloodstream, and with every moment I sobered up, her blood on my hands just kept getting clearer and clearer. Those tears and those fucking sobs would never leave my goddamn mind. They echoed inside my skull on constant replay.

Once I was done eating, I took my plate into the kitchen and washed it up before drying it and putting it where it belonged. Then, I dropped a kiss to Aaliyah’s cheek. “Thank you,” I murmured.

A sad smile tilted her lips as she looked up at me. “Johnston told me what he knows,” she quietly informed me. I clenched my jaw, looking away from her and focusing on a spot somewhere above her head. “Jessica told me she keeps trying to reach out to you. Maybe you two should talk.”

Had she? I hadn’t even bothered to look at my phone yet. If someone needed to get me a message, they knew how to contact Johnston.

I shook my head and stepped away from her. “She used me, and then it probably didn’t even help anything anyway,

Aaliyah.” I shoved my hands through my hair. “She was crying and fucking sobbing. She *bled*, Aaliyah.” I stared down at my hands. “And now, her blood is all I fucking see.”

“Chase—”

I turned on my heel and stormed out of the kitchen. Johnston arched a brow at me when Aaliyah yelled my name, rushing out of the kitchen after me, but I shook my head and pushed out of the clubhouse doors. I didn’t want to hear whatever she had to say.



I groaned, closing my eyes as the blonde on her knees between my legs sucked my dick, swallowing me to the back of her throat. Sophia’s tear-streaked face flashed through my mind, and I cursed, opening my eyes again to stare at the blonde beneath me, looking up at me through blue eyes.

“Get up,” I growled. This shit wasn’t working.

She quickly stood to her feet, and just as I stood to mine, ready to bend her over the bed so I didn’t have to look at her face, my phone began to ring. I snatched it up, agony ripping through every part of my body when I saw Sophia’s beautiful face lighting up my screen.

*Not today, cupcake.*

I denied the call and then gripped the back of the blonde’s neck, pushing her face down on the mattress. She moaned, wiggling her ass. I clenched my jaw. “No sounds,” I muttered as I sheathed my dick in a condom. I didn’t want to hear anything that wasn’t my woman. My cupcake.

I pushed inside of her, not even checking to see if she was wet enough. She winced, but I didn’t care. She wasn’t here to get pleasure or to even get off. She was here because Johnston had paid for her to be here. That was it. She was mine to fuck and fill.

I fucked into her, driving my cock forward, my hand still on the back of her neck. The door to the room opened,

revealing Blayke. He crossed his arms over his chest, arching an eyebrow at me as he leaned against the door jamb.

“Scorpion wants you back home. You need to hit the road.”

I cursed and pulled out of the blonde, my muscles tensing. “Not goddamn ready,” I muttered.

Blayke shrugged. “Prez calls, you get a move on. You know how it is. What we feel in that moment doesn’t matter.”

I nodded. I knew that. It was part of my oath as the VP. Sighing, I pulled off the condom before dropping it into the trash. “Get out,” I told the blonde. “I’m sure one of the other guys will be happy to take over.”

She sauntered out of the room, casting a saucy wink in Blayke’s direction before she slipped by him. He looked over his shoulder, trailing his eyes over her naked body before turning back to face me. “I don’t know what’s going on, brother, but you need to work it out sooner rather than later. We’ve got too much shit going on to have you disconnected.”

I nodded once as I tugged my jeans up my legs. He slipped out of the room, and once I was dressed, my phone in my pocket, I grabbed my bike keys and walked out of the room.

Johnston emerged from the shadows, a cigarette between his lips, when I stepped out of the clubhouse. “Ride safe, you hear? Taking a risk riding by yourself.”

“I know,” I told him. I sighed, looking up at the sky. “How did you deal with Aaliyah being attacked?” I finally asked him.

He shoved his hands into his pockets. “I compartmentalized,” he told me. “Fuckers like us, Chase, that’s all we can do. Learn to put it into its correct slot in your mind. Don’t let it become your sole focus, or you’ll lose sight of what’s right in front of you and what’s important.”

With that, he headed back into the clubhouse, and I strode toward my bike, my gut clenching at the thought of going home and facing Sophia.



I needed to compartmentalize. But how the fuck was I supposed to do that?



## *Chase*

I was not ready to be home, and when I saw Sophia step outside as soon as I rolled onto the lot, a sweater wrapped around her upper body, her arms curled around her midsection as she stared at me, I had the greatest urge to spin my bike around and high tail it back out of town.

But Scorpion wanted me home, and I couldn't defy my president. I'd sworn an oath, and I wouldn't break that oath just because I couldn't handle the shit going on in my head. This club came first before everything else.

Grunting, I turned my bike off and got up, hanging my helmet on the handlebars. Rotating my jaw and steeling my spine, I made my way to the clubhouse doors, which Sophia was blocking. Sighing, I crossed my arms over my chest, staring down at her when she didn't budge. So, this was how we were going to play it.

"Are you going to move?" I asked, my voice gravelly from not being used in hours.

She stubbornly tilted her chin up, shaking her head. I usually adored how stubborn she could be, but not today. Not when I wasn't in the mood to deal with her. Not when there was so much shit between us.

"No. We need to talk, Chase. You've been ignoring me." I almost scoffed. Now she wanted to try calling me out on my shit? I deserved a fucking few days of peace, didn't I?

Her bruises were healing slowly but surely, which I was grateful to see, and this morning, she'd taken the time to shower. She smelled like my soap and shampoo, and fuck if that didn't do some shit to me, even though I didn't want it to. She'd used me, and though I knew I'd given in, which was entirely my fault, she didn't even seem to feel remorse for the shit I'd been going through because of it.

And despite her lack of remorse for what I was going through, I hated that I was still in love with her. My heart was at war with my mind. My heart wanted to drag her into my arms and say fuck everything I was feeling just to have her as mine, and my mind was warning me that trying to be with her with all of these tumultuous feelings rolling around inside of me would just hurt us both in the end and leave both of us wrecked.

No matter how much I was hurting, I didn't want her to hurt, too—not in that way. Because when we inevitably ended, it would be the type of hurt neither of us could take back. And probably one neither of us could get over.

“Nothing to talk about, Sophia. Now, move. I need to get inside and talk to Scorpion.”

“You can spare me two fucking minutes of your time, Chase,” she snapped, getting angry. I hated that my dick perked up faster than it had in the two days I'd been gone. “Why did you run, Chase?”

I barked out a humorless laugh. So, she wanted to do this right now, did she? Fine—I'd talk. But that didn't mean she would like the answers she got. Curiosity killed the cat, and in this case, it was going to destroy my little cupcake's heart.

“Because I fucking hate myself for what I allowed you to talk me into,” I bitterly told her.

She flinched, and it took everything in me not to take the words back. “You could have told me no,” she finally retorted, her arms tightening around her midsection.

“Could I?” I bit out, getting angry, too. “I fucking told you I'd do anything for you, cupcake.” The term of endearment

slipped out before I could stop it, and her eyes brightened the slightest bit. I hated that a little bit of warmth trickled into my chest at the sight. “And I fucking did. I still *would*. Despite me not being able to sleep without seeing your tears and hearing your fucking sobs when I shut my eyes, despite me seeing nothing but your blood staining my fucking hands every time I look at them, I’d still goddamn do anything for you. And *that* is why I fucking left, Sophia.”

Her eyes dimmed, tears welling in their beautiful depths. My chest fucking *ached*. “You are the absolute fucking worst for me, cupcake, and had Scorpion not told me to get my ass back home, I would still be gone,” I roughly told her, my voice thick with sadness, pain, and anger.

She choked on a sob, her eyes welling with tears I so badly didn’t want to spill over. “I never wanted to hurt you, Chase.”

“Didn’t you?” I demanded, hurting so fucking much now that I could barely contain it. And that hurt laced my words. The agony wrenched my soul apart. “You knew how I felt about you, Sophia. You’ve always fucking known. I *never* hid it. Not goddamn once. And you used my love for you. You took and fucking took without even trying to see *me*, Sophia. And while I am fucking glad you feel better and you’re doing better, I still need time to work through my own shit.”

“I don’t want you to block me out, Chase,” she pleaded, reaching for me. Her touch burned my skin, scorching me from the inside out. “Please let me fix this.”

“Cupcake, I need *time*,” I rasped.

She shook her head, her lips trembling. I cupped her cheeks, resting my forehead on hers. She sobbed, tearing my mind apart. “Sophia, even now, you’re not seeing me.” She shook her head. “Cupcake, you’re not seeing me,” I repeated. She sobbed again, those tears sliding down her cheeks. “I fucked numerous faceless women while I was gone.” A cry ripped from her throat as she clung to my cut. “I *tried* to move past this the way I move past everything else in my life, but I couldn’t. I just need *time*. Please just fucking give me that,” I begged.

“I’ll do anything, Chase. Please don’t pull away from me. I know I screwed up, but—”

I sighed and stepped back from her, watching as her arms fell to her sides. “Sophia, you’ve never opened up to me. You always pushed me away, despite my constant pursuit. Why now?”

“Because I realized how much I *do* want you, Chase. I’ve been afraid—”

“*Why?*” I barked, losing my temper. I was fucking dying inside, and she wouldn’t just let it the fuck go. I just needed *time*, and she wouldn’t even give me that. “Why the fuck were you afraid of me, Sophia? I never gave you a reason to be!” I barked.

“Because I’m used to men like you being cruel!” she yelled, sobbing. Her face was flooded with tears, but I didn’t move to wipe them away, despite the urge in me to do so. “I’ve seen what a man wearing that cut can do to a woman. I saw what it did to my mom when he wouldn’t ever choose her—us—over his stupid fucking club. Saw what the stress of club life could make a man do!”

I barked out a cruel laugh. “And now, you think I suddenly will? That I’ll suddenly be different from him?” I demanded.

Her lips trembled. “You already are,” she whispered. “I was just too late to realize it.”

She was right. I had. I always fucking had been. And she was right when she said she was too late to realize it because now we had too much pain between us to easily move past.

“I’m terrified giving you time will make you turn your back on me,” she croaked.

“I’m not your father, Sophia,” I quietly told her. “If you don’t give me time, we’re going to destroy each other, and I *never* want to do that to you.”

