

T.L. DRAKE



ROAD DEMONS
BOOK 6

CYPHER

LOSING WHAT YOU WANT CAN LEAD TO WHAT YOU NEED.
WHAT YOU NEED CAN TURN INTO WHAT YOU WANT MOST.

ROAD Demons MC

CYPHER

BOOK 6

T.L. DRAKE

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****Warning: This book contains sexually explicit scenes, graphic violence, death and adult language that may be offensive to**

some readers. It is intended for adults 18
and over.



Fight the demon in your head, to find the
angel in your heart. Don't try to outrun
them, face them head on and give them hell!

– Unknown

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Chapter 1

CYPHER

I squint at the harsh light, trying to seep through my eyelids. My fucking head is pounding, my mouth tastes like rubbing alcohol, and it's so dry I have to peel my tongue from the roof of it. I groan as I crack an eye open, then immediately slam it shut. It's way too fucking bright in here. I attempt to roll over and pull the blanket up over my face so I can finish sleeping off this hangover, but my arm is caught underneath something warm and soft. I glance down, finding a sea of strawberry blonde hair spilled out over the top of me. One tan arm is flung over my chest, and a toned leg is hitched over my waist.

What the fuck? Who is this chick?

I lift my hand to scratch at my head, only to touch something hard and pointy. I grab hold of the stiff plastic and tug it off. A rubber band snaps as I pull it from my face. I frown as I take in the black cat mask. How the hell did I end up wearing this? My costume was pretty simple last night and required no mask. Searching the room, I spot a shiny black leather cat suit tossed across the back of my desk chair. I wrack my brain for any memory of a woman dressed up as a cat. There's nothing. All I can remember is Vera... and Ember.

A soft moan sounds from the woman plastered to my side as she shifts next to me. As hung over as I am, that little moan has my dick perking up. I have no idea who she is or what she even looks like, but apparently my dick doesn't care. It likes the sound this woman just made, and it wants to make her do it again. But she's all wrong. Her hair is too long, and not silvery blue. Her skin is tan, not creamy white. And when she slowly tilts her head back and looks up at me, her eyes are not green, but a warm golden brown. Still, they're pretty fucking spectacular. There are hints of gold flecks twinkling inside them. Yes, fucking twinkling. Her full lips are a peachy

brown color, plump and perfect for wrapping around a cock. Her cheeks are flushed, and if it wasn't for the fact that I'm so hung up on one of my best friend's Ol' Lady, I'd find this little treat to be pretty fucking tempting.

Her sleepy eyes blink several times, trying to bring me into focus. Again, my dick jumps. Apparently, it also likes the way she looks. Her skin is flawless—glowing even. Her eyelashes are thick and dark. Her nose is a perfect little button, but again, it's all wrong. How could someone so beautiful be all kinds of wrong?

I frown down at her. I need to know who she is and how someone like her ended up in my bed. “Who the fuck are you?”

Her eyes widen at the hard edge to my voice, and she sits up, revealing the best set of tits I'd ever seen. I almost groan in appreciation. They're fucking perfect. A full D cup, perky and one hundred percent real. I've seen enough to be able to tell without laying a single finger on them. Her nipples are a dusky brown, puckered into hard little points. I want to suck them into my mouth as I get lost between those full mounds. *Fuck! My dick would look fantastic fucking those puppies.* Annd now I'm sporting a full blown hard-on. Maybe I should enjoy this little treat before I kick her out of my bed. I mean, I'm assuming I already had the pleasure, but I'd like another go, this time while I'm sober enough to remember fucking the rare beauty.

“Oh my god,” she mumbles as she scrambles to her feet. She almost face plants when the sheet tangles around her legs. I sit up, taking in her hourglass figure, her plump firm ass, hips that are perfect for gripping onto while you grind her back and forth over your dick, and the flat stomach that leads down to a completely bare pussy. Long gone is the dry mouth from a few moments ago. Now I'm fucking salivating. *Jesus Christ, who is this woman?*

She grabs her tiny black cat suit, and I can't help but grin as she attempts to peel the tight leather back up her body.

I cock an eyebrow when she wiggles her ass in an attempt to get it over her full bottom. I appreciate the fact that she isn't wearing any underwear. But it doesn't feel right letting her run out like this. I don't typically let girls crash here, but the least I can do is offer her some coffee and make sure she has a ride home.

“Hey?” I say, trying to get her attention, but she ignores me.

She manages to pull the suit up over her tits and slip her arms into the sleeves. I have a sudden urge to grab her and pull her back into bed, rip the fake leather from her perfect body and bury myself between her thighs, but I don't. She's not the woman I want. She isn't Ember. Still, I'm disappointed that she's no longer in my bed, and a little annoyed that she won't even look at me.

She hunts around, finds her shoes, and slips them on.

“Hey,” I try again, but still get nothing. I grit my teeth, tired of being fucking ignored. “Will you wait a fucking minute?” I growl, tossing the sheet aside, cringing when it sticks to my dick. Glancing down, I notice several dried cum spots covering the black sheets. *What the fuck?* I rack my brain, trying to conjure up memories from last night. There's no way I fucked her without protection. I never go bareback, no matter how drunk I am. I glance around the bed, looking for wrappers, discarded condoms, something to settle the nerves that are starting to fester in my gut like sour milk.

“I have to go,” she says, hurrying towards the door.

My head jerks up, finding her stumbling on her heels. I jump out of bed, making it across the room just as she grabs the handle. I slam my fist against the door so she can't open it and press my chest against her back. My dick goes hard as a rock. The bastard's getting the wrong impression as I breathe in her coconut scent. Another thing that's different from Em. Her height is all wrong, too. She's at least five-seven, without the death traps she's wearing. Not the fun-sized five-one like Ember. Still, I like having my body against hers. Electric

energy crackles between us, something I can't say I ever felt, not even with... yup, you guessed it... Ember. I shake my head, trying to clear out the last of the fog from my hangover. I'm probably still a little drunk. I ignore my throbbing dick. There are more important things to worry about. Like why the fuck are cum stains all over my bed?

"Did we use condoms last night?" I snap, my voice coming out much harsher than I intended.

She cringes. Her shoulders rise to her ears as she sucks in a deep breath. "I... I don't remember."

Bullshit. She has to remember. I grab her shoulders, spinning her around until she's facing me. Her long hair falls over her eyes, and I grip her chin, tilting her head back until it rests against the door. She gasps, and I know I should back off and give her space, but my head is a scrambled mess right now, and I need fucking answers. "Are you on the pill?"

Her brown eyes flash as she plants her hands on my chest, shoving me away. "I'm not fucking stupid," she shouts.

"You went home and fucked a guy you don't know. That sounds pretty fucking stupid to me."

She clenches her teeth. "Really, asshole? I'm not the only one who fucked a complete stranger last night."

I smirk. "That's not a bad thing for me, sweetheart. I'm not the one everyone will be calling a slut." I regret the words the moment they fly past my lips.

Her mouth drops open, tears filling those warm brown eyes. "Fuck you," she hisses as she pushes me away, and turns to leave again, but I grip her arm, pulling her back into my chest.

"I'm sorry, I'm not trying to be an asshole here," I mumble. She tugs against my grip, but I don't let go. "Just answer the question, Princess."

"Yes, I'm on the goddamn pill. Now let go of me."

I should. I really fucking should. But my body isn't ready to let her go. My hand slips down her arm and around her waist as I lean in, burying my nose into her hair, inhaling her scent. "What if I don't want to?" She goes rigid in my arms, then relaxes as a soft moan slips past her lips. My cocky ass smiles. Like every other woman, she's putty in my hands. "How about you ride me, Princess? That way I'll have something to remember you by."

She goes stiff again. I know I said the wrong thing, but my brain still isn't working yet. I'm about to apologize when her hand darts up and slaps me across the face. My head jerks to the side and I stumble back a few steps. It feels like an explosion inside my brain from the hangover. "You're a piece of shit," she spits the words like venom before yanking the door open and rushing down the steps.

"Fuck," I mumble, trying to shake off the pounding in my head before taking off after her. For a woman wearing four-inch spiked heels, she's down the steps before I can take the first one. I run after her, hitting the bottom of the stairs just as the door to the Den slams behind her. A high pitch whistle makes me freeze. Clapping fills the room, and my head jerks around to find several people hanging out by the Xbox.

"Not bad, Cyph. Not bad."

I turn, finding Salem and Alora staring at me with huge smiles on their faces. More specifically, they're staring at my dick. *Oh fuck!* I glance down, just now remembering I'm not wearing any boxers.

"Oh my god," a familiar voice squeaks. I look up, finding those green eyes I've fantasized about more often than I'd like to admit, locked on the half chub I'm still sporting from having that strawberry blonde pressed against me upstairs.

"Jesus Christ," Declan growls as he grabs Ember and spins her away from me. "What the fuck are you doing?"

Riggs and Wren walk out of the kitchen, coming to a quick stop when they see me. “What the fuck?” Wren snaps.

Declan glares at me and I clench my hands into fists at my side. “You mind covering your dick, asshole?” he says through clenched teeth.

“Afraid she’ll like what I have to offer better, Brother?” I can’t help but take the jab.

Declan jerks away from Ember, storming in my direction with a look of murder on his face. *Bring it, motherfucker. I’ve been dying for this moment.*

Riggs steps in front of him, blocking his path. “No,” he snaps. He looks at me, his face pinched with disapproval. “You’re out of fucking line, and this shit...” He motions to my junk. “...is going too fucking far. You either need to get your head out of your ass, or we’ll fucking do it for you. Got it?”

“Whatever,” I mumble as I spin around and head back up to my room. This day is already shot to hell. Might as well go back to sleep and wake up when it’s an acceptable hour to start drinking again. I slam my door behind me and crawl back into bed, pulling the crusty sheet back over me. At this point, I really don’t give a shit.

Only I can’t sleep. Because all I can smell is coconut, and it has my stupid cock perking up once again.

And I don’t even like fucking coconuts.

Chapter 2

SICILY

“Oh my god, Sicily,” Penn squeals as she flops down on the seat next to me, her shoulder slamming into mine. The pitch of her voice is like an explosion in my head, and I cringe at the sharp jolt of pain. “How was it?”

I crack an eye open to watch Jodi and Eliza slide into the bench seat across from us. My three best friends all share the same expression—curious excitement. I glance around our favorite campus café, making sure no one can overhear us. The last thing I need is for rumors to start going around about me spending the night with a biker at his bar. Or the clubhouse, or whatever the hell they call it. My parents would flip their shit, and Christian would have a major meltdown. Though I couldn’t give a rat’s ass what he thinks. Still, I don’t need anyone knowing my business, and if he were to find out, he would run straight to his mommy and daddy, who would then run to mine.

“Shhh,” I hiss. “Keep your voice down, Penelope.”

Jodi leans in, the smile on her face wider than I’ve ever seen it. “Spill the beans, Sis. That guy was hot as hell. Please tell us he isn’t all show and no go.”

I wrap my hand around my coffee mug, letting the warmth seep into my fingers. The guy was hot—sinfully hot. I almost thought he was a dream when I first woke up. Someone who looks like that just couldn’t be real. Those eyes couldn’t be real. But everything from last night is a complete blank. “I honestly can’t remember.” I sigh.

Eliza scoffs. “Yeah right. You just don’t want to give us the dirty details.”

I shrug a single shoulder. “I would if I could. But I really can’t. There are a few foggy images, but that’s it.” I

glance around at their disappointed faces and smirk. “Which tells me it wasn’t anything worth remembering.”

Penelope slouches back into the booth. “Well, that sucks. With the body he had, I thought for sure you’d be walking a little funny today.”

I shift in my seat and wince. The truth is, I am walking funny. My thighs feel like I rode a mechanical bull all night and my poor va-jay-jay is swollen and raw. There’s no question that I slept with him. The proof is still throbbing between my legs. But sadly, there’s no memory of what happened. Which royally sucks because Penn is right. The guy was pure deliciousness. With those ice-blue eyes alone, he’s probably lured hundreds of women to his bed. I’ve never seen anything like them. Probably never will again.

Eliza sits up straight. I can practically see the moment this new thought pops into her head. “Okay, so last night is a blur, but what happened this morning when you woke up in his bed?” She smirks, like she already knows the answer. “Did he kick you out as soon as he realized you were still there?”

Memories of this morning come rushing back. His handsome face staring down at me, full of confusion and suspicion. The way he pinned me to his bedroom door, his body pressed against mine. The hum of electricity that worked its way through me as he touched me. Then he ruined it by opening his mouth.

“How about you ride me, Princess? That way I’ll have something to remember you by.”

What a dick.

“You’re holding out on us!” Jodi grins.

I blink, bringing myself back to the present.

“You are totally blushing.”

“I am not.” I scowl.

“Bullshit!” Penn snickers, bumping me with her shoulder. “You might not remember last night, but you clearly

remember this morning.” She scoots closer. “Did he wake you up with his head between your legs?”

My mouth drops open. “No!” I pull my mug closer. “It was awkward. He didn’t remember me at all.”

Jodi gasps. “Wait, he didn’t even remember you from the party?”

I shake my head. “Nope. And he was kind of an ass.”

Eliza smirks. “Of course he was. He’s a biker. What did you expect?”

“What happened?” Penn asks.

I can feel the weight of his body against mine as I think about what happened this morning. I can still smell him and hear the deep rumble of his voice. The memory has me squeezing my thighs together. “After admitting he had no clue who I was or what happened, he had the nerve to ask me for another round, so he had something to remember me by.”

“Eww, really?” Penn frowns.

“Did you?” Jodi asks, her voice squeaking in excitement.

“Of course not,” I snap. “I slapped his sorry ass and got the hell out of there.”

Eliza slumps back in her seat, frowning. “What a waste.”

I wave my hand, brushing the topic away. “It was a mistake either way you look at it. Thankfully, one I’ll never have to worry about bumping into again.”

“Bumping into what again?”

My head snaps up at the all too familiar voice, finding Christian and his two best friends approaching our table. Penn grins as Cameron slides in beside her and presses a quick kiss to her lips. They’ve been dating for six months. Jason jerks his chin at Jodi, and she scoots sideways to allow him some room. They’ve been flirting with each other for weeks, and I’m

pretty sure they'll make it official by the end of the year. Christian leans across the table and snatches up my mug, lifting it to his lips before taking a sip. I roll my eyes. I would have considered that cute when we were dating, but not now. Not since I walked in on him sucking face with Lucy Darrow at a party a month ago. Right there in the middle of the dance floor for all to see. He blamed it all on her, and a bottle of Vodka of course.

Truthfully, things with Christian were over long before I caught him kissing Loose Lips Lucy. That was just the icing on the lopsided cake. In reality, I was over Christian a few months after we started dating. But our parents are close friends, and they encouraged our relationship because it made sense for the two most prominent families in town to be linked together. It's all political bullshit, and I was tired of being their pawn.

"I tried calling you several times last night," Christian says.

I glance at Penn, who looks nervous on my behalf. As I said, I don't really care what Christian thinks of me, but if my parents find out, I'll never hear the end of it.

"We went to an off-campus party," Jodi says, and I'm tempted to kick her in the shin under the table. The smile drops from her face when she notices my scowl.

Christian's hazel eyes roam over my face like he's looking for the secret I'm keeping hidden. He's a good-looking guy, in the classic all-American boy kind of way. Blonde hair, green eyes, athletic body, and the perfect smile. But he also has the, I'm good looking, my family has money, and I know it, attitude that makes even the most attractive men ugly. *Conceitedness is such a turn off.*

"What party?" Jason asks.

Jodi fidgets nervously. "Oh, um. It was a Halloween party at Uproar."

“The biker bar?” Cameron frowns at Penn and her cheeks flush.

I shake my head and push on Penn’s shoulder, wanting to get up. “It’s a bar where lots of college kids go, and there was a Halloween party. So yeah, we went.” I slide out of the booth once Penn and Cameron have moved, needing to put an end to this conversation before it can get started. “I have to go. I’m meeting my mom at the salon.”

Christian grabs my arm as I try to pass, and I turn my head to meet his judgmental gaze. “You shouldn’t go to that bar without me, Sis.”

I grin, attempting to keep things civil, but I’m so tempted to yank my arm away. “We were fine. We stuck together and then crashed at Penn’s place after. It was pretty boring, actually.”

He lets go of my arm and places the coffee mug down on the table. “You still shouldn’t go there. That place is beneath you.”

I grit my teeth to keep from calling him a snob, but I really don’t have the energy to get into it with him this morning. I’m still nursing my hangover and I really do have to meet my mother at the salon. Tucking my purse under my arm, I glance over at my friends. “I gotta go, guys. Call me later?”