“You’re hurting me now,” she whispered, her voice cracking.

I grabbed her hand in mine, pressing it to my chest where she could feel the rapid beat of my heart. Her watery eyes met mine, her wet lashes clumped together. Gripping her chin, I pressed my lips to hers in a kiss so tender, it brought tears to my own eyes.

“Give me time,” I whispered against her lips.

Then, I moved past her and headed into the clubhouse, leaving her sobbing behind me.



## *Chase*

**M**y security alarm was blaring on my phone. I jerked into an upright position and snatched it up, cursing as I squinted at the screen. One of our clients' businesses had been broken into.

Godfuckingdammit. These fuckers were really working my last nerve.

I lurched to my feet, already forcing my legs through a pair of jeans when Scorpion pounded on the door. "Chase!" he barked.

"I'm already up!" I called. I shoved my feet into my boots and yanked a shirt over my head. I was sliding my arms through my cut when I yanked open the door to the spare room I was staying in while Sophia used my room. Scorpion was still standing outside the room, and when I emerged, we fell into step together. "Was anyone watching the store?" I asked as we quickly made our way down the hall.

"Mark and Tango," Scorpion informed me. "I'm waiting on word."

Sophia rushed down the stairs wearing one of my t-shirts and a pair of my boxers, her eyes filled with panic, her hair a wild mess. My heart softened at the sight of her. The past few days hadn't been easy, but she'd been doing her best to give me the space I needed. And honestly, it was helping. It gave me time to think and sort through the shit in my head.

The red stain on my hands would never go away, but I had to learn to live with that.

“Chase, what’s going on?” she rushed out as Elias slipped past her on the staircase.

“Nothing to worry about,” I told her. And it wasn’t—not for her. She was safe. This was club business. “Go on back to bed, cupcake. Everything is okay.”

She frowned, and I could tell she didn’t believe me, but finally, she nodded and headed back up the staircase.

For two days now, this was how it’d been. That small little talk was the extent of our conversations lately. She didn’t try to force me to talk, and if we did happen to be around each other, she was sweet and kind, pretending for my sake that nothing was off between us.

But I knew we both felt it—the loss of each other and something beautiful we might’ve had before all this shit happened. It was like a coursing river was rushing between us, and the moment we dove into those depths, it would sweep us both away.

The question was, when we jumped in, would we be enough to save each other? Would we be enough to keep each other from drowning?

Scorpion’s phone went off, and he quickly pulled it to his ear. “Got it,” he grunted, ending the call almost as quickly as he answered it. He looked at all of us. “Let’s go. Mark and Tango have both culprits.”

I quickly followed him out the door. I didn’t even need to know where we were going. I trusted my president, and I trusted him as my best friend even more. But what I really wanted was answers, and I wanted to see these fuckers pay for touching my woman—if they were even the same men.

And if they weren’t, then they would serve as a message to whoever touched her.

I would be coming for them.





I leaned against the wall with a cigarette between my lips as I watched the two men Mark and Tango had gotten their hands on slowly come awake. It wasn't often I smoked—only when I was stressed or needed to keep myself from doing something stupid. And in this case, it was a little bit of both. I was impatient and aggravated as fuck.

Scorpion had given me the order to stand down, to not touch them. Because he wanted answers, and he knew there was a possibility my rage might get out of hand. And if it did, we wouldn't get a goddamn thing.

“What the fuck?” the one on the left grunted. His hair was blonde and was probably spiky before he put the mask on to break into our clients' store. He fought against his restraints, gritting his teeth as he snarled at us when he realized there was no slipping out of his binds.

Tango was damn good with rope.

“Fuck,” the other one, a mere boy probably around eighteen or nineteen, wheezed, realization dawning across his face. His fear coated the room. It was so strong, I could almost taste it.

My blood pumped hotly through my veins, and I quickly lit another cigarette to keep myself calm.

“Fuck is right,” Tango mused, amusement shining in his blue eyes. “You look like you're ready to piss your pants, kid.”

Kid was definitely right. He was too young for this shit. Too young, in my opinion, to prospect for a club, much less be sent out to do dirty work like they'd been doing. How the fuck he got roped into whatever shit he was doing, I'd never know. But if he was lost and looking for a place to belong, it made sense.

Kids at that age were very impressionable.

“Fuck you,” he spat, but it wasn't as strong as I was sure he wanted it to be. His voice trembled, and his pupils were

blown wide with fear, his body trembling in his restraints. His teeth even began to chatter.

He wasn't cut out for this.

Tango chuckled and kneeled in front of him. "I'll make you a deal, kid. I'll make this quick and painless if you just tell me what I want to know."

"Don't you say a fucking word," the older man hissed at the boy.

Mark hummed, twirling his knife between his fingers. "Why not?" he asked, drawing the older man's attention to him. "Neither of you are getting out alive." The boy whimpered, but I didn't remove my eyes from the man Mark was speaking to. "But if you don't cooperate, I can make it really fucking hurt. I'll *make* you cooperate."

"I'm not telling you a fucking thing," he hissed. "You can do whatever you want to me."

The boy next to him squeaked in fear when Tango trailed the tip of his knife up his throat. The end was sharp enough to easily break the skin, and blood trickled from the wound. The boy sobbed, tears already spilling down his cheeks. "You might not, but I've got a feeling this sweet boy will, won't you?" Tango asked, softening his voice, playing with the boy's emotions. Tango was a manipulator through and through, which was why he was the best when it came to torturing information out of someone. Even Johnston had used him a time or two.

The boy gulped, fear making his pulse rapidly beat at the base of his throat. He would be our link to finding out what we wanted, no doubt about it.

"Shut your fucking mouth," the older man snarled at the boy, making him flinch.

Mark gripped the man's hair and yanked his head back. "You open your mouth again, and I'm going to shove my cock so far down your throat, you suffocate, you hear me?" Scorpion snickered beside me. Mark was bisexual. He didn't

flaunt it, but he wasn't shy about it either. He fucked whatever his flavor of the night happened to be.

"Gay fucker," the man seethed. "Fucking hate faggots."

Mark barked out a laugh. "Getting a dick sucked is just getting a dick sucked," he told him. "Only fuckers not secure in their sexuality would feel a need to call another man a faggot." He placed his knife in the man's mouth, the blade gleaming under the harsh lighting. The man paled, his jaw open. "Now, shut the fuck up and don't say another word, or I'll shove this through the back of your thick-ass skull. Understand?"

He didn't say another word, not that I blamed him. Because Mark didn't remove that blade from his mouth. He kept it there while Tango eyed the boy.

"Who do you work for?"

"I'm a prospect for the Ghosts of Chaos," the boy whimpered.

I looked at Scorpion. Nothing showed on his face, but I knew what he was thinking. We'd definitely been dragged into the problems Johnston had because the Ghosts of Chaos MC had recently been causing a lot of problems for the mother charter. We'd known it was going to happen, but now we were eyeballs deep in it.

Wouldn't be long before it was threatening to drown us.

*Fuck.*

"Good boy," Tango crooned. The boy sniffled. "Why is our club being targeted?"

The Ghosts of Chaos MC used to be a clean club. They didn't dabble in the shit we did. They worked hard and repped the whole Blue Lives Matter shit. I didn't know what changed, but I had a feeling we'd find out tonight.

"P-Pressure," the boy stuttered, clearly terrified. But it was clear he thought answering Tango's questions and dying fast was the easiest way to go. He was at least a smart kid. Too bad he made the decisions he did. Prospecting for the Ghosts of

Chaos would cost him his life. “Prez formed a d-deal with the R-Russians,” he said, tripping over himself.

I gritted my teeth, my hand curling into a fist at my side. My fucking cigarette was done, and I tossed it to the floor, stomping it out with my boot. Dammit, this was the last fucking thing we needed.

“Fuck,” Scorpion whispered so low, the only reason I heard him was because he was standing right next to me.

The Russians were going to be a fucking problem. If they were pressuring the Ghosts of Chaos to start a war with us, they wanted our territory and our power. It would be a bloody war. And the chances of coming out alive were slim as fuck. This put *everyone* connected to us in danger—our women and other clubs.

“Why target our clients?” Tango asked the boy, his voice calm and soothing. I hated to admit it, but I was getting soft for the boy. It was clear he was terrified as fuck and hadn’t wanted to do any of this. Especially when I thought about his reactions to the older man he got caught with. He’d been scared.

But none of that changed what he’d possibly done to Sophia.

“T-To take away a m-money resource.” Made sense. We did rely heavily on our security firm when gun and drug sales were low.

“What do the Russians want with us?” Tango asked him. The boy sniffled, crying heavily now, his chest heaving. Tango slid his fingers into the boy’s hair, scraping his nails along his scalp. “Easy. Breathe for me. You’re doing so good.”

The boy drew in ragged breaths, snot running down his face. “Your territory and c-connections,” the boy cried.

*Shit.* That meant this was going to drag in the Savage Crows, the fucking Sons of Hell, and the goddamn Mexican cartel, too. This was going to be absolute carnage. Alejandro Garcia was just as bad as Johnston, and he had a fuck ton more manpower than all the clubs we were connected to combined.

Alejandro was going to make this shit look like World War III.

Tango used his shirt to clean the boy's face of snot and some tears. The boy hiccupped. "Can you tell me who broke into the bookstore and attacked the woman who worked there?"

The boy sobbed. "I begged them not to," he cried. "Is she o-okay? I was s-so sick," he sobbed.

My heart clenched for him all while my blood boiled in my veins at the mention of what happened to Sophia. How much she'd suffered because of greedy assholes with no fucking morals.

"She's okay. Got a long way to heal, but she's coming along just fine," Tango assured him.

"H-him," the boy choked, jerking his head the tiniest bit toward the man next to him. "And the VP," he choked out. "I was supposed to go, but they thought I-I'd be a l-liability," he whimpered. "I got l-locked in a-a—" He choked on his words.

Fuck. He was just as much of a victim as Sophia. What the fuck? What was the point of him being part of this if he didn't want to be in it?

"A what, baby boy?" Tango asked softly, still scraping his nails along the boy's scalp. "Go on. Tell me."