Penn nods and I turn to leave. I don’t make it two steps before Christian’s heavy arm lands over my shoulder. “I’ll walk you out.”

Great.

I wrap my scarf around my neck as we exit the café. I take in a deep breath of the crisp November air, hoping it will help to clear the last of the booze from my system. Fall has settled in over campus. All the trees have started to turn rusty oranges, reds, and yellows. It’s my favorite time of the year. Baggy sweaters, skinny jeans, and boots are a must. Nothing but cold mornings and comfortable days. I would gladly take

the cooler weather over hot and muggy any day. I hate the heat, bugs, and sweating.

“I miss you, Sis.” Christian’s voice pops my happy Autumn bubble. “I thought maybe we could grab some dinner at Dominic’s tonight?”

Dominic’s is my weakness. It’s the best Italian restaurant in the state, in my opinion. I’m a sucker for good pasta. I start walking towards my car, and of course, Christian falls into step beside me, his arm draped over me the entire time. “I’m having dinner with my parents tonight.”

He flashes me a sexy smile. “I’m sure if you tell them you’re going out with me, they’ll be fine with you skipping out on dinner with them.”

I let out a heavy sigh and shrug his arm off. “Christian, you really need to stop.”

The smile on his face disappears, replaced by a scowl and the grinding of his teeth. So much for keeping this civil. “You’re still on this kick?” he snaps. “Jesus Christ, Sis, nothing happened with Lucy. It was a stupid fucking kiss.”

“It wasn’t just the kiss.” I huff. “I just don’t think we’re a good match.”

He grips my biceps, and I gasp at the sudden movement. “Bullshit, Sicily. We are a perfect match. You deserve the best, and so do I. There’s no one better than the two of us. Our families are equals. I’m the most popular guy on campus, and you’re the prettiest girl. We make sense.”

“The fact that you think that’s the reasons we should be together is only part of the problem.” I jerk out of his hold and hurry over to my car with Christian hot on my heels.

“Of course, that’s not the only reason,” he says. “You know I love you, Sis.”

I’m tempted to roll my eyes again. He thinks by telling me he loves me that I’ll magically fall for his charm. The man only loves himself. I open the door to my BMW and slide into

the cream leather seat, tossing my purse onto the passenger side.

Christian grips the door, preventing me from shutting it as he leans forward. “It’s been a month, Sis. I’m a man. I need sex. I’m trying to be patient here.”

I glare up at him. If he expects me to believe he hasn’t slept with anyone in the past four weeks, he must think I’m an idiot. Christian would never go without. He’s too selfish, and I happen to know for a fact he spent last weekend in another girl’s apartment. My grip on the door handle tightens. “I couldn’t care less what or who you do. But it won’t be me.”

The muscle in his jaw pops as he clenches his teeth. He straightens, letting his hand fall from the door. “Still being a bitch, I see.” His eyes flash with the threat I’ve heard several times before. “You and I belong together, Sicily. I will have you again; I always get what I want.” He takes a step back, his smirk curling one side of his lips. “But don’t expect me to be a saint while you figure your shit out.”

A slow grin forms and I flutter my lashes dramatically as I blink up at him. “I don’t expect you to do anything I wouldn’t do.”

His eyes widen as I slam the door. I ignore his shouts as I start my car and quickly drive away. Once again, leaving the spoiled asshole in my rearview mirror.

“What do you mean, she no longer works here?” my mother shouts at the poor girl standing behind the desk. She looks terrified, and I can’t say that I blame her. When my mother isn’t happy, no one is happy.

“Mrs. VanLear,” a middle-aged woman with dark hair says as she approaches us. “My apologies. I meant to call you yesterday, but things have been so crazy here lately.” She stops in front of us and offers her hand to my mother, who glares down at it. “I’m Katherine Barlowe, the owner. I personally will be taking care of you and your daughter today.”

“Ember is my stylist, Ms. Barlowe.” My mother frowns at the woman. “If she is no longer your employee, then I am no longer your client.”

Katherine lowers her hand, her smile faltering. I’m sure she’s worried about losing my mother as a client, as she should be. She’s a very influential person. “I’m sorry, Mrs. VanLear. Ember resigned her position here a few days ago.”

“Why?” I ask, my curiosity piqued.

Katherine folds her hands in front of her. “I’m sure you’re aware there was a shooting here a little over a week ago.” Katherine’s eyes glaze over. “Sadly, one of our stylists was a victim.”

“Oh my god!” I gasp, my hand covering my mouth. My mother simply stares at the woman. I glance around, looking for signs of such a tragedy, but the place looks perfect. Nothing to indicate such a tragedy.

“Ember resigned a few days after,” Katherine continues. “To be honest, Mrs. VanLear, it was for the best.”

My mother hikes her purse up onto her shoulder. “And why is that?”

Katherine shifts her weight from one foot to the other. “I don’t like to talk about people’s personal lives, but it’s been all over the news. The police suspect the shooting was gang related. They think a motorcycle gang was involved, but the gang they suspected seems to have suddenly left town.”

My mother’s brows draw together. “What does this have to do with my stylist?”

Katherine leans forward as she lowers her voice. “Ember is involved with a motorcycle gang. Although it’s not the same one the police seem to be looking for, there’s still some interest in the one she’s involved with. They deny any involvement, obviously. They are fixtures of the community, after all. They own several businesses in town, the tattoo parlor, and that bar called Uproar.”

My breath catches in my throat. “Ember is dating one of the bikers.” The young girl, who was looking so terrified behind the desk when my mother was glaring daggers at her, suddenly finds the nerve to speak up.

“There is no proof the motorcycle gang Ember is involved with had anything to do with what happened here,” Katherine says. “But I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t a little relieved she was no longer an employee. I don’t need any drama at my place of business.”

“Indeed,” my mother huffs. “Well, Ms. Barlowe. I believe we’re already cutting into my appointment time.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Katherine smiles and motions behind her. “Right this way.”

I follow my mother as we walk further into the salon, the two of them chatting away. About what, I have no clue. I don’t even manage to hear a single word because all I can think about is the hot biker I woke up with this morning. If his gang was responsible for the death of a young woman, then I placed myself in the direct path of some very dangerous people.

Thank God, I never have to see any of them again.

Chapter 3

CYPHER

Long strawberry blonde hair falls to her ass as she rides my cock like a dream. Head tipped back, her heavy tits bouncing up and down as my fingers dig into her hips. I guide her back and forth along my cock, making her cry out to the ceiling. I can smell her arousal mixed with her coconut scent. Her thighs squeeze against my hips as she pinches her nipples, pulling them so hard the skin turns white. "I'm going to come!" she cries. I lift my hips, pounding into her as my balls tighten. "Don't stop! Fuck! Don't stop!" Her hands slam down against my chest, nails digging into my flesh. Her body stiffens and the tingling in my balls shoots up through my dick. I grunt, about to explode inside of her as she jerks in my grasp. "Oh, God! I'm..."

"Cypher!"

My head jerks in Kellan's direction, his sharp tone snapping me out of my daydream. Or is it a memory? Whatever the fuck it is, I've been having it several times a day.

"You with us, Brother?" King asks, his eyebrow cocked.

I shift in my seat, needing to adjust my dick, which is pressing against the zipper of my jeans and begging for some relief, even though I just fucking jerked off in the shower not two hours ago. It's been three days since the mystery woman ran out of my apartment, and I've rubbed one out to her memory every single fucking day. To be fair, my thoughts always start with Ember. Her riding my cock, her lips wrapped around it. But somewhere in the middle of my fantasy, the woman morphs into the hell cat that left her claw marks down my back. My chest too, and they're still there, taunting me every fucking morning. Clearing my throat, I sit up straighter. "Yeah, I'm with you."

I glance at Declan, who's glaring at me from across the table. My jaw tics as I fight the urge to ask him what the fuck he's looking at. But we're in the middle of a club meeting, and I've already been warned to keep my shit outside the club doors.

"What's the word on Aero?" Ryder asks. "Have they found a place?"

"Yeah," Kellan says, bobbing his head. "They took the club money Buzz had been hiding and bought eight acres somewhere in Maryland. Some old lodge with a falling down outbuilding they're gonna fix up as their clubhouse."

Riggs huffs. "I still think they should have stayed around here until all this mess is finished."

Wren sits forward, resting his arms on the table. "As far as Aero and his men are concerned, their mess is over. Brick is our fucking problem. We'll handle him." The big man wants to get his hands on Brick so bad, he's almost foaming at the mouth.

"Agreed," Kellan says. "Aero and his men were only here because of Buzz."

Riggs settles back into his seat, looking a little annoyed.

"Anything else?" Kellan asks. No one says anything, so I go to get up, thinking the meeting is over. Kellan stops me just as I place my hands on the table. "Let them in," he says, nodding to Wren.

I frown as the big man pushes away from the table and walks to the door, opening it. When Alora and Ember walk in, my heart kicks in my chest. Just the sight of her has me on edge. Her doll-like face, those bow-shaped lips, and big green eyes instantly captivate me. The woman looks so good it's shameful, and she should have been mine. I can't help but growl when she gives Declan a little smile. I don't understand why she, out of all the women who've come into my life, is the one my stupid fucking heart decided to fall for. I lift my

beer to my lips and down the last of it, wishing it was something stronger. I tried to bring in a bottle of Jack, but Ryder snatched it from my hand and shoved a single beer into it instead. One fucking beer is not enough to numb me from this shit. I glare at the bald fucker when Em takes the seat next to Declan. He places his arm on the chair behind her, his fingers lightly running along her arm.

His woman. How the fuck am I supposed to accept that shit when I thought she was going to be mine? All I want to do is rip his fucking arm off and beat him with it, then grab Em and haul her into my lap and never let her go. I'd show her how much better I am than him, in every way possible. I grunt when Riggs' boot slams into my shin under the table. Jerking my head in his direction, I register the warning flashing in his eyes; *pull your ass together*. It's then I notice my hands are clenched into fists on top of the table. I uncurl my fingers, letting the blood rush back in.

"I wanted the girls to tell you what they overheard, even though I already told you what Em told me," Declan says.

My brows crease as I glance between Em and Alora. *What the hell did I miss while I was in the middle of my daydream?*

Ember shifts in her seat. "Alora and I were out shopping for supplies for the Halloween party. They didn't see us, but I overheard Rena, Larkin, and Mary talking about you guys."

"Virgin Mary?" I ask. "Since when did she start hanging out with those two cunts? And what the fuck is Larkin still doing around here? I thought her ass left?"

Everyone stares at me like I've lost my damn mind. "Where the hell were you ten-minutes ago?" Declan asks.

I grit my teeth, then grin as I look him right in the eyes. "Imagining your girl was riding—"

Kellan's hand slams down on the table, cutting me off. "Fucking finish that sentence and I'll kick your dumb ass myself."

Declan sneers, the vein in his temple pulsing. "No, let him finish it."

"Declan," Ember whispers, clutching onto his thigh. Her hurt filled eyes meet mine across the table, and a jolt of shame hits me like a sledgehammer. I haven't spoken a single word to her since the day my so-called "friend" claimed her. We used to talk all the time. Now I can't stand to hear her voice.

"Of course you have his back," I mumble, leaning back in my chair.

"Jesus Christ," Wren growls. "Are you fucking twelve?"

Kellan leans forward, his forearms resting on the table as his eyes narrow on me. "One more fucking word and I'll remove you from this meeting."

Clenching my jaw, I stare down at the thick wood of our club table. It's becoming very clear where I rank among my friends. All of them have thrown their support behind Ember and Declan. Not giving one shit that I wanted the woman just as much... fuck... more than he did.

"What did you hear?" Kellan says, going right back to the meeting like nothing just happened.

Em shifts again, but I refuse to look at her. "They were talking about Buzz knowing where you guys were. The place you were supposed to be in Pennsylvania."

"Confirmation that there's a rat in this club," Alora says.

Wren tugs her down into his lap. "Which we already knew. That information was a setup to prove it."

"What else?" Riggs asks.

“Rena talked about Brick becoming the President of the Demons, and that she’d be the queen,” Ember continues. “It sounded like they were working with Brick and the Henchmen to take you guys out.”

Kellan huffs out a laugh. “If they’re stupid enough to think the members of this club would follow them, then they’re dumber than I thought. No one other than Brick’s wants him as their leader.”

“Doesn’t mean they won’t try for it, though,” Alora counters. “Tell them what else you heard, Em.”

She’s silent for a few moments, and when the tension gets thicker, I finally glance up from the table, taking in the haunted look in Em’s beautiful eyes. “It was Larkin who lured Declan to the garage that day.” Her throat bobs as she swallows. Declan winds his arm around her waist as he pulls her into his chest. “She was the woman who made the phone call, claiming to have a flat tire.”

“Fuck,” Ryder groans. “If we thought Brick was pulling the shots alone, we were wrong. These bitches are in just as deep as Brick.”

Declan nods. “We should have gotten rid of their asses a long time ago.”

“I thought I did,” Wren says. “At least Larkin anyway. Didn’t think her ass would be stupid enough to pull this shit.”

Al leans back as she glares at him. “Really? After the other shit she pulled?”

“I didn’t think Rena would do something like this either,” Kellan says. “She hasn’t been a problem for a while now.” He shakes his head. “That’s what I get for trying to be nice. I thought since she was with Brick, she was over being pissed at me.”

“Not from what I heard,” Ember says. “She’s pissed you chose Jenna over her.” She turns to look at Wren. “And Larkin is definitely not happy you tossed her off for Al. It sounded to me like they hate you just as much as Brick does.”

Riggs smirks. “We make friends wherever we go.”

Ryder grins and shakes his head.

“Anything else?” Kellan asks.

A hint of pink colors Ember’s cheeks. “I’m sorry we didn’t tell you right away. There was just so much going on at the time.” She glances at Al. “We thought you guys had enough to deal with.”

Kellan stares at her, his expression blank as usual. “I get it, but don’t keep shit from us again. We need to know who we can and can’t trust.”

Ember nods.

“I have something else to bring to the club while Ember’s here.” Declan grins up at her.

She bites her lip as she smiles at him.

An uneasy feeling lands in my gut. *Oh, fuck no! If he’s about to announce that he knocked her up, I don’t think I’ll be able to stop myself from murdering the bastard.*

“I want the club to invest in a salon for Em,” Declan says, making the heaviness in my stomach lift a little. “It’s another investment I think would be beneficial for the club.”

“Like Salem’s tattoo shop?” Riggs asks.

Declan nods. “Exactly.”

“You’d be a fool not to,” Alora grins. “Em’s an amazing stylist. The best in this town and the next.”

Kellan takes in a deep breath, arms folded across his chest. “It’s not a bad idea. Definitely worth considering.” He glances around the table. “Thoughts?”

Ryder smiles. “I’m in.”

“Says the man with no fucking hair,” Wren laughs.

Everyone chuckles. Everyone but me. How the fuck is this fair? Everyone gets what they want and goes off to live happily fucking ever after, while I have to sit back and watch

the woman I love start a whole new life with someone else. And not just anyone, but someone I thought was my family—my brother.

“I say hell yeah,” Riggs winks at Em. “More income is always a good thing.”

Wren nods. “Another business for the club to profit off of? I think it’s a no brainer.”

All eyes turn to me and the simmering anger I’ve been trying to suppress starts to boil. “Does it even fucking matter what I think?” I snap.

The smile falls from Ember’s face, her eyes dropping to her lap. Declan practically vibrates with anger in his seat, no doubt ready to beat me to a pulp. *Yeah, join the fucking club, asshole.*

“Jesus Christ,” Kellan growls.

My head snaps in his direction, and the annoyed look on his face breaks the last of my resolve. I shove away from the table, knocking my chair backward. “You know what? Fuck it, give her the fucking salon. She deserves it, right? Job well done for driving a wedge through the middle of this club, sweetheart.”

“Cypher!” Ryder warns.

Tears pool in Ember’s eyes and I swallow down the guilt I feel. She had to have known how I felt about her. We’d been flirting for months. I thought we were on the same page, or at least headed in the same direction. Then she stabbed me in the back by choosing *him*.

Declan pushes up from his seat, nearly knocking Ember over, but before he can open his mouth, Kellan stands and grips his best friend’s shoulder. “I’ve had enough of this fucking shit,” his voice booms. The pissed off look on his face normally makes any man cower, but I’m too far gone to care. “Declan and Ember are together. Either deal with it, or there’s the fucking door,” he shouts.