"A d-dog cage," he sobbed. "Pa always p-puts me in one when I g-get mouthy or d-do something he doesn't l-like."

*A dog cage.*

*A fucking dog cage.*

"Goddammit," Scorpion snarled, his voice carrying through the otherwise empty room, making the boy jump. Tango soothed him.

"Why are you prospecting if they treat you like that?" Tango asked the boy. I could see the tension riding his shoulders, the anger brewing in his blue eyes. Shit—Tango was connecting with the boy. Which was surprising considering he was the sickest mother fucker out of all of us—

even Gidget. He didn't attach to others well. It had taken him *months* to really begin trusting us.

"No ch-choice," the boy choked out. "I'm the p-president's s-son."

I looked at Scorpion. He looked at me. Silently, we communicated, understanding running through both of us. He'd never wanted this. He'd been forced into it. The boy wasn't fit for any club shit. He was too soft, too fucking sweet. And he was on the verge of passing out from fear.

"Let him loose," Scorpion ordered. Tango quickly began undoing the boy's ties without a second of hesitation. "He's your responsibility, Tango," Scorpion told him. He'd obviously seen what I had. Tango was sweet on the boy.

Tango nodded once and lifted the boy into his arms. The boy wrapped around him like a monkey, sobbing into his neck. Tango didn't spare any of us a glance as he carried the boy up the stairs and out of the cellar.

Scorpion looked at me. "We've got what we need. What do you want to do with him?" he asked, jerking his head in the other man's direction.

I grinned and shrugged my cut off before rolling up the sleeves of my long-sleeve shirt. The man's eyes widened. "You know who I am?" I asked him as I stepped out of the shadows, handing Scorpion my cut.

He slowly nodded, being careful of the knife still resting on his tongue.

A cruel smile twisted my lips. "Good. Then you know the woman you attacked is *mine*. And I'm about to violate you in the same way you fucking violated her." I bent in front of him, gripping his chin. He winced when the knife cut into the inside of his cheek and his tongue. Blood spilled from his mouth. "Hope you're fucking ready," I rumbled.

I began to untie him, and Scorpion and Mark held him down as I worked on stripping him out of his clothes. He yelled and screamed and fought, but I barely broke a sweat. Once he was naked, I tied his hands behind his back and tied

his ankles together. Then, I grabbed my knife from my boot and began to cut the club emblem into his back.

He screamed, throwing up, and every time he passed out from the pain, Mark and Scorpion woke him back up. Blood covered my hands and arms and pooled on the floor.

Gripping his hair with my bloody fingers, I yanked his head back. He was sobbing like a fucking pussy. “You’re going to be a message that one day, I’m coming for your VP,” I warned him.

He cried in earnest, trying to apologize, but he was in too much pain to force his brain to work.

I spread his ass cheeks, and leaning over him, my chest plastered to his back, I kneeled on his balls. He screamed again, and then, I shoved the knife up his ass straight to the hilt.

“*No one* fucks with my woman,” I snarled in his ear.

Then, I slammed his head to the concrete hard enough to crack his skull.



## *Chase*

**I**t was almost dark by the time we rolled back up to the clubhouse. After the asshole had died on the floor of the cellar, Scorpion and I dragged his body out in a body bag and carried his heavy ass through the woods to the waiting van. It was another long ride to his territory—not to mention dangerous. The drop from my adrenaline high had left me exhausted and ready to crawl into bed.

But alas, that couldn't happen—not yet. Because after we dropped his body off in the Ghosts of Chaos' territory, we headed back to the cellar to help do clean-up. Which was another couple of hours.

And now, I was fucking exhausted. Dead on my fucking feet, really. Blood and sweat were clinging to my skin, and I was in desperate need of a shower. I smelled like I'd stepped out of a butcher shop.

“Go on and get cleaned up and get some sleep,” Scorpion said, looking as tired as I felt. “I'll call church in the morning so we can decide as a club where to go from here. After what we did tonight, there's no turning back. We're eyeballs deep in this shit now, regardless of Johnston's involvement.”

I nodded in agreement and tilted my head back to look up at the sky as twilight descended upon us. We'd brought our own shit on us now. Before, we could've just let Johnston call all the shots, but not now.

It had gotten too personal now.



“Well, the peace was nice while it lasted,” I joked.

Scorpion snorted. “Eh, it was beginning to get boring as fuck anyway.”

I snickered. He wasn’t wrong. It had been too quiet. Men like us didn’t want peace. We wanted bloodshed and darkness. It was where we were most comfortable at.

I clapped a hand to his shoulder before heading inside the clubhouse. Mark and Scorpion trailed in behind me, the doors closing quietly behind them. Gidget looked up from his phone, arching a brow. “You left Tango to clean up by himself or some shit?” he asked, noticing he didn’t come in with us.

“Tango is dealing with something else,” I told him evasively, leaving it at that. That boy was Tango’s problem, and while I wasn’t sure what had formed between Tango and that kid in the short time Tango had been interrogating him, all of us had felt the protectiveness Tango had for him. I wouldn’t be the one to open my mouth about anything Tango was doing. What Tango wanted us to know was up to him and only him.

Gidget scowled at me, but I ignored him. It was rare Gidget wasn’t in a foul mood, and I was used to it by now. The only time he wasn’t in a pissy mood was when he was getting his dick wet, honestly. But he’d chilled out over the years, so that was good, at least.

I quietly opened my door, not wanting to disturb Sophia if she was asleep. She was curled under my blankets, hugging my pillow to her chest, her blonde hair fanned out behind her. Unable to help myself, I stood over my bed, staring down at her. If I wasn’t worried about waking her up and freaking her out with all the blood on me, I would have run my fingers through her hair—maybe even leaned down and pressed a kiss to her cheek or her forehead.

I missed her like crazy. It was beyond time for us to talk, but I was also afraid the damage between us was too much to repair. And I didn’t want to face that if it was. I didn’t want to lose her.

It was selfish of me to keep her waiting, but I was a selfish mother fucker. I would never deny that. I wasn't ready to face the fact that I might have to let go of her. That shit *hurt*. Almost to the point it brought me to my damn knees.

Quietly, I made my way to the bathroom and shut the door behind me before toeing off my boots and stripping out of my clothes. Wanting to hurry so I spent less time potentially waking Sophia up, I quickly wet my hair and began to lather it, scrubbing at my scalp as I watched the red water slowly turn clear as the dried blood slowly washed off of me.

What I'd done still didn't feel like enough because nothing I did would ever repair what had been done to Sophia, but it would have to be. I'd done what I could to maybe bring her peace. To help her move on.

But just like she would always live with those painful memories, the nightmares and flashbacks, I knew I would always live with the guilt of not getting to her in time. Of not doing more to keep her safe.

I opened my eyes when I was done rinsing my hair and looked over toward the door, feeling eyes on me. And sure enough, Sophia was standing in the doorway, her wide, horrified eyes staring at my pile of bloody clothes.

*Fuck.*

I should have locked the goddamn door.

I quickly flung the glass door back and stepped out, dripping water all over the floor as I did so. "Cupcake, it's not as bad as it looks," I tried soothing her.

She swallowed thickly and looked up at me, her eyes slowly tracking over my naked, glistening body before she forced herself to meet my eyes. "Is that blood?" she whispered, her voice a little shaky.

I nodded, not wanting to lie to her. "It's the blood of one of the men who raped you, Sophia."

Tears immediately welled in her eyes. Her sweet lips trembled, and just like that, she crumbled in front of me, sinking to her knees, sobbing into her hands. I quickly sank to

the ground in front of her, dragging her into my arms. She clung to my damp skin, sobbing into my neck as she wrapped her body around mine, not even caring that I was getting her clothes wet or that I was naked.

I held her so tightly, I was surprised I didn't crush her. That she didn't voice I was hurting her. I held her like she could slip through my arms at any moment. I needed her as close as possible. I'd pull her inside of me if I could so I never had to be without her again.

We'd been apart for way too fucking long.

"They're dead?" she sobbed.

I cradled the back of her head and gently rocked her as her tears soaked my skin. "Just one, cupcake, but I know who the other one is. I swear to God, I'll gladly rip his soul from his body," I swore. And I fucking meant that. I didn't say that kind of shit lightly.

He'd pay for touching her. Without a fucking doubt.

Her nails dug into the back of my neck, her sobs wracking her body. "I love you," she sobbed. My heart stopped in my chest at her confession. Shakily, I tightened my fingers on her. "I'm so fucking sorry it took me so long to believe you were always real with me. I'm so fucking sorry I wasted so much time. Please, Chase, I need—I can't—I—"

She was panicking. Losing control.

I gripped a handful of her hair and pulled her hair back, running my eyes over her red, tear-stained face. Despite being a blubbery mess, she was still the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen in my life.

And she loved me. For some reason, despite all the pain and hurt coursing between us, she fucking *loved* me.

"You love me despite me running away, despite me fucking other women?" I rasped.

She cradled my face in her shaking hands and did her best to nod her head with the tight grip I had on her blonde strands. "Yes," she rasped. "Neither of us are perfect. But I never gave

you reason to believe I wanted exclusivity. All I've done is push you away. But I'm done with that, Chase. Please. Even if you still need time, please tell me everything will be okay." More tears tracked down her cheeks. "Please," she begged.

I crushed her mouth to mine. She moaned and relaxed in my arms, succumbing to my lips, submitting to me. Her lips softly moved with mine. And I took. I took so fucking much from her, everything she was willing to give me in this moment.

"I've always loved you," I rasped, panting as I forced myself back from her addicting lips. Her eyes were a little glazed over, but she was definitely alert as she breathed in my words. Captured them way down in her soul. "*Always*," I stressed, my eyes meeting hers. "Not a goddamn thing will change that, cupcake. And I'm still here. I'm *always* here. No matter what the fuck happens, I am *yours*."

More tears streaked down her cheeks. "No one has ever done for me what you have."

I slid my hand down from her hair and cupped the back of her neck, gripping just tight enough to force her to really listen to what I had to say.

"No matter what happens between us, cupcake, no matter how angry we get with each other or how much space I need, if you need me, I will come. I don't give a fuck what's going on, you hear me? I am *always* yours to call on."

She sniffled and leaned forward, kissing me again. I clutched her to me, my lips softer on hers this time. We took our time, our tongues slowly dancing together. I ran my hands over her curves, and she slid the tips of her fingers along my broad shoulders, down the ink on my back, and over my abs.

But there was nothing sexual about what we were doing. We were two lost souls finally finding a home within each other.

We mended each other. Sewed the ripped pieces of each other back together again. Glued puzzle pieces together. Welded our hearts into one.

Our love was the kind that had the power to become destructive, to become so fucking painful, it might very well kill us.

But it was a risk we were both willing to take.

*Chase*

“I need to finish my shower,” I murmured against her lips. I didn’t want to release her. Not when I finally got to hold her like this. Feel her against me. Fuck, her heart was beating in time with mine like we were meant to be together like this. But I still wasn’t fully showered and cleaned.

She sighed and pulled back from me, her dark eyes a little brighter than they’d been the past few days. Swallowing thickly, I reached up and brushed the pad of my thumb along her kiss-swollen bottom lip. “Wait for me in bed?” I softly asked her, watching as her eyelids fluttered at my soft touch, her teeth scraping over her bottom lip.

She nodded and stood from the floor, her clothes now damp from my skin. I forced myself to my feet and stepped back into the shower, ignoring the way my dick got impossibly harder at the sight of her stripping out of her clothes and tossing them into the hamper before leaving the bathroom. She was so goddamn beautiful, and she still didn’t even realize the kind of vice-like grip she had on every single part of me.

I was hers. Not a damn soul could ever rip me away, even if she decided she didn’t want me anymore. My words hadn’t been empty.

I was hers to call on. No matter what the fuck happened between us.

I gripped the base of my cock and nearly strangled it, trying to get my erection to go down. Neither of us was up for sex tonight, and fuck, I understood that. We needed time to just be together. I needed time to just feel her in my arms again, and she needed the reassurance that she hadn't fucked up everything between us.

I knew I would forever see her blood staining my hands when I looked at them. There was no changing that. But maybe knowing she didn't hate me, that she loved me anyway, would help me live with it.

Once I dried off, I wrapped a towel around my waist and walked to my dresser, grabbing a pair of boxers and a pair of sweats. Sophia sucked in a sharp breath of air when my towel hit the floor, but I let it go, ignoring her sharp intake of air, and instead tugged on my clothes before walking over to the bed, not bothering with a shirt. I needed to feel her against me as much as possible.

"Hey," I murmured, lifting the comforter and sliding in beside her. She rolled to her side so we were face to face, and once I was settled, I grabbed her hands in mine, linking our fingers together. "I missed you."

A small smile tilted her sleepy lips. "I missed you, too," she whispered. "Everything is going to be okay now though, right?"

I nodded and brought our joined hands to my lips, pressing a kiss to one hand and then the other before lowering them back between our chests. Her cheeks colored a pretty shade of pink, making my heart skip a beat in my chest. No one woman affected me like she did. Sophia was one of a fucking kind. "Yes, cupcake. Everything is going to be okay now."

She sighed, her eyes sliding shut. "Promise me you won't go anywhere?"

I brushed my lips to her forehead. "I'm here, cupcake. I promise."

"I'm trying to be better," she promised, her eyes not opening as she spoke. Her hands trembled in mine, so I held

them tighter, trying to reassure her. “My trauma... I let it rule me for too long.” Her eyes slowly opened. “I don’t want to be that woman anymore, Chase.”

I frowned at her as I brushed my thumbs over her knuckles. “Can you tell me what happened?”

She sighed. “Dad was a biker, too, though his club is gone now. Wiped out by a rival. Mom fled with me when I was seventeen so we wouldn’t be caught up in the shit storm that followed the rival club’s takeover.” Her eyes slowly opened, meeting mine. “But Dad... the club came first. Always. I know that’s the same with you, but he...” Her voice trailed off, and she pursed her lips, like she was trying to word how we were different. “Mom was a... convenience. A woman he could use when he felt like it. A punching bag when he was drunk and angry. The other club women weren’t treated much better.”

Sophia drew in a shaky breath. “He always promised her he would change when she threatened to leave. He would do better. Be better. He’d get help for his anger and his drinking.”

It didn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out he never had.

“Did he ever hurt you?”

Sophia shook her head. “I stayed out of the way as much as possible, but things I saw. The things I *heard*—” She audibly swallowed. I raised her hands to my lips again, kissing them, trying my damnest to soothe her. Because the torment in her eyes were clear.

“You’re not him, Chase,” she said softly. “None of you are. Sure, some of you can be assholes. And you’re domineering. You push and push. Most of you do. But one thing I did notice is that you and everyone else here are fiercely protective. And loyal. That loyalty is something I’ve never witnessed before.” She moved a little closer to me. “What you’ve done for me, he never would’ve done for her. *None* of it, Chase.”

I brushed my lips to her forehead. “Sophia, you’ve been my beginning and my end since the moment I laid eyes on you. The reason I fucking breathe every day. My motivation to



keep going forward.” I moved my head back a little so I could look down at her. “I’ll never be him. You have my word. This club comes first—you know that—but I’ll cherish you until my last dying breath. You hear me?”

She nodded, sinking further into the pillow, relaxing now that her past was out in the open. And fuck, I could breathe a little easier now that I knew and could understand her trauma and her fears.

Leaning over, I brushed my lips to her forehead before letting my own eyes slide shut, finally getting the rest I needed. Her scent clung to the sheets and my pillowcase, and her warmth curled around me, dragging me into her deeper and deeper.

And this time, I didn’t fight it. I allowed everything about this woman to cover me and embrace me.

She was mine, and I was hers. And once I took care of the VP of the Ghosts of Chaos MC, I would officially make her mine.

That was a goddamn promise.



## *Chase*

**S**ophia was still asleep when I woke up the next morning. As much as I wanted to remain in bed with her, I needed to head downstairs for church. We had shit to discuss as a club, and as the VP, I had a duty to sit at that table.

Grunting, I carefully extracted myself from the sheets and got out of bed, quietly pulling on a pair of black jeans, a plain black long-sleeve shirt, and my boots before shrugging my cut on my shoulders. I gently pressed a kiss to the top of Sophia's head before I slipped out of my apartment, shutting the door behind me with a barely audible click.

Scorpion nodded once at me when I emerged at the bottom of the staircase before he disappeared into the chapel with a cup of coffee in his hands. I quickly made myself a cup of the terrible coffee they always drank and followed in behind him, shutting the door behind me.

Fuck, I'd be glad when Sophia could reopen her shop. I was over this bullshit ass coffee everyone here drank.

All of the other club members were already sitting at the table, but no one was surprised I was the last one to stroll in.

"How's Sophia?" Mark asked me.

I grunted as I pulled my leather chair out and took a seat in it, leaning back to get comfortable. "Fine. Sleeping." I took a sip of my coffee and grimaced. God, it tasted like shit. Too fucking bitter.

Mark nodded once at me in acknowledgment. Scorpion leaned forward, his hands wrapped around his coffee mug. “I talked to Johnston last night,” Scorpion began. “This is bigger than he or I thought it would end up being, and he’s working now to see who he can pull in on our side. I’ve already reached out to Grim. He’s going to talk to Copper and get back with me.”

He looked around the table at all of us. “But in the meantime, I’ve gotten clearance for us to go after the VP for what he did to Sophia.” I sat up straighter, setting my coffee cup down. Scorpion looked over at me. “Your woman, your call. How do you want to handle this, Chase?”

I grinned, and Tango chuckled, looking positively fucking gleeful at the idea of getting blood on his hands. No one mentioned the boy he was protecting, so I figured that was off the table for the time being, though I had no doubt Scorpion was being informed of everything going on between the two of them.

“I’d like to pull in the mother charter for a day or two,” I told Scorpion. “Blayke and Dom are two of the best guys we have when it comes to stealth, and I want them in on this. We can’t risk being spotted yet. My only goal is to infiltrate, get the VP, and get the fuck out of there.”

He nodded once. “Good call,” Scorpion said. “I’ll reach out to Johnston when we finish here.”

“Please fucking tell me I’m going to be part of the torture,” Tango practically begged. “I just need to watch him get what’s coming for him, brother.” I looked over at him, arching a single brow. There was a darkness simmering in his eyes, something not present unless he was feeling particularly angry about something. And I had a feeling his protectiveness over the boy he’d taken in was sparking his need for blood.

There was no telling what hell that kid had endured, and if Tango was ready to unleash Hell for him... Well, it had to be pretty fucking bad.

I nodded once at him. He relaxed back into his chair. I looked at Scorpion. “Make the call. In the meantime, I think

we should call lockdown.”

Scorpion nodded in agreement and cleared his throat. “All in favor of lockdown?”

All hands at the table went up. Scorpion grunted. “Good. Tango, get your boy here.” Multiple eyes swung to him in surprise, but Tango didn’t even flinch. It wasn’t Tango’s sexuality they were worried about. It had never been a secret that, like Mark, Tango batted for both teams. But it *was* a surprise that he was hiding someone he cared about from the club.

Then again, none of us should have been surprised. Tango kept shit close to his chest. And after the months it took him to really trust any of us... Tango came from his own trauma, which none of us knew the story of. Only knew because of the shit we’d seen him go through in his mind before he found an outlet. Maybe whatever he went through was why he’d suddenly become so attached to the kid, too.

“No one open your fucking mouths,” Scorpion ground out when he saw Gidget getting ready to lash out at Tango. “I told Tango to keep it on the low for a fucking reason. No one will harass the boy, and you will *all* make him feel welcome. Do I make myself clear?”

Rounds of agreement went up around the table, though some didn’t look happy about it considering we didn’t keep secrets. I took a sip of my coffee and grimaced in disgust. God, I couldn’t wait for Sophia to wake up so she could make me a decent fucking cup like she had been the past few mornings, even when we were on the outs. This shit tasted like pure ass.

“Anyone got anything else to bring to the table?” Scorpion asked. When no one said anything, he slammed his gavel down and pushed back from the table, heading out to go make a call to Johnston. I stood as well and crossed the room to Tango. He arched a brow at me.

“You want someone to ride with you?” I asked him.