My nostrils flare as my chest heaves with every breath. If those are my only two options, then I have no fucking choice. Because I can't sit by and watch *her* make a life with *him*. The room is completely silent, everyone waiting for me to sit back down, but fuck them. I've reached my breaking point. I straighten to my full height, never taking my eyes off my prez. "Good to know where I stand." Reaching up, I grip my cut in both hands and yank it off my shoulders. My gaze moves to Declan, then to Ember, who looks completely stunned. I toss my cut onto the table in front of her. "Welcome to the club, sweetheart. Looks like a spot just opened up."

Her chin quivers as tears roll down her porcelain cheeks. Declan's eyes widen. Riggs and Ryder stand, glancing around the table like they're expecting someone to jump out and say, "Surprise, you're on Candid Camera."

Wren's head snaps to Kellan, who looks absolutely murderous. "You're pushing me too fucking far," he growls.

"Now you know how I feel," I scowl, my insides feeling like lava as I boil with rage. "So much for club loyalty."

Riggs grips my arm. "Cyph, brother. What are you—"

I yank my arm away, not even bothering to look at him.

Ryder grabs my cut then rounds the table, shoving it into my chest. "I think you need to cool off and think shit over."

I meet Declan's wide eyes across the room. He's frozen in place, waiting to see if I have the balls to follow through. I do, because mine are a hell of a lot bigger than his. Shoving the cut that Ryder is holding out of my way, I shoulder check him as I storm out the door.

Fuck this.

And fuck them.

A knock sounds on my door, but I don't bother to answer. It doesn't matter anyway because it swings open not even two seconds later. I don't have to look up to know who it is, but it won't make a difference; I've made my decision. I shove more clothes into my backpack, not bothering to acknowledge them.

“What the fuck? You're serious?” Ryder asks.

I don't respond. Several heavy footsteps walk farther into the room, and I clench my jaw as I shove in another shirt.

“Cypher, brother, come on,” Wren says.

Bending down, I snatch the cord to my laptop out of the wall and shove it in the bag with my clothes.

“Fuck this,” Riggs snaps, grabbing for the bag, but I shove his hand away before stepping into him, putting us face to face. My pulse is racing, and I'm itching for a fight. I need to hit something—someone—any fucking one. Even the man I think of as my closest friend.

“You're just going to walk away? Fuck all of us?” he shouts.

“Isn't that exactly what you all are saying to me?” I snap. “Fuck Cypher, but let's make sure Declan and Ember get everything they fucking want.”

Ryder holds a hand out in front of him. “Whoa, that's not what we're saying, Brother. But he's claimed her. They're together. We can't not accept that.”

Riggs takes a step back. “Come on, man. Put your shit away and let's—”

“I can't fucking stay here!” I roar. My nostrils flair, my shoulders tensing. I'm so goddamn angry my chest feels like it's caving in. Everyone is watching me like I'm a ticking bomb, and I finally explode, letting them know just how fucking pathetic I am. “I fucking love her, all right!”

Silence fills the room; the only sound is my own heavy breathing. Wren and Ryder glance at Kellan, who grips Riggs

by the shoulder and pulls him back. “Fuck, Brother. I didn’t know you were in that deep.”

I take a step back, running my hands through my hair. “As deep as you are with Jenna.” I glance at Riggs. “And Salem.” I flop down on the bed, my forearms resting on my thighs as I stare at the floor. “I can’t stay here and watch the two of them together.”

Ryder folds his arms over his chest. “Cyph—”

“Could you?” I ask, looking up at him. “If Mia had chosen Jackson, and they lived in this town, right under your fucking nose. Could you watch them every fucking day and not want to rip his goddamn head off?”

Ryder clenches his jaw. I know for a fact he wouldn’t.

I turn my attention to Wren. “What about you? If Alora moved on with Kellan, or Riggs, or one of our other club brothers?” A low growl vibrates from the back of the big guy’s throat, and I nod. “Now you know how I feel.”

“So, we’re just supposed to let you leave?” Riggs asks, his tone sharp, but it’s lost some of its bite.

I push myself up from the bed, running my hands down my face before meeting his eyes. I never thought anything could make me leave my brothers—my family. But I never saw *her* coming either. “Yeah.” I sigh.

Riggs sucks in a deep breath. I know he wants to fight it, but there’s nothing he can say.

“Worst fucking timing,” Wren mumbles.

I nod. “I know. But at this point, I’d be more harm than good. I can’t focus on anything else, and you don’t need conflict between Declan and me while you’re trying to find Brick.” The sorry fucker took a few of his followers and has gone into hiding. He knows we’re on to him and he hasn’t shown his face since the attack on the Henchmen. He left Thomas and Rena behind, likely because they don’t realize we know they’re his little spies. We want to keep it that way, for

now. At least until we can use them to find out where the little pussy is hiding.

Kellan steps forward, stopping when he's in front of me. He grips me around the back of my neck, hauling my face closer to his. "Two weeks." His deep voice vibrates through the room. I stare at him, my hands clenched at my sides. "I'm not losing a brother over this," he says. "You have two fucking weeks to work this shit out, or I'll drag your ass back here myself."

"Would two weeks be enough for you if it was Jenna?" I ask.

The vein in his temple throbs. "I can't give you any more time than that. You know what we're up against here. We need your smartass to finish this." He sucks air in through his nose. "Two weeks. If after we handle Brick you still want to leave, we won't stop you."

We stare at each other, the tension thick, before I nod.

He slips his hand from the back of my neck, giving my cheek a quick slap before walking out.

"Fuck!" Riggs shouts, spinning around and clamping his hands behind his head. I can practically see his anger rolling off him in waves, no doubt wanting to argue some more, but he doesn't. Instead, he storms out of the room, not even bothering with a goodbye.

"If shit hits the fan, don't expect us to wait for you," Wren says.

I give him a quick jerk of my chin. "Just make sure when you find Brick, you make it fucking hurt."

A wicked grin forms on his face. "Oh, that's a promise." He takes a step closer, lowering his voice as his smile drops away. "And if my brother doesn't find you in two weeks, I will." I have no doubt the King brothers will follow through on their threats. He slaps my shoulder, then turns to leave.

“For the record,” Ryder says. “The answer is no.” My brows scrunch together. “I wouldn’t have been able to watch Mia with someone else.”

I nod, and he quickly pulls me into him, slapping my back in an awkward hug. “Take care of yourself, Brother. We still have enemies out there.”

I hug him back, knowing this could very well be the last time I saw any of them.

With another hard slap, Ryder turns and storms out the door. Glancing around, I finish shoving the last few things into my bag and zip it up. Hauling it over my shoulder, I leave my room, my club, and the woman I love behind.

Chapter 4

SICILY

Three weeks later

I stare at the woman like she has lobsters crawling out of her ears. I couldn't have heard her right. She had to have read the wrong file. That has to be it. It's just not possible. "I'm sorry, what?" my voice squeaks.

"You're pregnant," Dr. Vance repeats.

I blink, her words just not sinking in. I shake my head, my heart pounding inside my chest. "That's... I can't... that's not possible. I'm on the pill."

Dr. Vance grins. "Nothing is one-hundred percent effective, Sicily. If you had unprotected sex, then it's very possible."

I flash back to the Halloween party. Ice-blue eyes, a strong jaw, muscles for fucking days, and a voice that I can still feel vibrating through me as he pinned me against the door. I swallow past the huge lump forming in my throat. "How... how far along am I?"

Dr. Vance looks at the chart. "According to your last period, you're very early. Less than a month."

I close my eyes, fighting back tears. *It's his. The man I've been trying desperately to forget.* Christian and I haven't been together for over two months. There's no way this baby could be his. Not that I want it to be. I don't want to be tied to him for the rest of my life, but I don't want to be tied to a dangerous biker, either. What a shit show this is. Merry Christmas, Mom and Dad. Surprise! You're going to be grandparents. All hell is going to break loose when I deliver this news.

"Sicily?" Doctor Vance's voice cuts through my panicked thoughts. I open my eyes to find her watching me, a

frown pulling down the corners of her mouth. “I take it this wasn’t the news you were expecting?”

I shake my head. “I just thought I was tired from all the studying I’ve been doing. I just took my finals for the semester yesterday.”

“And the headaches and cramps?” she asks.

I bite my lip. “I chalked it up to stress.”

“All possibilities, but in your case, not the cause.” She gives me a cautious grin. “You do have options, Sicily. If this isn’t the right time, you don’t have to continue with the pregnancy. I can give you information on a few clinics.”

I press my fist against my stomach. *Options? Could I actually do... that? Could I simply erase this mistake like nothing ever happened and continue on with my life? My head tells me that’s the smart thing to do. It’s what my parents are going to demand I do. But will my heart let me? Will my conscience haunt me? There’s so much to think about and consider. Can I handle a baby while finishing school? Wait, will I still be in school?*

“If the conception date was October thirty-first, when is my due date?” I ask.

Doctor Vance types into her tablet. “It helps that you know the exact date of conception. That should give us a pretty accurate due date.” She nods as she makes a note in my chart. “Looks like a summer baby. You’re due July twenty-third.”

“July twenty-third,” I mumble. Well, at least I’ll be able to finish my degree no matter what I decide. School doesn’t need to be a factor in my decision. However, my job will be. Who wants to hire a nurse who will only be able to work for a month before having to take off on maternity leave?

Doctor Vance opens a drawer and pulls out several pamphlets, then hands them to me. I numbly take them, flipping through them as she continues to talk. “Take these

home and read them. If you have any questions, please call me.”

I nod as I read the titles on each one. There’s two for abortion clinics, one on adoption, and two on general pregnancy.

“If I don’t hear from you, I want to see you back in a month,” she says.

I nod again, swiping at tears I just now realized were falling.

She pats my arm, but I don’t look up. “Take as long as you need. I don’t need the room right away.” Then she turns and leaves me sitting there, staring at the packets of information. Again, I wonder how the hell is this possible? How did one drunken night become the night that has changed my life completely?

Taking in a deep breath, I climb to my feet, stuff the pamphlets into my purse, and compose myself. Once I’m out of the office and in my car, I call Penn. I need my best friend to talk me off this ledge.

“How the fuck were you this irresponsible?” my father’s voice booms through our living room.

After talking to Penn for an hour, she convinced me that I needed to tell my parents sooner rather than later. Especially since I was so torn over what to do. Logically, the smart thing would be to get an abortion, but I’m terrified. Not only about the procedure, but about what it would do to me. *Could I handle the guilt I would feel? Is my life more important than the one growing inside of me? Is it fair to ruin my life for one that hasn’t even started yet? Has it started yet?* I have so many questions and thoughts I can’t possibly make this decision on my own. Thus, the reason I’m sitting here with my father looking at me like I’m a huge disappointment, while my mother sits frozen on the couch.

“What do Ray and Isabelle think of this?” my father asks.

That seems to break my mother out of her shocked state. “We should call them.” She grabs her phone from the coffee table and starts scrolling. “Maybe this isn’t such horrible news after all.” She smiles up at my father. “We knew they would get married at some point. We just have to move the timeline up, that’s all.”

My heart jumps into my throat. “No!” I snap, before she can press the call button. Her head jerks up to look at me, and I swallow so hard I’m sure they both heard it. “He’s... Christian doesn’t know.”

My mother frowns. “Well, don’t you think he should? I mean, he’s going to be a father, Sicily, he—”

“No, he’s not,” I mumble.

Her mouth snaps shut. My father moves closer, his eyes narrowing into slits. “What do you mean, he’s not?”

I rub my sweaty hands over my jeans as I glance between the two of them. I probably should have broken this news a little at a time, but I figured it would be better to rip the band aid off quickly, rather than pull a small torturous piece off one at a time.

“I...” My face starts burning with embarrassment. If they thought they were angry before, that’s nothing compared to what they’ll feel when I drop this bomb. “Christian... isn’t the father.”

You could hear a pin drop. That’s how silent the room gets. My mother’s eyes widen so slowly it would almost be comical if the situation wasn’t so serious. My father’s face turns redder and redder the longer I sit, waiting for the explosion I know is coming. The tension in the room grows thicker and heavier, and I could almost count backward from five to the point of eruption.

“What?” my father roars.

“You... you cheated on Christian?” my mother gasps.

“No! Christian and I broke up months ago, Mother. You know that.”

“And you climbed right in bed with someone else the minute you were single. Is that what you’re telling us?” my father shouts.

My god, I just want to curl up and disappear into the couch. What child wants to have this conversation with their parents? But I don’t have a choice. I was adult enough to make the decision. I have to be adult enough to own it. “I got drunk at a party and made a mistake,” I tell them, my gaze dropping to the floor.

“A mistake?” My father scoffs. “You had sex with someone who wasn’t your boyfriend and got pregnant. That’s one hell of a mistake, Sicily.”

I shove up from the couch, glaring at my father. “Christian is not my boyfriend,” I snap. “How many times do I have to tell you that?”

“Sicily?” My mother’s tone pulls my attention to her. She looks pale as she slowly pushes herself up off the couch. “Who is the father?”

My heart rate kicks up a notch. *How can I tell them I don’t even know his name?* “You don’t know him. I don’t even know him.”

They both stare at me like I’m a stranger. My mother presses her hand to her throat like this is the worst scandal in the history of scandals. My father shakes his head, then runs his hands over his face as he lets out a heavy sigh. “Okay,” he says, dropping his hands to his sides before frowning down at me. “This isn’t a situation we can’t get ourselves out of.”

“Ourselves?” I ask.

“Yes, ourselves,” he barks. “This doesn’t just affect you, Sicily. My reputation at school is at stake here. So is your mother’s.”

My hands shake as anger swirls inside of me. This is fucking ridiculous. “This isn’t the nineteen fifties, Dad. An unwed mother isn’t a big deal anymore.”

“It is when you come from a family like ours,” my mother scolds.

“Your mother will help you find a clinic tomorrow,” my father says, ignoring us both. “I’ll take care of the expenses, but I want it done as soon as possible. Before anyone finds out.”

I’m thrown by the snobby, uncaring display they’re both showing. I mean, I always thought they cared about appearances too much, but right now, it seems like their reputation is all that matters. Not how I am feeling, or how I’m handling this. Or what I even want.

“I haven’t decided what I’m going to do yet,” I mumble.

Again, they look at me like I’m stupid. My father’s face, which was returning to its normal color, flushes an angry red once again. “There is nothing to decide here, Sicily.”

My mother gasps. “You can’t seriously be considering keeping it?”

“It’s a baby, Mother, not an *it*,” I correct her.

My father shakes his head. “You said it yourself. It’s a mistake.”

I’m not sure exactly when it happened, but I realized in that moment how protective I feel over the life growing inside of me. How could they simply want to ‘*get rid of it*’ so easily? It’s a baby—a part of me—a part of them. Is my child’s life worth so little that they could simply brush it under the rug and forget about it? Tears burn my eyes as fire pumps through my body and I grit my teeth, preparing for the fight of my life. “I said *I* made a mistake; I never said my baby was a mistake.”

“Your baby?” my mother’s voice pitches higher. “Do you hear yourself? You’re talking about it like it’s—”

“My baby’s not an it!” I shout.

My father moves to stand in front of me, less than six inches away, and glaring down at me like I’m a traitor who’s choosing an enemy over my family. “I’m offering you a way out. A solution to your problem. If you have this kid, it will ruin your life. Is that what you want?”

A sob catches in my throat, and I swallow it back down.

“You have the world at your fingertips, Sicily,” he says. “Don’t throw away your future for a bastard child.”

My hand moves on its own, and I don’t even realize what I’ve done until the sound of my palm meeting his cheek echoes through the room like a gun shot.

My mother gasps as my father’s head jerks to the right.

The moment I realize that I just slapped my father, I feel sick. My entire body shakes as I take a step back, and his heated gaze lands on me. “I’m so—”

“Get out!” he growls.

My eyes widen, dread creeps in, making me feel sick. “Daddy, I—”

“If you plan to keep that kid, you’re on your own. I’m washing my hands of the both of you,” he shouts.

I cover my mouth as a pained sob breaks free.

My father turns and storms out of the room, leaving me broken and afraid. Tears roll down my cheeks, and when I turn to look at my mother, they start flowing faster.

“After everything your father and I have done for you, this is how you repay us?” She glares, her eyes hard and full of venom.

My chest cracks open as she turns her nose up at me like she does anyone she feels is beneath her. As she follows after my father, I find myself thinking for what feels like the hundredth time today: *How did this happen?*

Chapter 5

CYPHER

I cut the engine on my bike and sit staring at the doors of the Den. It's been three weeks since I stepped foot in the place I once thought of as my home. I was given two weeks to get my head on straight and get over Ember, but it wasn't long enough. I wasn't ready once the deadline hit, so I dragged it out a little longer. Looking at the doors right now, I'm still not sure I am. Don't get me wrong, I've missed my family, but I haven't missed Declan making a life with the woman I once thought would be mine.

"Fuck," I mumble, letting out a heavy sigh. I debate whether I should stay and face the music, or if I should start the engine and drive the fuck out of here before anyone notices me? Just as I reach for the keys, the front door to the Den opens, and laughter emerges as a familiar blonde and brunette step outside.

They both freeze. Two sets of eyes widen and both mouths drop open in tandem.

"What are you doing?" a third voice asks just before Salem's dark hair pops up behind them.

"Cypher!" Mia gasps.

Smiling, I reach up and tug my helmet off. "So, you didn't forget me?"

"Oh my god," Alora grins, setting the half a dozen gift bags down on the ground before rushing towards me. I just manage to make it off my bike before she launches herself at me. Her arms wrap around my neck, her legs around my waist, and I chuckle as I hold her firmly against my chest and she squeals. Before I can take a breath, Mia is throwing herself at me as well. I shift Al to one arm and bend down to pick Mia

up with the other. Just like Alora, her arms and legs wind around me.

I laugh as the women bounce in my arms, squealing and laughing.

“Might as well join us.” I smile at Salem as I walk towards her, carrying both women like toddlers on each hip. She quickly sets the boxes down just outside of the door and hurries around behind me. The next thing I know, I have my favorite tattoo artist clinging to my back.

“Well, that’s one hell of a hello.”

I glance up to see Ryder standing in the doorway. I grin as I walk right past him and into the Den, where it looks like everyone is cleaning up from some kind of party. There are yellow and green balloons and streamers all over the room, pink and blue tablecloths covering several tables, and a shit ton of baby gear piled high on one of them. I breathe in the familiar smell of the Den, and a sense of belonging rushes over me. *I’m fucking home.*

“Holy fucking shit!” Riggs says. He’s standing behind the bar, holding a bottle of Jack that he just poured into several shot glasses.

Kellan and Wren are standing at the bar, watching me as I struggle with the three giggling women who are still clinging to me like I’m their personal jungle gym. “I think I have a few things that belong to you.” I laugh.

Riggs snickers as he walks over and plucks Salem from my back at the same time Ryder grabs Mia by the waist and pulls her into his arms. “Let the man breathe, woman,” he chuckles.

The girls giggle and protest, but they don’t fight. I’ve missed them as much as they’ve missed me. I’m about to turn to the King brothers when someone steps out of the hallway leading to the bathroom. My eyes lock on my favorite red head, then drop down to her very pregnant belly. It’s only been three weeks, but Jenna looks like she’s ready to pop.

“Cypher,” she says, placing her hand on her stomach.

Carefully, I set Al back on her feet. “Look at you, little momma.”

Jenna’s eyes shimmer with tears as she starts waddling towards me. I quickly meet her halfway. We throw our arms around each other, and she sniffs as she buries her face in my chest.

“I didn’t know if you’d make it home in time for the birth,” she whispers.

A pang of guilt hits me, and I cup the back of her head as I hold her against me. “I wouldn’t have missed it, sweetheart.”

“You still have a month, woman,” Kellan says. I release his Ol’ Lady and turn to face my Prez. His face is blank, his expression giving nothing away, as usual.

Wren joins us, draping an arm around Alora’s shoulders. “You’re late,” his voice rumbles.

I missed my deadline by a week, and he’s not happy about it. I shove my hands into my front pockets. “Yeah,” I mumble.

Kellan studies me. “You good?” he asks.

I take in a deep breath as I glance around the room. I know what he’s asking, and everyone is waiting for my answer. Not knowing what to say, I shrug.

Riggs glares at me, his jaw clenched. I’m waiting for him to ream me out for being gone so long. I kept in touch with him every week. The fucker wouldn’t let me off the hook that easily. Even though I hardly responded to his messages, he always sent me updates about the club, the girls, Mia and Ryder’s daughter Becca, and when he told me Mia didn’t think Jenna would make it to her due date, I knew it was time to come home. I’d never forgive myself if I missed King’s kid being born.

A slow smile spreads across Riggs' face as he reaches out and pinches the short beard I've grown over the past three weeks. "What the fuck is this shit?" he asks.

I laugh as I slap his hand away.

"Having lumberjack fantasies?"

"Nah," I chuckle. "Just didn't feel the need to shave on the road."

"Where did you go?" Jenna asks.

I open my mouth to respond just as the kitchen door swings open and *she* steps out. She stops dead in her tracks as our eyes lock from across the room. Her pale skin goes even whiter, her lips parting in a quiet gasp. My gaze travels down her body, over the soft green sweater that's hanging off one shoulder, the skintight jeans hugging her curves, and the ankle boots making her legs appear a little longer. Her big green eyes sparkle as she takes me in, and she bites her lip nervously, waiting for me to speak. She's even sexier than I remember.

"Hey, Em, you need—" Declan jolts to a stop as he enters the room behind her. We stare at each other, both at a loss for words. It fucking sucks. We've never had to pussy foot around each other before. For the first time in my twenty-four years of life, I have no idea what to say to someone. And not just someone, one of my closest friends.

"Cyph," he says, looking between me and Ember.

I nod, then give myself a mental kick in the ass. I didn't leave for three weeks, only to return and fall right back into the way things were before. I walk towards him, keeping my eyes on him and not the woman who had my head all fucked up. I won't lie. It still stings knowing she's his. I stop in front of him, giving myself a moment to breathe before pulling him into a tight hug. "Did you think you got rid of me for good?"

He lets out a nervous laugh, pounding his fist against my back. "Didn't want you to go in the first place, asshole."

Another round of guilt hits me, so I pull away. My eyes flick to Ember briefly before looking away again. “It had to be done. Shit wouldn’t have been good if I stayed.”

Declan nods. I turn back to the room, doing my best to act like I’m not still drowning. “Is there any cake left, little momma?” I ask Jenna.

She blinks, and her eyes bounce between me and Ember. So does everyone else’s. It’s pretty clear that I’m avoiding her, but I can’t bring myself to talk to her yet. I had a long time to think while I was away. Honestly, I did nothing but think, and I realized that Declan was telling the truth. He had no idea I was serious about Em. Just like I didn’t realize he was falling for her, too. With everything that was going on, it was easy to miss some obvious signs, and I can’t blame the man one bit for falling for such an amazing woman. I also can’t blame Ember for falling for Declan. They spent a lot of time together, and bonded over their tragedies at the hands of the same evil men. In truth, I should have seen it coming, but I was blinded by what I was feeling instead. Still, I can’t seem to bring myself to talk to her yet. I’m just not ready.

“Um, yeah,” Jenna says softly.

I clap my hands together and head back towards her and the rest of my friends, acting like everything is perfect.

Salem hurries over to the huge, half eaten cake still sitting on one of the tables as the rest of us settle into chairs.

“So, where did you go?” Alora asks.

“Down the East Coast,” I say, stretching my legs out in front of me. “Drove down to Florida, then over to Texas. Stayed a few nights in each state before heading back up to Tennessee. Did all right until I hit Ohio, then my ass started getting cold.” I laugh as Salem returns and hands me a huge slice of cake. “Thanks, babe,” I wink at her.

She grins and slips onto Riggs’ lap.

“Bet you wished you had taken your Camaro,” Declan smirks.

I shake my head. “Nah, I needed my bike.”

“Amen, Brother.” Ryder nods, tipping a beer to his lips.

The door to the kitchen opens again, and Mia, who I didn't realize had left, walks back into the room carrying a tiny little human with two whisper thin dark pigtails sticking out of the side of her head with tiny pink clips. I set my plate down as she approaches, and the next thing I know, I'm holding the fragile little girl. “Somebody missed her Uncle Cypher.” Mia smiles widely at her daughter.

Becca's dark brown eyes blink several times as she tries to focus on me. A little crease forms between her brows, like she's confused as to why her mother would hand her off to a strange man. I hold her under her armpits awkwardly, her tiny legs dangling down as I stare right back. I'm so not good with babies.

“Uh, hey, squirt,” I mumble.

Her head bobs a little, then her face scrunches up like she's in pain and she turns beat red. “What is she—” Something that sounds like bubbles underwater, wet and loud, vibrates from her back end and a few seconds later a god-awful stench reaches my nose. “Fuck!” I gag, quickly handing the little girl back to Mia. “She's your kid all right...” I cough as I glare at Ryder.

Everyone bursts out laughing. Ryder stands, taking his daughter from Mia. “I'll change her.” He leans over and kisses his wife before heading to the couch in the back of the room. The man must really be in love if he's volunteering to face that horrible stench.

Mia slides into his seat and punches me in the leg. “I'm glad to have you back, Cyph, but fuck you for leaving without even saying goodbye.”

“Agreed,” Alora and Salem say at the same damn time.

I rub at the beard on my chin. “Sorry. I just thought it would be easier all around if I just got out of Dodge.” I sneak a

glance at Ember, who's standing behind Declan like she's afraid to join the group. Her fingers tighten on his shoulder, and he reaches up and clasps her hand in his.

“Well, besides Ryder becoming all domesticated,” I say, turning my attention back to Kellan. “Did I miss anything important?”

He knows what I'm asking, and I already know Brick is still MIA, but Riggs did mention in one of his texts that a few of his little followers had been found and dealt with. I'm still kicking myself for missing out on that.

“Let's get together tomorrow. We'll catch you up on everything then,” King says.

Salem nudges my shoulder. “So, what happened on this bike tour of yours? Anything worth mentioning?”

Again, I glance in Ember's direction. I'll admit, I thought about her more often than I should have. But to tell the truth, she wasn't the only woman that haunted my dreams. There was someone else who took over my thoughts, surprisingly even more than Em. A fiery cat with sharp claws and the face of an angel. I don't know her name, but it doesn't matter. She'll forever be a fantasy, and nothing more.

“Cypher!”

I glance up as Vera comes rushing towards me, and I smile.

Yeah, it's good to be home.

Chapter 6

SICILY

I take a deep breath as I open the door to Curls Gone Wild, the new edgy salon that just opened last week. I would have gone to my mother's salon, but well, it's my mother's, and for the past four days, my parents haven't spoken to me. I'm still reeling from the way they reacted, and the fact that they haven't reached out. I thought after they cooled off, we would be able to have a civil conversation. Guess I was wrong.

Glancing around, I take in the punk theme, and for some reason, it makes me feel a little better. I never thought this was my style, but I like it. My mother would hate it. It's definitely geared towards a younger crowd.

"Hi." I glance up to find a pretty, silvery-blue-haired woman with huge green eyes smiling back at me. "Can I help you?"

My attention is drawn to the pregnant woman standing next to her. She looks like she's about to pop, and I clutch my hand over my stomach as the reminder of my own baby slaps me in the face yet again. Not that I could ever forget. I quickly glance away from the stunning mother to be and focus on the woman who greeted me. "I have an appointment for a trim."

"Are you Sicily?" she asks.

I force myself to smile as I nod. "Yes, that's me."

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Ember." She reaches out her hand, and I take it, giving it a small shake. She motions towards her chair, and I follow as she leads me further into the salon. I place my leather gloves and purse on the small table next to her station. Climbing into the chair, I glance up at her in the mirror. She's standing behind me, her hands already running through my long locks. "You have gorgeous hair."

“Thank you,” I say, watching as she fluffs and strokes it.

She cocks her head to the side as she studies me in the mirror. “You look familiar. Have I done your hair before?” I shake my head and she grins. “You must have one of those faces.”

“I get that a lot, actually.”

She twists my hair up and holds it in place with a few clips before turning around, grabbing a black cape from the cabinet behind her. She drapes it around me, snapping it behind my neck, then releases my hair from the clips, only to once again run her fingers through it. For the next twenty minutes, I zone out as the two women talk and Ember snips the dead ends from my hair. My mind replays the conversation I had with my parents. I slapped my father! I’ve never raised my voice, let alone my hand to him, in my entire twenty-two years of life. But the things he said, the blatant disregard for me or the baby...

“How far along are you?”

My eyes dart over to the pregnant woman as she watches me with a soft smile on her face. I blink several times, wondering if I said something out loud. I’m not sure what she sees on my face, but her smile falters. “I’m sorry. I just couldn’t help but notice the way you keep looking at me.” She runs her hand over her stomach. I wonder if it’s painful for it to stretch like that, although it doesn’t seem like it bothers her. “Plus, you keep placing your hand over your stomach, and even though you look scared out of your mind, you have that pregnancy glow.” I bite down on my cheek and look away as my eyes sting with tears. “I’m sorry,” she says. “I didn’t mean to upset you.”

I glance up at Ember, only to find her watching me through the mirror, a look of concern on her face.

“I’m Jenna,” the woman says, and when I turn my head back to her, I find her holding a tissue out for me to take.

“Hormones are a bitch.” She smiles. “I’d like to tell you they get better, but that would be a lie. I cry over toilet paper commercials.” She laughs, and I can’t help but grin a little.

Reaching out, I take the offered tissue and wipe my nose.

“You don’t have to share anything with me, Sicily,” Jenna says. “But if you need someone to talk to, I’m a great listener.”

How the hell can a perfect stranger offer to be the support system I need when my own parents can hardly stand to look at me? Ember unclips the cape from around my neck, and fluffs my hair once again. The ends bounce and swing, the much-needed trim making it look silky-smooth and healthy. My appointment is over, but I can’t find the strength to climb out of the chair. Instead, I glance at Jenna’s hands, looking for a wedding ring, only to find none.

“You’re not married?” I ask.

She shakes her head. “No. He hasn’t asked me yet.”

“But he will.” Ember smiles at her. “Kellan adores you.”

She ignores her friend, studying me like she’s trying to figure me out. Good luck with that. *I* can’t even figure myself out right now. “Forgive me if I’m stepping out of line, but is the father in the picture?”

“I don’t even know who he is.”

One of Jenna’s perfect brows lifts, and I realize I just made myself sound like a total slut.

“It was a mistake.” I say quickly. “I got drunk at a party. It just... happened.” *Yeah, because that made you sound so much better.*

“Jesus,” Ember mumbles. Her green eyes filling with worry. “Did he... force himself...”

I shake my head. “No! We were both drunk. It was mutual. But I have no idea who he is. I left before he woke up the next morning when I realized what had happened. I’m not that kind of girl.” I sniff. “I’d never had a one-night stand until that night.” Okay, so the way I ran out of the guy’s place isn’t completely the truth, but I don’t need to give them all the details. I bite my lip as I nervously pick at my nails. “My parents want me to get an abortion.” I have no idea why I’m telling them all this. Maybe because I feel a connection with Jenna? Or maybe I just need someone unbiased to talk to.

“And what do you want?” Jenna asks.

My chin quivers. “I don’t know,” I whisper, my throat feeling tight.

“You have no way of finding out who he is?” she asks. “No one at the party knows who he is?”

I shake my head. “I didn’t know anyone at the party. I went with some friends, and they didn’t know anyone there, either.”

“Friends who let you get drunk and hook up with some random dude? Doesn’t sound like very good friends to me.” Ember frowns. My eyes widen and her mouth drops open. “I’m sorry, that was not my place to say that.”

“It’s still the truth, though,” Jenna says. “Your friends should have been watching out for you. That’s what friends are supposed to do.”

I suck in a deep breath and climb out of the chair, grabbing my purse.

“I’m sorry,” Jenna says, struggling to get up. “I shouldn’t overstep—”

The door chimes as it swings open, and my heart drops into my stomach as two guys walk inside. Two guys with leather vests. Leather vests that clearly label them as bikers. I stand frozen as they walk towards us and all I can think is, *how the hell did they find me?* My back hits the counter, my heart pounding as they get closer. Then the blonde with

piercings reaches right past me and grabs Ember by the arm. I'm about to scream when he yanks her against his chest and kisses her. I watch in horror as she... *kisses him back?*

“Hey, babe, you ready?”

My head jerks around at the deep voice next to me. The tall, dark-haired guy has Jenna tucked into his side, and she's smiling up at him like he hung the goddamn moon. Fear snakes through me as I realize I just spilled my guts to two women associated with the very people I'm trying to avoid.

“Did you want to make another appointment?” Ember asks.

I blink several times, then notice they're all looking at me. If I say no, will they get pissed? Is this how she gets clients to come back? Have her biker boyfriend show up and intimidate them into booking another appointment? I swallow, nodding as I scramble to get my wallet out. “I... y... yes.” I can always call and cancel later. Or just not show up. Either way, I'm never stepping foot in this place again.

Ember flips through her appointment book. “Four weeks?”

I nod again. “H... how much for today?” I really need to get the hell out of here.

“Thirty,” Ember says. “How about one o'clock on December twenty-eighth? Right in time for New Year's.”