He sighed. “I don’t know how he’s going to feel about this,” he said, referring to the boy he’d rescued that none of us knew the name of except him. “Gabriel isn’t... he’s struggling, Chase.”

I clapped a hand to his shoulder. “I’ll ride with you. And I’ll keep my mouth shut and stay distant so he doesn’t feel overwhelmed.”

He frowned at me. “What about Sophia?”

“What about me?” my woman asked, stepping into the chapel with a cup of coffee. She held it out to me, and I groaned in pure fucking ecstasy, immediately taking a sip. *Fucking finally.* I gripped the side of her neck after and pressed a hard kiss to her lips.

My fucking savior.

“I need to ride with Tango to go get someone from his place. We’re going on lockdown,” I informed her.

I immediately hated the look of disappointment on her face. I knew she wanted to spend time with me, but she also knew the club came first. And Tango trusted me more than he trusted anyone else. Always had.

I ran my hand down her arm before grabbing her hand in mine. Tango looked between the two of us before looking like a whole fucking lightbulb lit up in his brain. I had to bite back a snort of amusement.

“If Scorpion will allow it, see if she can ride with you,” Tango said. “It might do him some good to see her alive.”

“Me?” Sophia asked in confusion, her eyes bouncing between the two of us as she tried to figure out what was going on.

I swallowed before setting the coffee mug on the table. Then, I gripped her upper arms, rubbing my thumbs soothingly along her skin. “The boy—Gabriel—that I need to ride with Tango to go get is part of the crew that ordered the attack on you.” Fear widened her dark eyes, clouding the pretty color. I cupped her cheek, keeping her eyes locked on mine. I didn’t need her going into her head. Not when I needed to ride out.

“He’s young, cupcake. So fucking young and tossed into a world he wanted no part of just because of who his father is.”

She looked at Tango and then back at me. “And you two trust him?” she croaked, looking like she wasn’t trusting either of our judgments right then. I had to admit, that cut deep. But I also knew what she’d endured. How much she was still suffering from that fucking attack.

Tango and I both nodded. “He told us everything,” Tango told her quietly. “And he was fucking torn apart knowing he couldn’t help you that night. He was supposed to go, but he fought it, Sophia. And it got him beat, raped too,” I ground my teeth together so hard, both of them could hear it, “and then locked in a fucking dog kennel.”

Sophia flinched at the word rape as I stared at Tango in horror. He clenched his jaw, a storm brewing in his eyes. “Jesus fucking Christ,” I finally swore, closing my eyes. That poor fucking kid.

Tango nodded. “He’s as much of a victim as she is,” he quietly told me.

Sophia nodded, drawing in a deep breath. Her fingers curled into my cut like it was her lifeline. “I’ll ride.”

“Ride where?” Scorpion demanded, looking between the three of us as he entered the chapel.

“With me to get Gabriel,” Tango informed Scorpion. “He’s not going to want to come here. The idea of being in the clubhouse freaks him out, but I’m hoping seeing Sophia with us will put him at ease.”

Scorpion grunted, clearly not liking the idea, but he nodded once, looking at his watch. “Clubhouse goes under lockdown in thirty minutes. And Johnston and his crew will be here in the morning.”

I nodded once and grabbed Sophia’s hand in mine, leading her out of the clubhouse and to my bike. I settled my helmet on her head and tightened the chin straps before sliding on. With my guidance, she slid on behind me, wrapping her arms tightly around my midsection, her thighs squeezing my hips.

Fuck, I'd love to feel those thighs squeezing me while I fucked her into a mattress. Or against the wall. Where the fuck ever.

"Where's your helmet?" she asked me, breaking me from my thoughts. Christ, my dick was hard.

"On your head," I told her as I turned the bike on. "You need it more than I do." Then, before she could put up an argument, I revved the engine and quickly followed Tango off the lot and onto the highway.



Tango wasn't kidding about the boy being nervous. Gabriel was trembling as Tango gently led him down the porch of his mobile home. He had Gabriel wrapped in his leather jacket, his arm securely wrapped around his shoulders. Gabriel looked at us where we parked by the road, and his eyes landed on Sophia. She waved at him with a smile tilting her lips, and he relaxed a little, allowing Tango to put him on the bike.

He was wearing Tango's clothes, which were way too fucking big for him, but the boy didn't seem to mind. And instead of riding behind Tango, Tango slid on behind him. The move spoke volumes about how much he adored and wanted to protect the kid. It even made my heart clench in my chest, and not much affected me unless it was Sophia. Not to that degree.

"He's breaking my heart," Sophia whispered, resting her head on my back.

I reached down and grasped her hands, giving them a gentle squeeze. "Tango will take care of him," I promised her. Of that, I was absolutely certain. Because I'd *never* seen Tango like this.

I watched Tango strap a helmet to Gabriel's head. Then, he pressed a kiss to Gabriel's cheek and slowly made a circle, heading back down his drive to the highway. We followed

behind him, and once we were on the highway, Tango dropped one of his hands from the handlebar and wrapped it around Gabriel's waist.

Sophia tightened her hands around me as we picked up speed, and she laughed against my back. I grinned, dropping one of my hands to grip her thigh, loving how free she felt riding behind me.

She was made for me. No fucking doubt about it.





## *Chase*

**S**ophia groaned in protest when I slid out of bed the next morning, and I cringed a little, hating that I woke her up. She was still recovering and needed as much rest as possible, especially since she was still waking up in the middle of the night from nightmares and flashbacks.

Leaning over her on the bed, I pressed a kiss to her forehead before walking over to the dresser.

“Do you have to be up already?” she mumbled in complaint, squinting one of her eyes open to look at me.

I nodded as I tugged a pair of jeans up my legs, fastening the button before yanking up the zipper. “Yeah, cupcake. Mother charter will be here any minute now,” I told her. “And not being awake when Johnston rides into town is just asking for trouble.”

She huffed. “Sounds like a douchebag,” she muttered.

I snorted. She just about hit the nail on the head with that assumption. Johnston was a cruel mother fucker, but this club was family, and he was a true ride-or-die. “He can be, but he also gave every single one of us in this club a place to belong, and he gives us structure. That’s something that most of us would never trade for anything else. We thrive best in this environment. Because even in the midst of chaos, we’ve got family. A home. People to rely on. A leader we can turn to and trust.”

She watched me for a moment as I tugged a shirt over my head and shoved my feet into my boots. “Do I need to get up, too?” she finally asked.

I shook my head. “Nah, cupcake.” I shrugged on my cut before sitting on the edge of the bed to lace up my boots. “You go on back to sleep and come down whenever you’re ready. Probably going to head straight into church.” After standing back up, I leaned over her again for the second time that morning and gripped her chin, turning her head so I could plant a kiss on her lips. “Go back to sleep,” I gently commanded.

She nodded and snuggled back beneath the covers, hugging my pillow to her chest. I quickly left the room and jogged down the stairs right as the sound of multiple bikes riding onto the lot met my ears. Jessica was holding Destin on her hip, though he was beginning to get too big to be held like that. But if there was one thing I knew about Jessica, it was that she would coddle her son for as long as she could.

She was a damn good mom.

The doors opened a moment later, and Johnston strode through, Aaliyah’s hand clasped in his. She was dressed in a pair of dark jeans and a plain black shirt with a leather jacket, a pair of leather combat boots on her feet. Her red hair was a mess around her shoulders, though it honestly looked like it had been styled that way. She pushed her shades up, smiling at Jessica and quickly making her way over to the other queen.

“Chapel,” Johnston grunted, not even bothering with so much as a hello, though none of us had expected it. I arched a brow at my best friend, but Scorpion shrugged at me before we followed him inside the room. It was standing room only by the time both charters were piled into the space. I gave my seat up to Johnston, moving to stand against the wall next to Blayke, Johnston’s VP.

“I’m understanding you want to go after the VP of Ghosts of Chaos,” Johnston began, leaning back in his chair to look at me. He steepled his fingers together in front of him. I nodded once in response. He reached up and scratched at the stubble

along his jaw, a scowl twisting his features for a moment before they relaxed again. “And you want Blayke and Dom to put their lives on the line so you can fulfill your need for revenge?”

I shrugged. “That about sums it up,” I told him. No point in lying about that. That son of a bitch needed to fucking pay. But it wasn’t just me who wanted him gone. Tango had a need to see that entire club wiped out.

“Where’s your proof that this asshole raped your girl and beat the fuck out of her?” Johnston demanded to know. I barely resisted flinching at how callously he spoke about what happened to Sophia, and I literally had to bite my tongue to keep from challenging him. “Not a goddamn thing is happening until I hear this shit for myself.”

Tango clenched his jaw when I looked at him. Snarling, he shoved back from the table and looked at Johnston. “The boy is fragile. I don’t give two fucks how powerful you are or who you are, Johnston, you will treat him with care and be gentle with him, do I make myself clear?”

Everyone held their breaths. Tango was challenging the mother charter president—the fucking king. One of the most feared men in the United States.

Jesus Christ, this could turn ugly quick.

Johnston quickly stood up. Scorpion lurched forward at the same time I did, putting an arm across Johnston’s chest. I pressed my palm to Tango’s sternum, forcing him back a step. Johnston’s nostrils flared, rage twisting his features. “Watch who the fuck you’re talking to, Tango, or I will burn that tattoo off your back and knock you back down to prospect level, do you understand me?”

Tango snarled at the mother charter president, still not backing down. “I mean it, Johnston. He’s been through a lot of shit, more than any of us standing in this room put together.”

Johnston clenched his fists, somehow keeping his cool, which was honestly a damn miracle. “Bring me the fucking kid,” Johnston snapped.

Tango leaned forward, knocking my hand off my chest. “Not until you give me your word, Johnston.”

Johnston stared at him for a moment. Everyone was silent, waiting to see what the fuck was going to happen. *No one* said shit like this to Johnston. He was a dangerous man, and no one, not even Alejandro Garcia, one of the most feared men in the Western hemisphere, dared to cross him. But Tango was.

All for the boy he’d rescued.

The mother charter president nodded once. “You’ve got my word,” Johnston finally told him.