“That's fine,” my voice squeaks as I snatch two twenties from my wallet and slide them across the counter. “Keep the change.”

I shove my wallet back into my purse and spin around, only to slam into the blonde-haired guy's chest.

His hands shoot out, gripping my shoulders to steady me. “Whoa, did the fumes get to you?” He chuckles as he looks down at me.

I stare up at him, my eyes so wide I'm surprised they don't pop out.

His eyebrows squeeze together as he takes me in. “You look familiar.”

“I said the same thing,” Ember says from behind me.

I shake my head as I ease out of his grasp. “Just one of those faces.” I step around him and hurry towards the door.

“Your appointment card!” Ember calls after me, but I don’t stop.

I throw the door open and rush out into the cool air, needing to take in a deep breath to calm my nerves. Only that never happens. Instead, I come to a sudden halt as several sets of eyes stare back at me. I scan the row of bikers parked along the curb. There’s at least six of them. And every single one of them is watching me like a steak that was just dropped in front of a pack of wild dogs.

“Fuck yeah! How you doin’, sweetheart?” one of them asks.

Someone else whistles.

My pulse accelerates.

I’m about to turn and hurry away when I hear it. The voice that made me weak in the knees and sent a bolt of lust right to my core as he had me pinned against him. Deep, seductive and smooth as honey. “Hello, Princess.”

The hair on the back of my neck prickles. I see movement out of the corner of my eye, but I’m terrified to look. Instead, my eyes drop to the ground. My entire body shakes as he stalks towards me. I close my eyes when his black boots stop in front of me. I can’t see him, but I can smell him. His spicy scent that I remember as if it was yesterday. His scent that stayed with me for the past month. I jolt when his hand suddenly strokes along my jaw, then slides under my chin to lift my head. “Open your eyes, gorgeous.”

I bite back a moan at the deep timbre of his voice. Why does it affect me like this? I can feel my blood rushing through me, hot and electric as my eyes flutter open and lock on those

icy blues that have haunted my dreams night after night. *My god, he is gorgeous.* He smirks when he notices my reaction. *The cocky bastard.* “Glad to see you remember me.” He leans in closer. “Because I certainly remember you.”

My legs are starting to feel like Jell-O.

The door to the salon opens, but I can’t pull my eyes away from his. They’re just so mesmerizing. “Sicily, you forgot—” Jenna freezes as she takes in the scene before her. How close we’re standing, and the way he’s still touching me.

“Sicily,” he whispers. My name rolling off his tongue sends a rush of warmth between my thighs. “Kitty has a beautiful name, too.” My knees wobble as I clutch my purse to my chest.

“Oh shit!” Jenna gasps.

Somehow, I manage to break the spell he has me under, and I turn my head to look at her. She glances between me and the guy still holding my chin. “The Halloween party,” she says. “You were the cat.”

“Hey, Cypher, does she have claws?” one of the guys asks, and the line of them burst out laughing. I glance at his vest; the name Cypher is stitched on a patch over his right pec above one that says Treasurer. I guess now I have a name. I mean, maybe? I’m not so sure that’s his real name.

“Oh, she most definitely has claws.” Cypher grins. He leans in until his lips brush against my ear. “I remember the marks they left on my back. I’d like to feel them again.”

His scent gets stronger and my mouth waters, but not in a good way. I groan as my stomach flips. He must mistake it for a sound of pleasure. The stubble on his cheek scrapes against mine as he pulls back, a cocky smirk lifting the corner of his mouth. “What do you say, Princess? Wanna use me as your scratching post again?”

“Come on, Cyph, share a little,” the same guy growls.

My stomach heaves and I slap my hand over my mouth as I scramble away from his touch. I wish I could tell him to fuck off, but I can't. I need to get out of here before I toss my cookies on his black boots. I bolt towards the parking lot, making it around the corner of the building just as I empty my stomach. What a great time for morning sickness to finally show up.

God, he's exactly like I remember him, freakishly handsome and one hundred percent asshole. My eyes flood with tears as I clutch a hand against my still rolling stomach. He may be the father, but I don't want him involved. I don't want my child wrapped up in that lifestyle. No, I can do this without the asshole sperm donor. If Ember and Jenna spill my secret, he probably won't care, anyway. In fact, it's probably the best way to make him avoid me.

Whatever, I don't need or want him, anyway.

Chapter 7

CYPHER

She's running away from me... again. But this time I'm not chasing. Even though my body jerks like it wants to take off after her, I hold myself back, watching as she runs around the corner. I clench my fists at my sides, and silently command my feet to stay put. I'm done chasing women. I'm back to being the unattached, flirty Cypher everyone expects me to be. Sleeping my way through the sweet butts of the club, and any other woman I can manage to lure to my bed. It's fucking easier that way.

I pull my attention away from the direction Sicily just ran when a pair of leather gloves hit me in the face. My brows draw together as I take in Jenna's clenched jaw and murderous eyes. *What the fuck is her problem?*

"What's going on?" Kellan asks as he steps out of the salon, followed by Declan. He glances between his woman and me, before reaching out to pull her into his side like he always fucking does. Only this time, she slaps his hand away.

"Why are men such assholes?" she snaps.

My eyebrows shoot upward. Sweet Jenna hardly ever cusses.

Kellan's head jerks back, his eyes widening before narrowing as they turn back to me. "What the fuck did you do?"

I shrug, not even sure of what I'm missing. "I have no clue. Maybe it's a hormone thing?"

Oh shit! The look on Jenna's face actually has me taking a step back. I've never seen the woman like this. The door to the salon opens again, and my gaze is immediately drawn to Ember. Her silver hair is pinned up on one side and she looks just as lickable as she always does.

She takes in the four of us before she steps closer to Declan. “What happened?”

“I have no fucking clue,” he says.

Jenna folds her arms and rests them on her stomach. Her green eyes drilling a hole right through me. “You know that conversation we just had with Sicily?”

Ember nods. “Yeah.”

“Meet the drunken mistake,” Jenna hisses.

Ember’s head jerks in my direction. A gasp falls from her pouty lips and all I can do is stare at them, imagining things I shouldn’t. “But I thought she didn’t know who...”

“Halloween party,” Jenna tells her.

Ember’s mouth snaps shut. “The cat.”

“Yup,” Jenna drawls.

“What the hell are you two talking about?” Kellan asks, his attention bouncing between the two women.

Ember turns to Declan, whispering in his ear. I watch as his eyes widen. “Fuck,” he groans, staring at me. Something in his expression sends an icy shiver down my spine. Declan motions to the men behind me. “You guys head out. We have something to take care of here.”

“What the fuck?” I ask as several bikes roar to life behind me. Declan slaps a hand to King’s shoulder and jerks his chin back towards the salon. Jenna and Ember hurry inside and I stand there frozen, trying to figure out what the hell I’m about to walk into.

“We need to talk,” Declan says. He points towards the door, telling me to follow the girls inside. King stares at me, trying to figure out what the fuck is happening. Guess there’s only one way to find out. I stalk towards the salon, the guys following me in. My stomach clenches, like it knows this is a bad idea.

Do they want me to leave again?

Is Ember uncomfortable with having me back in town?

I don't get the chance to think on it too long because the moment the door shuts behind us, Jenna drops the biggest fucking bomb of my life.

"She's pregnant."

I freeze mid step. I must not have heard her correctly.

"Who?" Kellan asks.

"Sicily," Jenna says.

"Who the fuck is Sicily?" Kellan's voice is becoming irritated.

Ember leans into Declan. "The girl who just left."

"Remember the cat at the Halloween party?" Declan asks.

There's silence for a moment, then Kellan growls as he steps in front of me. "The girl you were pouring liquor down her throat?"

I haven't moved. I don't think I've taken a breath since Jenna tossed the 'P' word at me.

"Fuck, Cypher." Kellan sighs. "What happened to: 'I always wrap my shit up?'"

Memories of the morning after the party come rushing back. The cum stains on my black sheets. The *many* cum stains. The lack of condom wrappers. Her declaration of being on the pill. My heart thunders in my chest as my head swivels in Jenna's direction. "She said she was on the pill."

Declan groans. "Come on, Brother, that's a rookie move."

I glare at him. "I don't even remember that night. But the next morning, it was pretty fucking obvious neither of us thought to use protection."

Jenna scowls. "The pill isn't a hundred percent effective, you idiot."

I hold my hands out in front of me. “Wait a fucking minute. How the hell do you two know this girl? And what makes you think it’s mine?”

“It?” Jenna fumes.

“We don’t know her,” Ember says. “We just met her today. She’s a new client.”

“How fucking convenient,” Declan mumbles.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Jenna snaps.

Declan cocks an eyebrow as he takes in the spitfire of a woman. None of us have seen this side of her before. It’s kind of scary. “You don’t find it a bit convenient that she showed up here claiming that Cypher was her kid’s father?” Declan asks.

“That’s not what she did.” Ember frowns up at him.

My fucking head is spinning. “Then how do you—”

“I figured it out.” Jenna scowls at me. “She didn’t say a damn thing about it until I questioned her about how far along she was. It was written all over her, and she’s scared, Cypher. Her family isn’t supporting her.”

“Babe,” Kellan says, finally managing to pull her into his side. His arms clamp around her as she leans against his chest.

I’m so goddamn confused. I scrub a hand down my face, trying to get the ground to stop swaying beneath my feet. “Okay, go back. Explain it to me. What the fuck did she say?”

Ember lets out a heavy sigh. “After Jenna figured out she was pregnant, she admitted it was the result of a one-night stand. She said she got drunk at a party and didn’t even know who the guy was.”

Declan frowns. “Random hook-ups, and you think this makes her reliable?”

Ember slaps a hand to his chest. “Did she look like the kind of girl who parties like that? She reeks of money and

poise. She's—" Her back stiffens, her wide eyes going even wider. "Oh my god."

"What?" Jenna asks, lifting her head from King's chest.

"She's a VanLear."

Everyone stares at her. Does she expect us to know what the hell she's talking about? She shakes her head. "Her mother was one of my clients. She showed me a picture of Sicily once. That's why she looked so familiar to me. Her father is the new Dean at the private college."

Kellan whistles. "She's money alright."

"And probably a spoiled little rich girl," Declan mumbles.

"That's not fair," Jenna snaps, pulling away from Kellan. "She is scared and confused. I know what it's like to come from a family like that. Their reputation means everything to them. More than their own precious daughter." Her glassy eyes meet mine and a weird feeling snakes through me. "Her parents want her to get an abortion."

For the second time today, I stop breathing. My chest goes tight and a spark of anger surges through me, but I push it back down. There's no way I'm ready for a kid. Shoving my hands into my pockets, I shrug. "Problem solved then," I whisper.

Jenna's lip trembles and it feels like a kick to the gut. Before I can take it back, she's out the front door.

"Dick," Kellan growls before he follows her out.

Declan doesn't say anything, but the look on Ember's face says it all.

I'm a fucking asshole.

I watch as Sicily emerges from her dorm. You'd think a private school would make you swipe a badge or something to

get onto campus, but they didn't. I cruised right on in like I belonged here. *Pathetic fucking security.*

I've been watching her for a few days, figuring out where she lives, where she hangs out and what people she's close to. Right now, she's walking side-by-side with the same blonde cheerleader type I always see her with. Her name is Penelope, I know because I hacked into the school's records. I also asked around when I followed them to a coffee shop the other day. I know she's Sicily's roommate and best friend, along with two other girls, Eliza and Jodi. I have no idea why I keep coming here, why I care so much about a girl I hardly even know, but I can't stay away. My curiosity has gotten the better of me. I guess I just want to know if she really did get rid of my k... her problem. I can't stop wondering if she's going to show up on my doorstep asking for money, or worse, a marriage proposal. I snicker. *Like that will ever fucking happen.*

Both of their heads turn in the direction of a few guys walking towards them. I sit up straighter as they approach, and a blonde-haired pussy slips an arm around Sicily's shoulders. She turns away from his lips as he leans in to kiss her, catching her cheek instead. My hands clench around my steering wheel. Who is this shit stain? Heat crawls up my neck as the fucker touches her like he has the right to. Before I even know what I'm doing, I'm out of the car and storming towards them. My vision zeros in on the Ken doll wanna be, and three seconds before I reach them, Sicily spots me. She stumbles back a step as I slam my hand against the guy's chest and shove him into his buddy.

"What the fuck?" he mutters, somehow managing to stay on his feet as he and his friend trip over themselves. I place myself between him and Sicily, silently hoping he'll give me a reason to lay his ass out in front of her. "Who the fuck are you?" he snaps, getting up in my face.

"The guy who's going to rip your fucking arm off if you touch her again," I growl.

“Cypher!” Sicily gasps.

Ken’s eyes snap to her. “You know this guy?”

“Oh, she knows me.” I smirk.

“Christian,” she says, moving around me, trying to squeeze between us.

Christian? Typical pussy boy name.

“Sis, maybe you should stay out of the way,” Penelope says.

My hands automatically land on her hips as she wiggles her way in front of me, her ass pressing against my crotch, and her tits against *his* chest. A spark jolts through my fingers as they press into her waist. I take a step back, only so I can pull her away from him. She stumbles into me, but I hold her steady. As long as no part of her is touching him, I can fucking breathe.

Christian frowns down at her. “Who the fuck is this guy, Sis?”

“Do you want to tell him, Princess? Or should I?” I grin at the little fucker.

Sicily spins around, her caramel eyes pleading with me to shut the hell up. “What do you want?”

I take in her face; her high cheekbones, full lips, and sultry eyes. She’s fucking gorgeous, and not for the first time, I wish I could remember what it was like to be inside of her. *How the hell can I not remember fucking this girl?* My fingers have slipped under the hem of her shirt and the feel of her warm flesh has my cock waking up. What the hell am I doing? I take a step back, letting my hands fall to my sides. “We need to talk.”

“What the fuck does she have to talk to you about?” Christian asks.

Sicily turns back to him. “Christian, please.”

“Seriously, Sis? He’s biker trash! You shouldn’t be seen talking to someone like him.” He sneers in my direction.

My hands ball into fists. I really want to knock his fucking lights out, but I have a feeling that wouldn’t go over too well. He’s not why I’m here, anyway. “Get in the car, Sicily,” I say through gritted teeth.

Christian grabs her arm and yanks her behind him. Sicily’s face contorts as she trips over her own two feet. “Ouch, Christian!”

The moment he touches her, and she cries out, I see fucking red. I pull my fist back and swing, catching him in the temple. Penelope screams as he hits the ground, and I grab Sicily’s hand, pulling her along behind me.

“Oh my god!” she gasps, staring down at the *Fifty Shades of Grey* wanna be. Then she turns her pale face to me. “What are you doing?” I don’t answer. I keep pulling her towards my Camaro. As soon as we step off the curb next to my car, she jerks her hand away. “Cypher!”

I spin around, towering over her as I breathe heavily through my nose. “Either get in the fucking car or I’ll place you in it.” The terrified look on her face makes me pull back. I’m not trying to scare the girl; I just want to talk. Motioning to her stomach, I force my voice to be calm. “I know.”

She swallows hard, the blood draining from her face. “W... what are you going to do to me?”

I shake my head. “I just want to talk, Princess.”

“Sicily?” Penelope pants as she runs up behind us.

We stare at each other, silently trying to read each other’s minds. She wants to know if she can trust me, and I want to know if she’s telling the truth.

“It’s alright, Penn,” she tells her friend, not even bothering to look at her.

I take a step back and grab the door handle to my Camaro, yanking it open and motioning for her to get in. A

hint of color rushes back into her cheeks as she silently slips into the passenger seat and I shut the door. I walk over to Penelope, whose eyes grow wider the closer I get. “Give me your phone.” She blinks several times before pulling her phone from her back pocket. “Unlock it,” I demand. She does, then quickly hands it to me. I open the camera, hold it up in front of my face and snap a picture, then I take one of the tags on my car. “If she goes missing, you can show the cops exactly who took her.” I hand her the phone back and give her a quick wink before heading to the driver’s side. If that doesn’t prove to Sicily she can trust me, I don’t know what will.

“She’s safe with you, right?” Penelope asks.

Opening my door, I glance back at her over the top of my car. “Safer than she is here, sweetheart.”

Chapter 8

SICILY

I sit on the hood of his car, letting the heat from the engine warm my legs. He drove us to a park twenty minutes out of town, and neither of us said a word the entire drive. The moment he put the car in park, I jumped out, needing fresh air because I couldn't breathe sitting so close to him. I'm not sure when he got out, but when I started to shiver from the cold, he picked me up and placed me on the hood of his car to keep me warm. Now he's leaning back against the side of his Camaro, arms folded over his chest, staring at the ground. Talk about awkward.

"It's been four days since we ran into each other at Ember's salon," he says, his deep voice breaking the silence. "Are you going to tell me what I already know? Or just keep pretending I don't exist?"

I pick at a string on my jeans. "Ignoring you doesn't seem to work. You came to find me, anyway."

He jerks away from the car, coming to stand in front of me. I jump when he plants his hands on either side of me, and he leans in, his face stopping inches from mine. "Fucking say it, Sicily," he demands, his voice dropping lower. His eyes turn a shade darker as he glares down at me.

My pulse races, both in panic and excitement. I'm so confused. My body obviously wants him, but knowing what he is, how dangerous he is, I'm suddenly terrified of being here alone with him. I swallow hard as I try to look away, but he grips my chin, forcing me to stay just as I am. I open my mouth to speak, but nothing comes out. Fear has stolen my voice.

"Is it mine?" he asks.

I manage a nod.

His jaw clenches as he stares me down, trying to see the truth. “You sure about that, Princess?”

Bye bye, fear. Hello, anger. My nostrils flair as I jerk my chin out of his grip and shove him away. “Fuck you, asshole,” I snap, sliding off the car to walk away from him. *Okay, that hurt, but what did I expect?* Tears fill my eyes, and I wrap my arms around myself as the cold seeps back in. “I’m not like that. I don’t sleep around.”

“You landed in my bed pretty easily.”

I practically wince as another one of his insults slices into me. I spin around, my body shaking as my tears finally fall. “I was drunk!” I shout. “That’s the first time I’ve ever drank that much. I’ve been with three men in my entire life. A fraction of the women I’m sure you’ve been with. I hadn’t been with anyone for almost two months before sleeping with you, and I haven’t been with anyone since, so yeah, I’m sure it’s yours.” I swipe angrily at my cheeks, my chest heaving. Cypher watches me, showing no hint of emotion. When he doesn’t say anything, I storm past him, back to the car, and snatch my purse from the inside. Fishing out my phone, I start walking towards the park exit as I pull up the Uber app.

The phone tumbles from my hands when thick arms wrap around my waist, and I’m pulled back against his chest. “We’re not finished, Princess,” his hot breath whispers against my ear.

“We never started,” I hiss, elbowing him in the gut, jerking free once again.

He smirks as he bends down and scoops up my phone. “Oh, we definitely started, sweetheart.” Instead of handing it back to me, he stares at the screen, reading the dozens of messages from Penn and Christian I ignored in my haste to get out of there. His jaw clenches as he reads through them. “Your little boyfriend is threatening to go to the cops.”

“He’s not my boyfriend,” I huff, reaching for my phone only for him to snatch it away and start typing. “What are you

doing? Give it back, Cypher.”

His fingers freeze, a low growl vibrating from his chest as he looks up at me. I suck in a breath, taking a step back at the heated look in his eyes. “My name sounds good on your lips, Princess,” his voice rumbles.

My hand glides over my stomach and he notices. He blinks, and the heat fizzles out as he goes back to texting on my phone before handing it back to me. I glance at the screen to see what he typed and almost choke when I read the message he sent to Christian.

“I’ll be sure to give the police a full report of how much bigger his cock is than yours.”

My head snaps up, my mouth dropping open. When I see the smirk on his handsome face, my mouth slams shut. “You really are an asshole.”

He shrugs. “Never said I wasn’t.”

“Jerk,” I mumble as I scroll through my messages. A text pops up from Penn asking if I’m okay and letting me know she convinced Christian not to go to the police, but she couldn’t keep him from running to my parents. I groan as I text her back. Before I can even hit send, a call comes through from my father. I hit ignore. Fucking fantastic. As if they weren’t already pissed enough. Once again, I pull up the Uber app. “I have to go.”

“We’re not done,” Cypher says, snatching the phone yet again.

“Look,” I sigh. “You’re off the hook, okay? I don’t want or need anything from you.”

The vein in his neck bulges. “I think I have a right to know what your plans are.”

Why does it matter? I don’t know him, and he doesn’t know me. As far as I’m concerned, this is my problem. The last thing I need is to be indebted to a biker. My phone rings again and he lifts it to see who’s calling. “Mommy dearest,” he

says, flashing me the screen before hitting ignore. “I’m sure they have no problem paying to make this little problem go away.” He motions to my stomach.

“They’ve already offered. Insisted, in fact.” My heart cracks a little more, remembering the way they looked at me when I told them about the baby. I glance away, not wanting him to see how pathetic I am.

He moves closer, and I bite down on my lip, trying to fight back my emotions. His big hand gently grasps my chin, turning my face back to his. His pale eyes roam over me, full of questions. “Is that what you want?”

My chin quivers. It should be. It would make everything easier for everyone; make everyone happy. Everyone except me. The more I think about it, the more I find myself in awe of the life growing inside of me. The thought of ending his or her life literally makes me sick. But I won’t admit that to him. I can’t. Instead, I nod.

He watches me closely for several seconds before nodding and taking a step back. “Then I’ll pay for it.”

I shake my head. “No, I don’t need you—”

Anger flashes in his eyes, so dark and deadly, cutting me off with a gasp. “It’s my responsibility, Sicily. I’ll handle it.” He shoves my phone into my chest as it starts to ring again. “Get in the car. I’ll take you home.”

I clutch the phone to my chest as I watch him storm away. Letting out a deep breath, I answer it as I follow him. “Hey, Mom, I’m—”

“Where the hell are you?” she shouts. I flinch and pull the phone from my ear. Rolling my eyes, I open the door and climb in just as Cypher starts the engine. “Christian said some guy showed up on campus and dragged you away.”

“He didn’t drag me away,” I huff. “I went willingly.” I watch as Cypher’s hands tighten on the steering wheel.

“Christian said he was a biker. My god, Sicily, if anyone sees you with someone like that—”

I grip the phone tighter. *That’s* what she’s worried about? Someone seeing their precious daughter with a person she considers to be beneath us? She hasn’t even asked if I was okay. If I was hurt or needed help. “He didn’t waste any time running to mommy and daddy, did he?” I mumble.

She gasps. “Sicily!”

“I’m on my way home, Mother. I’ll be there in twenty minutes.” I don’t wait for a response before hanging up and dropping my phone in my lap. I press my fingers into my temples, trying to alleviate the pounding headache I suddenly have.

“Who is Christian to you?” Cypher asks.

Squeezing my eyes tighter as a sharp ache pierces through my head, I sigh. “My ex.”

He snorts. “Of course he is.”

I drop my hands and turn to look at him. “What is that supposed to mean?”

He turns the car onto the road, heading back into town as he grins at me. Although it seems more like a sneer. “Only that you would date a guy with a pussy ass name like *Christian*.”

I watch his profile, taking in his arrogance. “It’s better than *Cypher*.”

When he smiles, this time it’s genuine. “I see you didn’t dispute that he was a pussy.” He glances over and winks.

I purse my lips as a smile tries to break free, then turn to look out the window. *God, he’s cute*. “Cypher isn’t your real name, is it?”

He shakes his head. “It’s Kyle. But no one calls me that. Ever.”

I smirk, knowing he just gave me a small piece of himself. But then I think about what I'm about to face once I get home, and that sense of dread creeps back in.

We pull through the gate at my parent's house, only to find my father and Christian waiting outside for me. Great, this is going to be a shit show. I'm assuming they told Christian about the baby, so I can only imagine what vile things he's going to spew at me.

"Two on one," Cypher growls as he brings the car to a stop and puts it in park. He glares at the two men as they approach the car. Both looking like they're ready to murder not only me, but the man sitting next to me as well.

"It will be three on one once I walk inside. Don't think my mother won't be in on this as well." I sigh as I reach for the handle.

Cypher's hand darts out and grabs my wrist. My head jerks around to look at him, only to find his eyes narrowed at who's on the top of the steps. "Who are they?"

I lean forward to get a better look, and my heart slams against my ribs when I spot my mother standing there with two people I wasn't expecting. "Shit," I mumble. "Christian's parents." Cypher's door opens, and he climbs out of the car. "What are you doing?" I gasp. He doesn't answer, and I watch as he slams his door and makes his way around to the passenger side.

Opening my door, he holds his hand out, his face hard as stone. "Five on one isn't going to fly with me, Princess."

If I could speak, I would tell him I'm fine, but the protective tone of his voice has rendered me stupid. Instead, I reach out and take his offered hand. He helps me from the car, shutting the door just as my father makes it to the hood.

"Get your hands off my daughter!" he snaps.

I flinch, squeezing Cypher's hand. He smirks, completely unaffected by the anger rolling off the man in front of him. "A little late for that warning, isn't it, Pops?"

My breath catches in my throat and I almost choke. I can't believe he just said that. My father's face turns almost purple as he shuffles closer. "Why you piece of—"

I quickly step between the two men, despite Cypher trying to hold me back. "Stop!"

"Sicily," Christian says, drawing my attention to him. His left eye is swollen and turning a dark bluish black, thanks to the right hook Cypher gifted him a few hours ago. His gaze is intense and angry, and he's practically shaking as he struggles to keep his cool. "Is it true?"

Guilt claws at my stomach. Yes, he gets on my nerves, and yes, he cheated on me, and we've been broken up for months, but I don't want to hurt him. Especially not like this. Looks like I don't have a choice, though. "Yes," I whisper.

His shoulders sag. I can almost see his heart breaking, and it only makes me feel even worse.

"Sicily," my father's voice lowers in warning. "Get in the house."

"I don't think so," Cypher growls from behind me. His hand tightens over mine and it's then that I realize he's still holding onto it.

My father steps closer, his eyes narrowing into slits. "This does not concern you."

Cypher moves, slipping in front of me. His shoulders seem to widen as he towers over my father, coming face to face with him. "Considering it's my kid she's carrying; this most definitely concerns me."

The power radiating off of him has even my father taking a step back. The angry look on his face falters, and the man who I've always thought to be the toughest man I know shows fear for the first time. But he quickly covers it.

“T—This,” he clears his throat. “This is a family matter. You need to leave.”

Cypher grins down at him. But it’s anything but friendly. “I am family now, Pops.”

My father’s jaw clenches. He’s not used to having people stand up to him. He’s used to being the authoritative figure, not only here at home, but at his school as well. This whole thing is going to explode if I don’t get Cypher out of here. I tug on his arm, placing my hand on his chest. “Cypher, please, just go. I can handle this.”

His attention cuts over to Christian. “Why are you here, pretty boy?”

“To make sure his future wife doesn’t make an even bigger mistake than she already has.”

I glance up to find my mother storming down the front steps, her dark gaze piercing into Cypher like he’s a bug that needs to be squashed. Her lips are set into a tight line as she glares down her nose at the man still standing at my side.

Cypher glances between me and Christian. His teeth grinding together. “Well, this is news.” His voice comes out gritty.

“I’m not marrying him,” I quickly explain. I turn back to my mother as she joins my father. “I told you we broke up months ago. Stop trying to push us together.”

My mother’s lips press together so tightly they’re turning white. “Are you seriously going to throw your life away for someone like *him*?” She waves her hand in Cypher’s direction. He sniffs as she scowls at him.

“I’m not throwing my life away. I’m not with Cypher or Christian,” I argue. “And someone like *him*? You mean someone who’s willing to stick up for a person he hardly even knows?”

“You knew him enough to spread your legs for him.” Christian sneers.

My body goes tense. I wait for my parents to defend me, but of course, they don't. They don't even bat an eye at the blatant insult he just hurled at their daughter.

"Pissed she rode my cock better than yours?" Cypher grins at him.

I gasp. Christian's face goes red, and he looks like he wants to slam his fist into Cypher's face, but he isn't stupid. The man could probably snap him in two. It's obvious he's scared of him, and who wouldn't be? Cypher is big, scary, and reeks of danger.

"I've had enough," my father's voice rumbles. "You've disrespected us, your future husband, and his parents." He points a finger at my stomach and sneers. "Either that bastard goes, or you do. There is no compromise."

My knees go weak as I watch him grab my mother's arm, and they turn away from me. I fall back into Cypher's chest, his arm wrapping around my waist to hold me against him. Tears flow down my cheeks as I watch my parents walk up the steps, leaving a clear ultimatum behind. If I don't terminate this pregnancy, I'm no longer a part of their family.

"It's not too late, Sicily," Christian says, his eyes locked on Cypher's arm around me. "Make the right decision. Me and your family." His gaze travels up to mine. "Or a man who I guarantee will leave you with a kid to raise alone after he bleeds you dry."

My chin quivers. He could very well be right. But I'm not choosing Cypher, I'm choosing myself. I'm choosing my child. I'm choosing to not be bullied.

"Tell her parents I said thanks." Cypher's chest rumbles against my back.

Christian watches him. "For what?"

"For making this so much easier for me." My feet come out from under me as Cypher scoops me up, bridal style. My hands automatically lock around his neck as all the air leaves my body. "What are you—"

“Shhh,” he whispers against my ear as he turns back to his car. “You’ll ruin our grand exit.”

I can hear the humor in his voice, but I can’t laugh. Not when I stand to lose everything. My world is hanging by a thread, and I’m pretty sure it’s about to unravel.

Chapter 9

CYPHER

What the fuck am I doing? I can't take this girl back to my apartment. I could take her back to her dorm, but it doesn't feel right to just dump her off. Her family did her dirty, and watching the way they treated her, the way she started to break, set off something fierce inside of me. I wanted to protect her, to protect what was *mine*. That thought hits me so hard my entire body jerks, and I almost run us off the road.

"Cypher!" Sicily gasps, her hands shooting out to grab the dashboard.

"Sorry," I mumble.

She goes back to staring out the window and not talking. Lost in her thoughts and no doubt replaying the last twenty minutes over in her head. I feel bad for her. I'm angry for her. I want to help her. *Again, what the fuck am I doing?*

My phone rings and the screen on the dash lights up with Riggs' name. Pressing the button, I answer, "Yo."

"Where are you?" he asks.

"Headed back into town."

"Need you at the Den, now." His tone has an edge to it. Something's going down.

I glance at Sicily out of the corner of my eye. She's still staring out the window. "I'm not alone."

Riggs doesn't say anything for several seconds. When he does, his voice has dropped lower. "Miss Kitty?"

Sicily's head whips towards the dash display, glaring at it like she can actually see him. "I have a name," she snaps.

I cock a brow as I steal a glance at her angry profile. Hot damn, there's that fire I remember.

“Bring her, this can’t wait,” Riggs says, then disconnects. *Yeah, something is definitely going down.*

Sicily goes back to staring out the window, and we make it back to the Den without another word passing between us. Pulling up out front, I cut the engine and climb out. Making my way to the club’s doors, I stop when I notice she hasn’t gotten out of the car yet. Is the princess waiting for me to open her door and escort her inside? Frowning, I turn around and stare at her through the window. Her face is so white, she’s practically glowing, and she’s staring up at the clubhouse like she’s terrified of the horrors that lie within. Grumbling to myself, I march back to the passenger side and yank her door open. “Are you planning on coming in? or sitting out here in the cold?”

Eyes never leaving the front doors, she opens her mouth then closes it. After a few seconds, she finally turns her attention to me. “Couldn’t you just take me back to campus first?”

I cock a brow. “Did you not hear the conversation in the car? I’ll take you back later.” I shove my hand towards her, waiting for her to take it.

“I... I don’t think I belong here,” she whispers.

I grit my teeth, my hand dropping back to my side. “Looks like the apple didn’t fall far from the tree after all.”

She stiffens. “What does that mean?”

I slam her door and turn back to the clubhouse. Not two seconds later, I hear her door open, then close. “Cypher? Wait a minute. That’s not what I meant.”

I turn back to face her, making her skid to a halt before slamming into me. “What was all that back there?” I wave towards the road we just came from. “Just a way to rebel against mommy and daddy?”

She stiffens, her mouth dropping open. “No! How could you even... you were there, Cypher. You heard the things they said to me.”

I scoff. “Yeah, but it’s an easy situation to fix to get back into their good graces.”

Her whole-body flinches like I’ve just struck her. I’m pretty sure she’s not breathing. Her eyes shimmer as she nods and takes a step back. “You’re right, it is. Thank you for reminding me.” A tear breaks free as she spins around and rushes through the parking lot towards the road.

“Fuck!” I groan. “Sicily?” I hurry after her. I can tell she has her phone out, the light from the screen lighting up her face. I catch up to her as she hits the road and turns left out of the parking lot. *Jesus, is this girl on the fucking track team or something?* This is the second time I’ve had to run to catch up with her. “God damn it, woman. Hold the fuck up.” I grab her arm and spin her around, but her eyes are closed. She doesn’t want to look at me. “What are you planning to do? Walk back to town?”