Tango nodded once in return and left the room. Johnston sat back in his seat like nothing had happened, and I took my leaning position back against the wall next to Blayke. Amusement lingered in his eyes, and I snorted. “Fucker,” I muttered.

He chuckled. “Not often a man gets bent out of shape like that over someone.”

I elbowed him in the ribs, biting back my own laughter now that the situation was resolved and tensions weren’t riding high. I for sure thought Johnston was contemplating putting a bullet between Tango’s eyes at one point, but I also had a feeling Johnston understood where Tango was coming from. Johnston had tamed a little since he’d settled down with Aaliyah, but he was still a ruthless, cold-blooded asshole at his core. And it didn’t take much to bring that man forward.

A few minutes later, the door opened, and Tango carried the boy in. Fucking carried him. Gabriel was clinging to him, his arms and legs wrapped around Tango, and his body was shaking so badly, his teeth were chattering as his eyes landed on all of us.

“*Shh*, baby boy,” Tango soothed, settling into his chair at the table and leaving the boy wrapped around him. His fingers slid into Gabriel’s hair as he gently began to rock him. “It’s okay. No one here will hurt you. I promise. I’ll rip their fucking throats out if they try.”

Johnston, miraculously, stayed silent, his eyes glued to the small figure Tango was holding like he was the most precious, rare gem in the entire world. The last of its kind.

“Fuck,” Johnston whispered, staring in horror at Gabriel. He stood up and rounded the table. “Goddamn, kiddo, they did a number on you, didn’t they?”

Gabriel looked up, his eyes widening when they landed on Johnston. “J-Johnston?” he stuttered.

Johnston smiled, which was a goddamn rare sight. I roughly cleared my throat so I wouldn’t choke on my own saliva. “Yeah, kiddo. It’s me. How are you holding up?”

The boy shrugged. Johnston reached out and ran his hand over Gabriel’s dark locks. Tango clenched his jaw but stayed silent. I figured it had to do with Johnston helping put the kid at ease. “Can you tell me how you ended up here? Your old man never let you out of that damn clubhouse.”

“Got older,” Gabriel muttered. “And Mark and Tango caught me and Rick trying to get into one of the businesses they run security for.” He swallowed thickly, calming down now. Tango ran his hands over the boy’s back and hair, soothing him as he talked to Johnston. Hell, all of us were still shocked that Johnston knew how to be tender and comforting. I wasn’t even sure if he was like this with Aaliyah. Gabriel really was something fucking special. Two of the grumpiest mother fuckers I knew were sweet with this boy. “I spilled everything to Tango when he was asking me questions.” He sniffled, tears blurring his eyes. “I didn’t want to die slow.”

Tango pressed his lips to the boy’s temple. Johnston followed the movement, but no surprise showed in his eyes. “Can you tell me what you told them?” Johnston asked him.

Gabriel nodded and began to quietly relay what he’d informed Tango of. Johnston listened patiently, allowing him the pauses he needed when he began to get emotional and upset, which was when Tango upped his comfort, gently rocking the boy, whispering soothingly to him, his hands running all over his small form.

“Alright, Gabriel,” Johnston said quietly. “That’s all I need to know. You can go back to your room now. Is there anything you need or want?”

“No,” Tango answered for him, shooting Johnston a dark look as Gabriel burrowed his face in the curve of Tango’s neck. “I’m more than capable of taking care of him.” He stood from his chair and carried Gabriel out of the room without another word.

“He’s soft over him,” Johnston said, striding back to his chair. Once he took a seat, he looked at Scorpion. “He gets protected like he’s an old lady, clear?” Normally, I’d have been surprised, but after witnessing how he was with Gabriel, I kind of saw it coming.

Scorpion nodded. “Crystal.” There was no need to tell Johnston we already were. He wanted confirmation that we would continue, no matter what happened between him and Tango.

The room was silent until Tango came back in and took his seat back at the table. “First things first,” Johnston said, “Gabriel gets protection. Understand? His father is a nasty fucker.” We all sounded our agreements. He pointed at me. “Tomorrow morning, you begin working on getting your hands on the VP, clear? You have twenty-four hours to get it done—that’s getting your hands on him, torturing him, and getting rid of the body and the evidence. Understood?”

“Yes, Prez,” I immediately answered. That was more than enough time.

He nodded once. “Good. Meeting adjourned until tomorrow morning.”

With that, he strode out of the room and headed outside, pulling a blunt from his pocket. Aaliyah quickly followed him, her worried eyes on his back. I sighed. “What do you think Johnston knows?” I asked Scorpion once the room was cleared.

Scorpion shrugged, standing beside me, his hands shoved into his pockets. “Johnston is full of secrets. But if he wants

Gabriel protected, then he knows something we don't." He looked at me. "When Johnston cares about something, he'll tear the world apart. This war is about to be bloody as fuck."

I nodded. I knew that, too. I just hoped we didn't end up with casualties. But there was no backing out now. We were eyeballs deep in this mess, and I could already taste the blood of war on my tongue.

*Chase*

**B**layke grunted and adjusted his elbows, digging them into the dirt. I quietly snickered when he grumbled under his breath about this being absolute bullshit. “Getting too old?” I whispered.

He rolled his eyes at me, but his lips twitched with a smirk. “Fuck you, Chase.”

I quietly laughed and lifted my binoculars back to my eyes, looking around the exterior of the Ghosts of Chaos’s clubhouse for the VP. Gidget was creeping around the exterior of the building, his stealth remarkable. If I didn’t know he was there, I’d never notice him. He slunk through the shadows like he was part of them.

It was kind of creepy, but hell, at least he was on my side. I’d hate to be faced with a man I couldn’t detect. And none of these assholes were detecting him. They were just partying and drinking like nothing was amiss.

Dom was watching Gidget’s back from his high-up position on a tree branch, and I could hear him whispering in our earpiece, though Gidget never responded. It was too risky to. But at least he was getting the intel he needed to remain safe, even if sometimes I thought Gidget was invincible.

“Movement in an upstairs window,” Dom said quietly. I lifted my binoculars, looking up at one of the windows. Sure enough, a woman was looking out the curtains, her eyes



wistfully staring up at the sky like she just wanted to escape. It made me sick to my stomach.

“Christ,” I whispered. Blayke grunted in agreement. It was clear she was a captive. But I couldn’t do a rescue mission tonight. That kind of thing had to be cleared by Johnston, and a lot of recon and organizing had to go into something like that. But I’d make sure it was brought to the table at some point.

So far, we’d been out here for two hours, and we had to wait for darkness to descend before we could even get onto the grounds with Gidget. One, we didn’t have the stealth Gidget did, and two, too many of us on the lot at one time would just spark mayhem and get us caught.

“Fuck. Gidget, he’s outside lighting up now.”

My muscles tensed, ready to spring into action. It was through sheer training that I kept my ass parked exactly where I was at. Too much commotion could fuck everything up, and all of us could end up tortured and killed instead of the fucking vice president.

I wasn’t afraid of dying by any means. I knew I was headed to Hell. But I would *not* leave my woman unprotected in the midst of this chaos.

“Hello, fucker,” I heard Gidget murmur before he grunted. Looked like he took the opportunity while he had it—even in broad fucking daylight. “Get to the van,” Gidget quietly ordered. “I’ll meet you there.”

Blayke and I crawled backward and then stood to our feet, heading through the trees lining the property to get to the van parked down the road. I threw open the backdoors as Dom got into the passenger seat. Gidget appeared out of the tree line, the VP thrown over his shoulders. The only sign of strain from carrying the heavy man was Gidget’s clenched jaw.

He stepped into the back and then dropped the fucker with a heavy thud, making the van bounce and creak. I shut the doors and then climbed into the back seat, lighting up a

cigarette. Dom immediately headed toward the cellar we used out in the middle of the woods about thirty minutes away.

“Got another one of those?” Gidget asked, nodding at the cigarette in my hand.

Silently, I grabbed a cigarette out of my pack and held it out to him, passing him my lighter after. He handed me the lighter back a moment later, and I rested my head back against the headrest, closing my eyes for a moment, finally relaxing the tiniest bit for the first time in *days*.

We had the other asshole who had touched my woman. And tonight, he would pay for ever daring to target her.



“How hard did you hit him?” Blayke asked, nudging the VP’s leg. I snorted when nothing happened, my fourth cigarette of the night dangling from between my lips. I was getting fucking impatient, and it was showing in the chain-smoking I was doing.

Tango was leaning against the wall. He’d been waiting once I called him with the news we had the VP of the Ghosts of Chaos. From what I understood, he just wanted to witness this fucker die. And I was more than happy to be of service.

“Hard enough that he wouldn’t wake up while we were on the way here,” Gidget retorted.

“Here,” Dom said, coming over with a bucket of cold water. I stepped back right before he threw it at the fucker’s face. Tango snickered.

The VP immediately began to splutter, his eyes popping open like he was never out to begin with. A smirk curved my lips, blood lust slinking through my veins, consuming me.

I was beyond ready to make him bleed.

“How long did you think you could fake it?” I asked him, cocking my head to the side the slightest bit. “I give you an A for your acting. It was damn good. Had me fooled for sure.”

“Fuck you,” he spat. “My club will come for yours and rip you to fucking shreds for this,” he snarled.

I barked out a laugh. “You really think the Russians will allow your shitty little club to step out of line to get vengeance for you?” His face paled. I crouched in front of him. “That’s right—I know. We know everything. That cute little boy you all kept locked up in a dog cage? He was all too happy to tell Tango everything he wanted to know.”

“That cunt—” Tango snarled and stepped forward, but I already had it handled.

I pressed the tip of my knife to the VP’s throat, making a *tsking* sound. Gabriel was now under our protection, and my brother clearly felt something for him. Which meant talking sideways about Gabriel was off fucking limits.

The VP swallowed thickly, fear flashing in his eyes. “No reason to say nasty shit about him. He just wanted to live, and Tango was promising him freedom and protection.” Tango leaned back against the wall again. “A boy that starved for the basic human necessities would do anything to have it.” I pressed a little harder with the knife, watching a small trickle of blood as it slowly trailed down his neck. The VP squeaked in fear, his eyes almost bugging out of his head.