Her eyes fly open. “Do you seriously expect a young woman to walk into a biker club full of men she doesn’t know? Do you not see how terrifying that is? No woman in her right mind would knowingly put herself in this position.”

I release her arm and run a hand down my face. Fuck, I can understand that. Taking a step back, I nod. “You’ll be fine. You’re walking in there with me. No one will touch you. They know better.”

“And why is that?”

I lift my hand to her cheek and brush my thumb across it. “Because they know I’d rip their fucking arms off if they did.” Her lip’s part, and I grin as I drop my hand from her cheek only to link our fingers together. “Just trust me, babe.”

She hesitates, but then allows me to lead her back towards the club. Her fingers tighten around mine as I throw the door open, and we walk inside. Smoke, music, conversations, and the crack of pool balls greet us before we manage to make it three steps in. I can feel her press against me, her free hand clutching at my arm as she glances around

the room. Several heads turn our way, eyes traveling over the newcomer who, she was right, does not fit in here at all. But just like I promised, no one says a damn thing. They greet me with smiles, handshakes, or slaps on the shoulder, and offer her nothing more than a curious glance. She seems just fine with that.

I spot Riggs and Mammoth at the bar talking to Salem and Al, and I make my way over to them. Mammoth cocks his head, fighting a grin as we approach. I roll my eyes, ignoring him as I plaster on my signature smile for Salem and Al. “Hey, ladies, miss me?”

Alora snorts. “Like I miss a yeast infection.”

“Or an ingrown cooter hair.” Salem smirks.

I wrinkle my nose. “Your wife is all class, Brother,” I say, turning back to Riggs.

He laughs. “You’re just jealous she chose me.”

“That I am, Brother. That I am.”

Mammoth leans back, looking around me at the woman that’s glued to my arm. “Since dickless here has no manners, I’m assuming you’re Sicily.”

She nods, but makes no attempt to answer.

“I’m Mammoth, this here is Riggs and his wife Salem.” He motions to them.

“And I’m Al,” Alora says.

Sicily smiles nervously at the two women.

“Can I get you a drink?” Salem asks.

She nods, finally loosening her death grip on my arm. “Just a water please.”

I guide her onto the stool next to Mammoth, carefully pulling my hand from hers, but making sure I stay close enough for her to feel comfortable. I turn to Riggs and lower my voice as the girls start chatting away. “What’s up?”

“King and Wren made a grab.” He jerks his chin towards the conference room door.

My heart starts to pound. “Brick?”

Riggs shakes his head. “Thomas.”

My hands clench. That’s just as good. “Fuck yeah,” I growl. “We doing this tonight?”

“Just waiting for Mac and Breaker to—”

I jump when a hand slips around my waist and grabs my dick. I spin around and the moment I’m facing her, Vera grabs my shirt and yanks me to her lips. Her tongue swipes against my mouth, briefly slipping inside before I manage to pull away. “Hey, baby,” she purrs. “I missed you.” My eyes automatically dart over to Sicily, who’s taking in the half-dressed woman who barely has her huge tits covered. Vera’s hand goes right back to my cock as she presses herself even closer. “How about we go upstairs and pick up where we left off the other night?” Even though my dick perks up, I mean a woman is touching it, of course it’s going to react. I grab her hand and push it away. Sicily’s face flushes bright red before she quickly turns back to the bar.

“Jesus, Vera,” Alora sneers. “Your skank is showing.”

Vera glares at her over the bar. “Mind your own damn business, Al.” She smiles up at me. “Cypher likes his women a little dirty. Don’t you, baby?”

“Most guys do like easy pussy,” Mammoth says. “For a short while.” He smiles at Sicily. “Then they finally grow up and realize they don’t want what everyone else has already had.”

Vera’s nostrils flare.

Riggs barks out a laugh, but I haven’t been able to take my eyes off of Sicily. She’s staring down at her water, clearly trying to fly under the radar and not draw attention to herself. But she looks pissed. When Vera touched me, I felt guilty. Like I was the one who did something wrong. *How the hell*

was this my fault? Vera's the one who touched me, not the other way around.

Vera follows my line of sight, her face twisting into a scowl as her cold stare roams over Sicily with irritation. "Who the fuck are you?"

Sicily looks like she's about to choke on her water as she swallows hard and turns to face Vera. Her eyes dart between me and the woman who has placed herself in front of me like she's defending her property. "I... uh... I'm."

"Oh pleeease, let me tell her," Alora sings. Sicily's face drains of color and she ever so slightly shakes her head. "This," Alora grins as she motions to her. "Is Cypher's baby momma."

Vera blinks. She looks from Al to Sicily, then back at me. Slowly, Al's words sink in, and as they do, her hands clench tighter and tighter. "Are you fucking kidding me?"

"Nope," Riggs smirks, lifting his beer to his lips and finishing the bottle. "Cypher's gonna be a daddy."

The red in Vera's face starts to creep down her neck and chest. She looks murderous, and poor Sicily looks like she was just tossed to the wolves. Grabbing Vera's arm, I pull her away, not wanting her near Sicily in case she starts throwing a fit.

"What the hell, Cypher?" she snaps.

I open my mouth to tell her we'll talk later, but I'm interrupted before I have a chance. "Fuck off, Vera. We have business to deal with." I glance over her shoulder to find a scowling Mac approaching. His features are tense, and you can clearly see the threat of death coiling around him. At seventy-three, the man is still scary as shit. "And by fuck off, I mean get the rest of the girls and get the fuck out of Dodge. This isn't a party tonight."

Vera's a smart girl. She knows what that means. With a scathing look at Sicily, she quickly hurries away, headed

straight for a cluster of other sweet butts. She'll have them all cleared out within the next five minutes.

Breaker stares at Sicily. "Are you waiting for a special invitation, sweetheart?"

She looks like she's about to pass out as she slinks down in her seat. I step up behind her, my chest pressing into her back. Salem grins like a goddamn loon. "Breaker, Mac. Meet Sicily. She's here with Cypher."

Breaker's eyebrows lift.

Sicily's mouth drops open. "No, I'm just... I mean, I'm not *with* him."

"It's complicated," I tell them.

Mac glances between the two of us, the scowl on his face deepening. "I don't give a fuck if she's your long-lost sister." He looks over at Salem and Al. "*All* women out." The tone of his voice leaves no room for arguing. Considering what's about to happen, and who his grandsons have in the back room, I completely understand.

"Come on, Sicily," Al says, making her way from behind the bar, with Salem following. "We're heading to Kellan and Jenna's place to hang out with the girls for a bit."

Sicily glances around as she slowly slips off the stool, looking terrified. When her warm brown eyes land on me, I nod, letting her know it's okay. She grabs her purse and follows the girls out, keeping her head down the entire way. I don't like seeing her like this. I like her fire, but I completely understand why she's so nervous.

As soon as the door closes behind them, and the last of the sweet butts are gone, Kellan and Declan appear from the hall that leads to the conference room, looking more pissed than I've ever seen them. "Shut the fuck up," Kellan shouts. Everyone goes quiet as they scramble to find seats. Fury flashes in Kellan's eyes, and you'd have to be an idiot not to recognize how serious this is. He moves to the middle of the room, where a huge circle has been purposely created. He

paces, his gaze locked on the floor, shoulders tense, and hands clenched at his sides. “You’re all fucking aware there are a few backstabbing, pussy ass traitors in our ranks. The Henchmen were getting their information from somewhere.” He sneers as he continues pacing, and my pulse quickens as I anticipate what’s about to go down. “We know who the motherfuckers are.”

A few members mumble between themselves, but no one speaks up. “Tonight, we found one of them.” Kellan stops directly in the middle of the circle, lifting his head and looking directly at his grandfather. Mac’s breathing intensifies, sounding like a bull ready to fight. “Bring him in,” Kellan growls.

A scuffling sound comes from the hall, and then Ryder and Wren appear, dragging Thomas, aka Popeye, between them. His eyes are swollen, his lip busted, and you can tell his nose has already been broken. Seems Wren and Kellan have already worked him over. Several “what the fucks,” and “fucking bastard” fill the room. A few men jump to their feet, not sure if they should be helping Popeye or backing their prez. I get it; the man’s been a part of this club for over thirty years.

“Fucking piece of shit.” Mac sneers as he shoves his way between me and Riggs. Thomas’ head jerks in our direction, and I wouldn’t have thought it possible, but the man goes even whiter than he already is. I grab Mac’s shoulder, holding him back, but let’s be honest, I’m not trying very hard. Popeye deserves every bit of what he’s going to get tonight.

“It wasn’t my call,” he yells as Ryder and Wren drag him into the circle with Kellan. “I was just following orders.”

Kellan grabs him by the hair of his head and jerks it back, getting in his face as he stares him down. “And tell everyone whose fucking orders you were following.”

Popeye swallows, his Adam’s apple bobbing as he shakes his head.

The muscles in Kellan's jaw tighten. "Whose fucking orders!" he roars.

"Brick's!" Popeye snaps. "Fucking Brick's orders."

Several curses fill the room, but no one is really shocked; the man has always hated the King men, and it's no secret he wants to rule this club.

Kellan moves his face closer, his grip on Popeye's hair tightening. "And what were his orders?"

The two men stare each other down, tension thick with anger. "Dante and Brick were working together with Marcell. They wanted the club to start dealing in heavier drugs and weapons, but Dante knew Mac and the other founders were against it. Brick convinced him to do it; said once the profits started rolling in, everyone would be on board. But when Dante and Marcell found out that women were a part of the deal, and that the Henchmen were involved, they wanted to back out." Kellan shoves his head back, releasing his hair. Popeye spits blood on the ground, his chest heaving. "We stood to lose a fucking fortune, and it was too late to change our minds. The deal was already made, and Brick wanted to be the one to run the show. Dante, your father..." Popeye scowls. "...threatened to go to the club and have the operation stopped. If he did that, the Henchmen would have taken us all out. Brick had no choice."

Mac pulls out of my grip, and I let him. He stalks towards the bastard in the middle of the room. I've never seen the old man look so deadly. "No choice to what?" he asks, his voice dripping with venom as he comes to a stop right in front of him.

Popeye stiffens but turns to face him head on. "To eliminate the threat, and show Marcell what would happen if he tried to back out as well."

Mac's body rocks forward. Clearly, he's holding back until the sorry piece of shit confesses everything. We need the entire club to know exactly what Brick did and just how far his

betrayal ran. "He gave an order to have my son killed," Mac questions, his teeth clenched tight.

Popeye nods. "Yes."

Mac's hand slides to his lower back, wrapping around his Glock tucked into his waistband. Popeye follows the movement, knowing what's to come, and I'll give the piece of shit props, he's accepting his fate like a man. He knew he wasn't walking out of here tonight.

"Who pulled the trigger?" Mac asks.

Popeye lifts his head, squaring his shoulders as he meets Mac's eyes. "I did."

In a blink, Mac pulls out his gun, aims, and pulls the trigger.

Chapter 10

SICILY

How much shit can pile up on one person in a twenty-four-hour time frame? My parents want nothing to do with me, Christian thinks I'm a whore, Cypher has bulldozed his way into my life, and now, I'm sitting in the president of a motorcycle gang's house with his pregnant girlfriend and her friends, who all happen to be dating or are married to other members of the same gang. I must be crazy. I must have been temporarily out of my mind to have allowed Cypher or these women to lure me to their place alone. How do I know they won't beat the crap out of me and leave me for dead in the woods? Maybe that's what Cypher ordered them to do. Eliminate the problem, aka me.

“Sicily?”

I startle at the sound of Jenna's voice. Five sets of eyes stare back at me from the living room, and it's then that I realize I'm still standing just inside the front door. Ready to bolt if need be.

“We won't bite, you know?” a dark-haired woman holding a little girl that looks just like her says. “I'm Mia, and this is Becca.” She grins down at the baby, whose little fist is shoved in her mouth. I slowly make my way into the cozy living room. I guess if there are children here, they won't murder me in front of them. Then again, maybe they start teaching them young?

“Here,” Ember says, scooting over and patting the spot next to her. I'm still cautious, and a bit stiff as I slip onto the black leather sofa. I'll admit, the place is pretty nice, not what I would have expected at all. “Mia, this is Sicily,” Ember says.

“Hi.” I smile nervously.

“You look like you’re afraid to move.” Alora grins. She throws her legs over the back of the couch and drops down between me and Ember. Her shoulders bump into ours, and the two of them laugh. I can’t help but smile; just a little.

“I’m sorry, I’m just... you have to realize how nervous this all makes me,” I confess. “I don’t know any of you, and here I am, thrown headfirst into the middle of a motorcycle gang.”

“Club,” they all say at the same time. They glance around at each other, smirking.

My gaze travels around the room. “I’m sorry?”

Salem, who’s sitting on the floor next to Mia, smiles up at Becca. “They’re a club, not a gang. Gangs run the streets and terrorize people. An MC is a club. They’re part of the community, and for the most part, contribute positively to society.” She turns to smile at me, but there’s a hint of seriousness in her tone. “Don’t call them a gang in front of the guys. They get a little touchy about that.”

“Noted,” I mumble.

“MC clubs get a bad rep. But a lot of them actually do quite a bit for their communities. They raise money for issues like poverty, child abuse, and domestic violence,” Mia says. “A lot of clubs are former military, so they raise money for veterans too. Don’t get me wrong, there are some that fit the term ‘gang’ very well, and the Demons are not a club to mess with. You don’t want to cross them.”

I must look terrified because Jenna nudges Mia in the arm. “They’re just protective of the ones they care about, Sicily. You know that includes you, right? You have nothing to worry about.”

I glance around, confused. “But I’m nobody.”

Alora laughs. “Oh, honey, you most certainly are.” She slides a hand over my stomach, and I freeze. “You’re carrying a future Demon. That makes you a huge somebody.”

My face grows hot at the thought. “I’m not... I mean, I haven’t decided what I’m going to do yet.”

Ember leans forward to peer around Alora. “Have you and Cypher talked about it?”

I shrug. “Kind of. We had a few minutes to talk before my parents called, and he took me home.” I huff out a laugh. “They flipped the hell out when I arrived with a biker, and demanded, yet again, that I get rid of *it*, as they like to call my baby.”

Jenna frowns. “Believe me when I tell you, I know exactly what you’re going through.” I study her, wondering how she could possibly know anything about my life. She gives me a sympathetic grin. “I’m pretty sure your family isn’t much different from mine. My father is Senator James Bryant. My family controlled everything about me, including who I was expected to marry.”

My eyes go wide.

Nodding, Jenna runs a hand over her large stomach. “I won’t go into specifics, but the man my father was forcing me to marry wasn’t a good man at all. If I had stayed, I probably wouldn’t be alive right now.”

“Thank God for Kellan,” Alora says.

Jenna’s whole face lights up. “Yeah, Kellan saved me in more ways than one. Trust me when I say, Sicily, I was exactly like you. Kellan found me broken down on the side of the road after I ran from the abusive asshole. I was thrown headfirst into the MC life, just like you, and from day one, they protected me, even when I fought against it.”

“I guess the first thing you need to figure out is if you want to keep the baby,” Ember says.

Mia cocks her head as her gaze bores right through me. I swear she can hear my thoughts, knowing what my heart is feeling, because she gives me a wide smile. “I think you’ve already made up your mind. You want the baby, or you would

have already done what your family is trying to force you to do.”

Right on cue, my eyes flood with tears. Deep down, I do want to keep my baby, but I’m terrified of what it will cost me. Not just my family, but the future I had all planned out. Nodding, I quickly swipe at the lone tear that managed to escape. “I’m scared though.”

“Of course, you’re scared,” Jenna says, pushing herself up from her chair, making her way over to me. She motions for me to scoot over, and I do, allowing her room to sit next to me. “Your entire world has just been flipped on its head. But you won’t be in this alone.” She wraps her arm around my shoulders and tugs me against her. “Whether you want it or not, you’ve just gained five sisters and several very overprotective big brothers.”

“That’s another thing about an MC,” Salem says. “Once you’re in, you’re family, and you, dear Sicily, are in.”

My pulse is racing. How could I possibly fit in among these people? Do I want to? Clearing my throat, I shift nervously. “But... I’m not with Cypher. I mean, it was a one-time thing. I’m not even sure we like each other.”

“Oh, honey,” Salem chuckles. “How could you not like a man that looks like that?” My face grows hot as I picture those icy blue eyes, his wide shoulders, hard chest, his firm jaw, and the sexiest lips I’ve ever seen on a man. Salem’s smile grows wider, and she points a long, thin finger right at me. “See, that look right there says it all.”

“I mean, he’s hot, yes.” I fidget in my seat. “But I’m not interested in dating him.”