“I didn’t do—”

“Didn’t do anything?” I asked, anger ripping through me hot and heavy. “That’s where you’re wrong,” I snarled. “You raped my woman. Left her for dead on the floor of her shop behind the coffee counter.” I moved the knife, and he breathed a ragged sigh of relief right before I slammed the knife to the hilt in his thigh, hitting bone. He screamed, tears leaking down his cheeks. “Tonight, you’re going to find out what she felt,” I promised. “Did you fuck her while you beat her? Or did you beat the shit out of her first and then fucked her? Or was it the other way around?”

Tears streamed down his pale cheeks. His breaths were labored as he tried to cover up his pain. But those tears told me everything I needed to know. And it made me positively giddy to know he was already hurting.

I stood to my feet, watching as he choked on his sobs. He wasn't bleeding; the knife was blocking the blood flow... For now.

“Strip him,” I commanded.

Dom and Gidget moved forward at the same time, ripping his jeans away and then taking off his cut and his shirt. Eventually, he was laying bound on the floor, his clothes in a pile next to him. His little cock was shriveled up from the pain pulsing through his thigh. Tango moved closer to get a better view of what I was about to do to him.

I stepped on his tiny, shriveled cock, and he yowled. “Such a little prick. Makes sense you feel the need to rape women,” I taunted. “Probably can't get one to fuck you willingly with this tiny little dick.”

He sobbed. I then slammed my other boot down on his ribs, crushing them. But I didn't move my other boot, so I only crushed his dick more when I put pressure on it. A blood-curdling scream ripped from his throat, and I laughed. After that, blow after blow landed wherever I fucking wanted on him. Blayke, Dom, Tango, and Gidget stood back, watching me get some of my need for vengeance out of my system.

“Give me the bat,” I ordered. Tango grabbed it from its leaning position against the wall and passed it to me.

“No,” the VP sobbed, shaking his head, blood covering his face. “Please, God, no,” he cried. Looked like he already knew exactly where this was going.

“God has nothing to do with this,” I sneered. “In our world, God doesn't exist. Just the fucking Devil and all his demons.” I yanked the knife from his thigh and rolled him to his back. Blood poured over the plastic covering the floor. Gidget shoved the fucker's hairy ass cheeks apart, and I shoved the bat up his ass. He screamed, trying to wiggle away, but he wasn't escaping his fate.

“Did my woman scream like this when you shoved your puny little cock inside of her?” I sneered. He was crying too hard to respond. “Did she beg for you to stop?”

I shoved the bat in a little further before releasing it, stepping back. Gidget crossed his arms over his chest, watching the man sob and scream and cry from the pain. I grabbed my bloody knife from the floor and leaned over his back, cutting our symbol into his back while he was still conscious. He was vomiting, choking on it as he cried.

“You’re going to be a message to your crew and those fucking Russians not to fuck with us,” I hissed in his ear. I gripped his hair and yanked his head back so he was forced to look at me. “I’ll see you in Hell,” I promised.

Then, I slid my blade along his neck, watching as his blood sprayed and he suffocated with a pleased smile on my face.



## *Chase*

I was exhausted. After dumping that fucker's dead body back in front of his clubhouse to serve as a message to the Ghosts of Chaos that we were coming and then riding back home, I wanted to do nothing more than crawl into bed. It was going on four in the morning, and I was running on pure fumes.

But there was no way in fucking hell I could get into bed with all of this blood, sweat, and dirt on me. Fucking the VP up had given me the outlet I needed, and I would be able to assure Sophia that the assholes who raped her were never coming around again. But it was tiring as fuck once all my adrenaline wore off.

I quietly slipped into the apartment, my eyes instantly falling on Sophia's body snuggled beneath the covers of our bed. A small smile tilted my lips. It was crazy that I could finally call that *our* bed, but we'd come to a silent agreement that she was staying here with me, even when her bookstore opened back up.

Sophia was mine as much as I was hers. Sure, we had the power to destroy each other, but I knew our love was also something undeniable. There was no fighting this shit between us, even if we'd wanted to. She'd tried.

And failed.

We were inevitable.

And now that I had her as mine, I was never letting her go. No matter the demons between us. No matter the darkness that now haunted us.

I toed off my boots by the door before padding across the room in my socks, quietly shutting myself into the bathroom so I wouldn't disturb Sophia. After stripping off my clothes, I left them in a pile on the floor and stepped into the shower, turning it on. I hissed when the freezing cold water hit my skin, instinctively flinching back from it before forcing myself under the spray. The quicker I got bathed, the faster I could get my ass into bed and curl up behind my woman.

The water quickly began to heat up, and I breathed a sigh of relief. The water rushed down my skin, washing away the blood and turning the shower floor a light red.

“Are you hurt?” Sophia whispered.

I tilted my head back, letting the water run through my hair, grunting in surprise at the sound of her voice. This was the second time she'd managed to sneak up on me. Granted, both times, I'd been exhausted and worn out, so my senses weren't as heightened as they normally were, but still.

“I'm beginning to see a pattern,” I lightly teased, shutting my eyes and tilting my head further back.

The shower door opened, and I quickly opened my eyes, watching as she stepped into the shower with me, already naked. I groaned at the sight of her beautiful, curvy body before tugging her closer to me. She curved into me, tilting her head back so I could claim her lips in a soft, slow kiss.

Christ, I couldn't get enough of her.

“Are you hurt?” she asked, pulling back from me to run her eyes over my body, checking for wounds.

I ran my fingertips down her spine. “No, cupcake. Not hurt. Same can't be said for the other fucker.”

She hummed and trailed her fingers lightly over my back, making me shiver despite the hot water pounding on my skin. Goosebumps pebbled on my flesh in the wake of her light

touch. She had me by the balls. No other way to put it. I was all hers.

“Can I ask whose blood?” she asked, glancing up at me from beneath her lashes for a moment before focusing them back on my chest and flat stomach. “I understand if you can’t answer,” she added.

I nipped lightly at her jaw before soothing the bite with my tongue. She sighed, her lashes fluttering against her cheeks. I leaned back and cupped her cheek, my other hand grasping her waist. Her pretty eyes met mine.

“Your other rapist,” I told her calmly. She sucked in a sharp breath and leaned back from me, her wide-eyed gaze locked on mine. I tightened my hold on her. Sliding my fingers into her hair, I gripped a handful and yanked her head back, grounding her with me to the here and now. “I stabbed him in his thigh, beat the ever living shit out of him, then shoved a baseball bat up his ass so he knew what it felt like to be raped.” Her breath caught in her throat, her face paling, but she didn’t look afraid of me. More a little grossed out, which was kind of amusing. But I *needed* her to know he didn’t get off easy. I made it painful as fuck. “Then, I cut the club emblem into his back, slit his throat, and sent him back to his bullshit club as a message.”

Her response wasn’t one I’d been expecting. Not with how grossed out she’d looked. Her lips met mine, sexual aggression pouring out of her. I growled, meeting her with the same pent-up feelings. Shoving her back against the shower wall, I lifted her and easily sank inside of her, taking her raw. She choked on my name, her hands clawing at my back.

I didn’t have the patience for foreplay, but she was already drenched. Fucking *soaked*.

“Does knowing I killed him turn you on?” I rasped, sucking at the skin of her neck. She nodded, moaning as I bounced her on my cock. Her nails dug into my shoulders. “Good. I’ll slaughter anyone who ever comes for you again,” I promised.



“I love you,” she rasped, her tits bouncing as I pummeled her sweet core. “I love you so fucking much, Chase.”

I sucked at her collarbone and then moved back to her neck. Biting. Licking. Tasting. Devouring. “You’re my entire fucking world,” I growled. “You’re *mine*, and any son of a bitch who thinks they can touch you will die slowly and painfully,” I promised. “You belong to *me*. And *no one* will take you from me.”

Her orgasm punched through her, stealing the breath from her lungs. I circled her throat with my hand, pinning her head back against the wall as I took her harder. Like a savage. A man starved for her.

“Fuck,” I snarled, my balls drawing up tight. “I’m about to come, baby.”

“Give it to me,” she begged, her hands framing my face. She drew my mouth to hers, kissing me hungrily. “Mark me as yours, Chase,” she pleaded.

“Fuck!” I roared as I spilled inside of her, coating her insides with my cum, officially marking her as mine both inside and out. I dropped my hand from her throat and buried my face in the curve of her neck, panting against her slick skin as I wrapped my arms around her, holding her tightly.

She ran her fingers through my hair, her heart beating rapidly against my chest. “Let’s get washed up,” I whispered, pressing kisses to her abused throat.

She tilted my head back and softly pressed her lips to mine. I sank into her embrace easily, taking the comfort she was offering. She’d been faced with the monster I was and still loved me as much as she did before I told her what I did to the man that hurt her.

“I don’t deserve you,” I rasped against her kiss-swollen lips.

She hummed in disagreement. “Let me be the judge of that.”



“This better be good,” I growled as I leaned against the wall, cradling the cup of coffee Sophia had ready for me this morning. Scorpion had come banging on my fucking apartment door this morning, demanding I get my ass out of bed and down to church. My woman had already been up, but I’d been dead to the world.

“Watch the tone,” Johnston warned.

I looked at my watch, trying to bite back my irritation. “No offense, Prez, but it’s only a little after six. I’ve had *maybe* an hour’s worth of sleep,” I muttered before lifting the coffee mug to my lips and taking a sip of the sweet liquid. I sighed, my eyes rolling back in my head for a moment.

Fuck, Sophia could make a damn good cup of coffee.

“Do not have an orgasm beside me,” Blayke hissed, looking just as moody as I did.

I just grunted. It was too early for orgasms, even for me. My energy levels were dangerously low.

“I did some digging while the four of you were out yesterday,” Scorpion began, looking at me, Blayke, Gidget, and Dom. “The Russians aren’t fucking happy. Not only did we take out one of the Ghosts of Chaos’s men, but we also made Gabriel disappear. They don’t like not knowing if he’s dead or alive since he knows too much. I’m sure they’ll be rampaging when they find their VP.”

Tango stayed silent, drinking in everything Scorpion was saying. No doubt, he was already working out safety plans in his head for Gabriel. “Right now, we all band together to keep Gabriel safe. He’s barely an adult, and he’s already seen more than most of us sitting in this room have. We also lay low. Word on the street, Russians are moving in, and there’ve already been altercations between them and the Mexican Cartel. Shit’s about to get ugly in Texas, and Joey’s crew is getting pulled in.” Joey was the president of the Sons of Hell

MC. He and the leader of the Mexican cartel, Alejandro Garcia, shared a woman. No one knew the exact dynamics, especially since Alejandro was a true monster. “Keep your ears to the ground. Do not ride alone.”

He looked at me. “Sophia will need to reopen soon, I imagine.” I nodded once, though I didn’t fucking like the idea. “You and one other member will always be at the bookstore with her, and you will shadow her. No one touches her again, clear? I’m working with Logan to come up with tighter security in the meantime.”

Logan was a member of the Savage Crows MC Mother Charter. He owned his own security firm, and his clientele had much deeper pockets than those we worked with. His clients were very high profile and demanded everything top of the line. Which meant Logan’s equipment was even better than ours.

“Alejandro?” I asked. “Sons of Hell? Fathers of Mayhem?”

“All on board,” Johnston answered. “Especially after the Russians came for Alejandro. Alejandro has his men crawling the streets. The Russians will get the war they want, but it’ll come at a high price—possibly on both sides.”

I nodded once in understanding, though the thought of war made me sick to my stomach. It would be a fucking miracle if all of us made it out of this alive.

Johnston leaned forward. “Gun practice and self-defense training happen every fucking day, even if you’re so sick, you can barely drag your ass out of bed. We only have each other to rely on when shit gets ugly. Remember that. Don’t let your brothers down, got me?”

We all showed our acknowledgment. Scorpion slammed his gavel on the table, concluding church. I finished the rest of my coffee and left the room, taking my cup to the kitchen. When I walked in, Sophia was helping Jessica make breakfast. I tugged her to me and lowered my head, kissing her, tonguing her mouth for a moment before I released her, leaving her panting.

“I’m going back to bed,” I grunted.

She pressed a kiss to my cheek, an adorable smile on her lips. “Sleep well.”

Unable to resist, I kissed her again before I slipped out of the room and headed back up the stairs. I passed out as soon as I sprawled across the bed, not even bothering to kick my boots back off, take my cut off, or pull the blanket over me.



## *Chase*

I watched from my perch against the back wall of the bookstore as Sophia organized books on the shelf in front of her, looking completely in her element. Seeing her surrounded by the things she loved most in this world just made my heart expand in my chest. After too long of her looking miserable, she was finally finding peace.

I'd been irritating her by trying to help and breathe down her neck, so she was keeping me occupied with coffee. And I sure as hell couldn't complain about that, especially when she was making them especially for me.

Gidget was with us today—the guys were doing a cycle, of sorts—and he was camped out in the back room, watching cameras and occasionally taking a break to walk the bookstore and outside, keeping an eye on the general area. We wouldn't take the chance that the Ghosts of Chaos would try attacking her again. They said lightning didn't strike in the same place twice, but I'd seen too much shit happen when it wasn't supposed to happen again for me to have much belief in that bullshit saying.

Logan had come in and installed his most expensive security system, and I was paying for it so Sophia wouldn't have to. It had zero blind spots—even kept a look on the roof. The alarms were silent inside the store, and if someone didn't know what they were looking for, they'd think this place had zero security.

But it linked directly to an office Logan had recently opened nearby, and his team would be notified immediately and here within a couple of minutes, which was a lot faster than any of us could be here.

Even with the new security system though, the guys and I agreed we still weren't comfortable with leaving a woman attached to the club unguarded. And Sophia, the fucking champion that she was, was rolling with the flow. I was pretty sure she was nervous to be alone outside of the safety net of the clubhouse, which was understandable. No one would ever make her feel bad for that. Especially not after what she'd endured.

She'd gone through something horrific. No one went through something like that and had zero fears afterward.

Sophia winced and rolled her neck around. Pushing off the wall, I strode toward her. "Break time, cupcake," I ordered, plucking the book from her hand before she could stop me. I set it on the cart she was working from.

She sighed and planted her hands on her curvy hips. "Chase, I need to get these put up."

I pressed my hand to her lower back, leading her toward her office. "And you will. Just as soon as you sit down, take some Tylenol, and rest for a damn minute," I assured her. I pushed open her office door, leading her inside before shutting it behind us. Her other employee, Heather, would be able to handle the store for a little while. She was more than capable of doing so. "Sit," I commanded once the door was shut.

Sophia sighed and sank into her desk chair, reaching for her bottle of water and the bottle of Tylenol. I watched as she swallowed a couple of pills before she leaned back in her chair, shutting her eyes. I ran my hand over her hair, frowning at her. "You're pushing yourself too hard, cupcake." I knew she felt she needed to after being closed for so long, but the world wouldn't end if she slowed down a bit and paced herself better.

She opened her eyes, looking up at me with a frown pulling at her sweet mouth. "I don't know how not to," she

confessed.

“Well, you’re going to learn.” I crouched at her feet and slipped her sneakers off before taking her foot in my hand, rubbing at the sole of her foot. She sighed in contentment, her head slipping back to rest against her chair. A moan slid from her throat, and my dick reacted strongly, hardening so fast, it made me just a tiny bit dizzy.

“That feels good,” she mumbled.

“Good enough to agree to be my old lady?” I teased, pressing in just the right spot. She softly moaned again, her body slouching further into the chair.

She hummed. “I’ve been picturing myself as your old lady for two months now, Chase.” She opened her eyes. “I’ll never get married. We already had that talk. But I never took being your old lady off the table.”

I understood her aversion to marriage after what happened to her mother. After what she’d witnessed and gone through. I’d never pushed her on it, and I never would. But being a man’s old lady could trap her even more than marriage could. I wasn’t sure if she understood that.

“You do know what being an old lady entails, don’t you?” I asked her in all seriousness. “You leave, and the club may take your life. I won’t be able to stop them. You’re already in too deep. Know too much. Johnston won’t stand for that shit.”

She leaned forward and gripped my chin, tilting my head up, a soft smile on her lips. “I am happier than I’ve ever been in my entire life, Chase. I am safe. Protected. We may clash heads like nobody’s business,” a grin quirked at my lips, “but we’re inevitable. Always have been.”

I lowered my head and pressed a kiss to her palm. “I’m going to need you to write ‘we’re inevitable’ so I can get it tattooed,” I murmured, looking up at her from beneath my lashes.

She grinned. “Deal. And I want your name on the inside of my wrist so everyone sees the claim you have on me.”

I growled at the image of basically having her branded and stood up before lifting her from her chair and depositing her on her desk. She hummed, her hands sliding under my t-shirt. “You know all the right fucking things to say, cupcake,” I rasped before I slanted my lips across hers, plundering into her mouth, unable to keep my hands off of her. “Say it. Say you’re mine.”

“I’m yours,” she breathed, her hands tugging at my belt. I groaned low in my throat at her promise. “Always yours. We’re inevitable, remember?”

I snarled and ripped her leggings down her legs before seating myself inside of her, my hand wrapping around her throat. She fell back on the desk, tugging me with her, our teeth clashing as our lips met.

“I’m going to kill Gidget if he’s watching,” she moaned, her hands clawing at my cut for something to hold on to as I pounded into her sweet cunt.

I grunted, not giving a single fuck. “Let him watch, cupcake. I don’t give a fuck who sees because you only belong to *me*.”

She whimpered, her legs opening wider, allowing me to sink deeper inside of her. I hissed a breath through my teeth and nipped at her chin before sucking at her jaw, leaving my marks on her skin for the entire world to see.

“You better not be marking me where customers can see, Chase,” she panted.

I just chuckled darkly, ignoring her. I wanted her angry because the sex we had when she was...

*Fuck.*

I hooked my arm around the back of her knee, angling her leg back, and she cried out, falling apart around me, her pussy milking my cock. I spilled inside of her, snarling her name against her chest as I coated her insides with my cum.

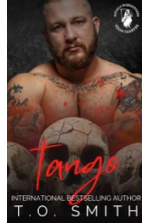
*Mine.*

**Want more of Chase and Sophia?**



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# SATAN'S WORSHIPPERS MC BOOK THREE



**Meet Tango: a patched member of Satan's Worshippers  
MC's Texas Charter.**

<https://mybook.to/tango-tosmith>

## TANGO

I'm tainted by darkness. There's no color in my life—it's all just shades of black and gray.

But the moment I lay my eyes on Gabriel, I know he's different.

He's scared of his own shadow. He needs someone to take care of him. And despite the fact that I was the one kneeling in front of him, threatening to end his life, he clung to me and the tiny shred of hope I somehow gave him.

And now that the Ghosts of Chaos are after him, wanting to bring him back home and end his life for being a traitor, I'll do anything to protect him.

This boy is mine. I'm keeping him.

And anyone who dares to come for him better be prepared to die.

~\*~\*~

## GABRIEL

There's no hope for a damaged boy like me. I've survived things that probably should have killed me.

I don't know what real kindness looks like. So, when Tango is kneeling in front of me, threatening to end my life quickly if I give him what he wants, I take the option with both hands.

Because to me? That's what I think is kindness.

Instead, he takes me home with him. He's promising to keep me safe and protected.

I don't really think he'll be able to do it, but I'll take the little bit of light I have while it's there.

But Tango's a monster. He's cruel and heartless. Darkness colors his soul. It's snuffed out every bit of his light.

Yet, he looks at me like I'm the most precious thing in the world.

And when my family comes after me, I'll see firsthand what that darkness inside Tango is capable of.

*\*\*Trigger warnings: child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, rape*

**This is book three of a fourteen-book series. It is highly recommended to read Scorpion (Savage Crows MC Book 11) and books 1 and 2 of this series before reading this book.**

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

T.O. Smith believes in one thing - a happily ever after.

Her books are fast-paced and dive straight into the romance and the action. She doesn't do extensively drawn-out plots. Normally, within the first chapter, she's got you - hook, line, and sinker.

As a writer of various different genres of romance, a reader is almost guaranteed to find some kind of romance novel they'll enjoy on her page.

T.O. Smith can be found on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and now even TikTok! She loves interacting with all of her readers, so follow her!