“Why?” Alora cocks a brow. “Do you think you’re too good for him?”

“What?” I gasp. “No, that’s not what I meant at all. I just mean that we’re so different from each other. I don’t know him, and I have enough to worry about.” I wrap my arms around my middle.

Becca starts to fuss, and Mia maneuvers her up onto her shoulder. “Well, first of all, opposites attract. Just look at Jenna and Kellan.”

Jenna nods.

Mia continues, “Second, you’ll get to know him, and all of us. We told you; you won’t have to do this on your own.”

“Regardless of what happens,” Jenna says. “That baby will be a part of this family, therefore, so will you.”

I twist my fingers nervously in my lap. I’m not sure if that’s a good thing or a bad thing. “I haven’t even told him I want to keep the baby yet. What if he doesn’t want anything to do with it?”

“Honey...” Mia grins. “He found out where you went to college, showed up there and dragged you away, stood up with you against your family, and brought you to the clubhouse, where he knew everyone would see you walking in with him. Trust me, he’s already made it clear that you’re his. Even if he doesn’t realize it yet.”

“Plus, there’s the way he looks at you.” Alora smirks. “The man obviously wants back in your panties.”

My mouth drops open. “That is certainly not true.”

“Oh, it’s true.” Salem giggles. “He’s only ever looked at...” Her eyes slide to Ember before quickly darting back to me and she clears her throat.

“He’s into you,” Alora says quickly. “Trust us.”

I stare at Ember, who suddenly can’t seem to meet my eyes, and I wonder what the hell I’m missing. Did she and Cypher used to date? Letting out a deep breath, I ignore the awkward moment. “I’m still not sure what’s going to happen.”

“The first thing that’s going to happen is you’re going to tell Cypher you want to keep the baby, with or without his help,” Jenna says.

I nod, straightening my back. She's right. I've made my decision. Now I need to stand by it and be ready for the fallout that's sure to come. But if I'm doing this, then I need to understand the people I'll be doing it with, because apparently, I'll have a support system, just not the one I was expecting. "Then I guess you better start telling me everything I need to know about your club."

All five of them smile and settle in like it's story time. I listen as they explain the history of the club, who's married to who, and what members hold what ranks. Apparently, they're all either married to or dating one of the club officers. There's a brief mention of a former club, the Henchmen, but they don't tell me much about them. The impression I got was that I was better off not knowing. They make sure to tell me everything they can about Cypher. How he's some tech whiz, and can do just about anything with a computer. I'll admit, I wasn't expecting that. I'll also admit that I'm impressed. Seems there's more to these guys than I thought. Just goes to show, you should never judge a book by its cover.

As I listen to these women laugh and tell stories of their lives within the club, one thing becomes glaringly obvious... they are, in fact, a family. And it seems that family now includes me.

I startle awake, glancing around at the dark, unfamiliar room. It takes my eyes a moment to adjust, and even when they do, I don't recognize the place. Frowning, I sit up and shove the blankets off of me. I'm still wearing my clothes, minus my boots, which only confuses me more. *Where the hell am I?* Panic starts to work its way in as I climb out of the bed and make my way to the door. I hold my breath as I wrap my hand around the knob, terrified that I'll find it locked. I breathe a sigh of relief when it turns, and I slowly drag it open. The hall is just as dark, and it's so quiet, my breathing sounds like I'm in an echo chamber. I cautiously make my way down the hall, exiting into the familiar living room that belongs to Kellan and Jenna. I guess I never left.

My eyes land on the couch and I freeze at the sight of the man stretched out on it. One arm slung over his head, eyes closed, and... no shirt. With the bit of moonlight streaming through the windows, I can see his solid muscles. Without realizing it, I'm moving closer to get a better look. His arms are thick and veiny. His chest is wide and firm looking, but it's the amazing six pack that looks like a damn washboard that has me biting my lip. My memory of him was severely lacking.

“Something you need, Princess?”

My head snaps up to find those icy blues staring back at me. My heart flutters at the sexy smirk playing on his lips, and it hits me so hard I stumble back, tripping over his boots.

“Fuck,” he gasps, shooting up from the couch just in time to grab my waist and haul me down on top of him before I manage to fall on my ass. My hands land against his pecs, and the heat of his flesh steals my breath all over again. I blink down at him, our faces just inches from each other. His arms are locked around my waist, holding me against him, and I swear I can feel every hard inch of him. My system is going into overload. It's too much all at once, and I really need to put some space between us, so I can think clearly.

Clearing my throat, I manage to push myself off of him. “I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you.”

He slowly removes his arms from around me, and I quickly maneuver myself to the opposite end of the couch. “I wasn't asleep anyway,” his deep voice rumbles as he sits up.

“What are we still doing here?” I ask, looking around the room. “Why didn't you wake me when you got here?”

He runs a hand through his hair. “It was late; you were already passed out on the couch. Jenna said I should let you sleep because... uh... pregnant women are always tired.”

Okay, I swoon a little over that. “Then how did I get into the guest room?”

“I wasn’t going to let you stay on the couch while I took a bed.” He frowns, like I just asked a ridiculous question.

I bite my cheek, thanking God that it’s dark enough he can’t see me blushing. Damn it, these girls have gotten me all screwed up, putting crazy thoughts inside my head. “Thank you,” I whisper. “You didn’t have to stay, though. I could have gotten an Uber back to campus tomorrow.”

His eyebrows pull together, a deep crease forming between them. “Will you stop with the fucking Ubers? You shouldn’t be getting into a stranger’s car, Sicily.”

“I do it all the time.”

“Not anymore.” He tosses the blanket off, draping it over the back of the couch.

I try to study him, seeing if I can work out his expression, but he’s a tough one to read. One thing I do know, I’m tired of being told what I should and shouldn’t do. “I don’t think that’s your decision to make?”

His gaze drops to my stomach, and I can practically feel the intensity of his stare. “I had a talk with Jenna and Mia when I got here.” His eyes lift to mine. “You’ve changed your mind.”

The sting of betrayal hits me. I thought I could trust my new ‘friends’. That was a stupid mistake. Clearly, they’re loyal to him, but still. “They had no right to—”

“They didn’t,” he cuts me off. “I overheard them talking. When I asked them about it, they told me you were part of our family now. I’m a smart man, Princess. It wasn’t too hard to figure it out.”

My pulse races as we sit there staring at each other, my breathing becoming heavier. Is he going to be pissed that I’ve changed my mind? Will he try to talk me out of it? Scooting further away, I wrap my arms around myself. “I want to keep the baby.”

He watches me closely, even though it's kind of hard to see. "Your family will cut you off completely. From their lives and financially. Are you sure you're ready for that?"

A sharp pain pierces my chest at the thought of them turning their backs on me, but I've made up my mind. I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I ended this pregnancy, and more importantly, I don't want to. I'm already in love with my child. "Yes," I say firmly.

He cocks his head to the side. "And Christian?"

I huff, rolling my eyes. "He's not a factor. How many times do I have to tell you we broke up months ago? I don't want him."

He moves so quickly I have no time to react. I fall back against the arm of the couch as he lunges over the top of me, pinning me under his body. I gasp, staring up at him as his hot breath fans over my face. *Holy shit, he's intense.* But instead of being terrified that he's going to hurt me, my body starts to tingle in a way it never has before. His left hand is planted on the arm of the couch beside my head, his right braced beside my hip. My mouth goes dry as he leans in even closer. Oh god, is he...

"Then I have every fucking right to protect what's *mine*. That means making sure you don't get in a car with some fucking stranger."

My stomach flips. Mia's words echo in my head as his lips hover just out of reach. "*Trust me, he's already made it clear that you're his. Even if he doesn't realize it yet.*" His declaration of *mine* plays on repeat in my head. Surely, he's talking about the baby?

His mouth opens and my body hums when his tongue darts out to wet his lips. Then, just as quickly as he dove across the couch, he jumps up and walks away, leaving me feeling discarded and completely confused. Sitting up, I turn and watch him storm into the kitchen, then out the back door.

Why did I think he was going to kiss me? Why did I want him to?

Let me ask this again: *what the hell am I getting myself into?*

Chapter 11

CYPHER

I delete the code I've been working on for the last three hours for the hundredth time. I can't fucking concentrate. The image of Sicily underneath me the other night, her full lips begging to be claimed, my body pressed against her soft curves, has distracted me way too much. How can I crave her so much when I still desire another woman? Yes, I've accepted that Em and Declan are together. I respect her choice, but it doesn't mean I'm still not struggling with it. But now my thoughts and dreams are being consumed by a fiery strawberry blonde that is so fucking far out of my league; she might as well be royalty. That's why I call her Princess. That, and I'm sure she's used to getting everything she wants. Born with a silver fucking spoon in her mouth, and never had to work a day in her life. She's probably going to college to make her a more well-rounded individual. Studying something like economics or how to be a good wife to your super rich husband.

But if that were the case, then why wouldn't she let her parents help her out of this... *situation*? Why does she want to keep the kid, if she doesn't want it to interfere with her perfectly planned out future?

I rub my hand down my face, frustrated. It would be my luck that the one chick I didn't use protection with gets knocked up, and I can't even remember fucking her. Damn, I wish I could remember. She's so fucking sexy, and I can only imagine what it felt like to be balls deep in her perfect little pussy.

Fuck! I slam my hand down on my desk. I need to stop thinking about her. I shove my chair back and stand, stretching and pacing my room to work out the kinks in my back and neck. I've been so fucking stressed since I found out I'm having a kid. Fuck! I'm twenty-four years old. What the hell

do I have to offer a child? I live upstairs at a biker club, for Christ's sake. Not that I couldn't afford my own place. I make damn good money as a technical consultant. But it's just easier to be here with all my equipment when the club needs me.

My phone chimes, alerting me to an incoming text. Fishing it out of my pocket, I swipe to read the message from Declan.

You might want to get to Em's salon. Sicily is here. Shit's not good.

My heart starts to pound as my fingers fly over the keys.

What the fuck happened?

I stare at the phone as those three little dots appear. It feels like forever before his response comes through.

Parentals pulled their money. Had her removed from the dorms. Your baby's momma is homeless.

Fuck! I grab my cut and slide it on, anger festering in my gut. I knew they would cut her off, but I didn't think they'd leave her without a place to live. What kind of parents do that shit? I shoot off another text as I exit my room and fly down the stairs.

Be there in fifteen.

"Yo, where's the fire?" Riggs asks as I rush past him and out the front door. I don't even bother to respond. I climb into my Camaro and take off towards town, my anger building the more I think about it. She's fucking pregnant with their fucking grand kid, and they've dumped her out on the street like common trash.

The entire drive was a blur. I don't remember any of it. The next thing I know, I'm pulling up in front of the salon and cutting the engine. When I blink again, I'm walking through the front door. I come to a hard stop the moment I step inside. The image before me is a major mind-fuck. The woman I'm trying to forget has her arm wrapped around the woman who's

carrying my child. How seriously fucked up is this? But the moment I see Sicily's tear-stained face, looking so fucking lost, a familiar ache starts to spread through my chest. An ache I've only felt for one other woman.

Seeing her like this has thoughts of murdering her parents briefly flashing in my mind. Declan is sitting behind the desk, clearly out of his element, when it comes to comforting anyone other than his own woman. When Sicily's eyes lift to mine, that ache in my chest intensifies. Her pain staring back at me guts me like nothing I've ever experienced. Not even losing Em. I'm across the room and pulling her up into my arms before I can even process what I'm feeling. My body knowing what it wants before my brain does. Sicily wraps her arms around me, clutching my back as she bursts into tears all over again.

"How could they d—do this?" she sobs. "I'm their daughter. T—This is their grandchild, h—how could they?"

My hand grips the back of her head, fingers knotting in her hair as I hold her against me. I grit my teeth, fighting the urge to storm into their expensive home, and burn it to the ground just so they can feel what she's feeling. How it feels to lose everything. "Fuck them, Princess. You don't need them," I growl.

She shakes her head, but makes no move to pull away. "I never t—thought they'd disown m—me." Her fingers dig harder into my cut. "I didn't think they'd actually be this cruel."

I pull her from my chest, cupping her cheeks. Her face is blotchy, and it breaks me even more to see her hurting so badly. "You're not alone, Sicily. This is my fucking kid, too. You'll both have everything you need, sweetheart. I fucking promise you that."

She sniffs as she stares up at me. "You don't even want this baby."

I swipe the tears from her cheeks, only for more to fall. “Whether I’m ready for a kid or not, it’s happening. We’re in this together.” I give her a playful smirk, hoping I can get her to smile. “Although, I don’t think I’ll look half as good in paternity clothes as you will.”

She lets out a small huff of a laugh, and the sound makes the heat in my chest surge even harder. I want to make her smile even more. “We can get matching nursing bras, too. I prefer black, and something with lace.” This time, a genuine smile tugs at her lips, and she rolls her eyes. I grin down at her before pressing a kiss to her forehead. “It’s going to be fine, Princess. I’ve got you.”

She takes a deep breath and nods. Pulling from my arms, she sniffs and wipes at her cheeks. Ember hands her a few tissues, and Sicily takes them, dabbing at her red nose. “I’m sorry, I’m just... I can’t believe they did this. I’m so close to graduating, I can’t believe they cut off my funding for school.”

“I know your father’s the Dean and all, but can he do that? I mean, I know he can choose not to pay, but you’re not kicked out of the school or anything, right?” Ember asks.

Sicily shakes her head. “No, I haven’t been kicked out, but I don’t have the money to pay for it, so I might as well be. And it’s too late to apply for financial aid. He’d probably order it to be rejected, anyway.”

“That’s fucked up,” Ember says. “I mean, this is your livelihood. Your way of supporting you and your child. I can’t believe someone could be so evil.”

My hand instinctively finds hers, our fingers linking together. “How much longer did you have?”

She blots at her eyes with the tissue. “I was supposed to graduate in May with a bachelor’s in nursing.”

I cock an eyebrow as I stare down at her. “You want to be a nurse?”

“A nurse practitioner, actually. I would have to go to college for two more years for my masters, but I wasn’t planning to do that right away. I wanted to work and get some experience before going for that degree.”

Well, goddamn. I seem to have misjudged my princess. She may come from money, but it appears Sicily isn’t afraid of hard work, and wants to make something of her life other than being a trophy on the arm of some rich bastard. I glance at Declan and frown. He’s trying to hide a stupid fucking grin, and when I narrow my eyes in question, his gaze drops to my hand that’s holding onto Sicily’s. When I grunt, he looks back up at me. “Can I talk to you a minute?”

“Yeah,” he says, finally coming out from behind the desk.

I reach up and tuck a strand of Sicily’s hair behind her ear. “I’ll be right back.” She nods and I turn to lead Declan outside. The moment the door shuts, I grab my phone. “Al’s old place is still empty, right?” I ask as I dial King’s number.

“Should be. I don’t think anyone’s been there for a few months.” He folds his arms across his chest.

I nod just as Kellan answers. “Yeah?”

“I need a meeting asap. Can you and Wren meet Declan and I at Al’s old place?”

“I’m with the guys now. We’ll meet you there,” Kellan says.

I hang up and pocket my phone. “You opposed to letting Sicily move in there?”

Declan shakes his head. “Not at all. I think it’s a good idea, actually.”

“Good.” I walk past him, heading back to the salon. “Let’s clear it before we say anything to her.”

Declan nods and follows me. Ember has Sicily in her styling chair, and is working her strawberry blonde locks into two braids on each side of her head. My cock perks up. I’ve

always had a thing for braids. It reminds me of the handlebars on my bike. An image of her on all fours with me plowing her from behind, those braids wrapped around my fists, flashes in my mind. I swallow as I fight to keep my dick from standing at attention. *So not the right time.*

Declan walks over to Em and kisses her cheek. “We’ll be back, babe. We gotta go talk to the guys for a bit.”

I meet Sicily’s dark gaze in the mirror. “Are you cool with staying here for about an hour?”

She nods.

Ember smiles. “We’re good. It gives us the chance to get to know each other a little better.”

I shoot Sicily a quick wink, hoping for another smile, which I get, then Declan and I head out. Ten minutes later, we’re doing a walkthrough of the small two-bedroom craftsmen that the club has owned for more than forty years. It’s been upgraded over time, but it’s still pretty old, and could use another facelift. But it’s available, dry, and has enough room for Sicily and my kid when the time comes.

“You think she’ll be okay with it?” Ryder asks.

“At the moment, she doesn’t have a choice,” I mumble, glaring down at the thick layer of dust on the old furniture.

Riggs lifts the corner of a picture off the wall and looks behind it. “Needs some work, but we can handle that.”

“I’m still not sold on this, Brother,” Wren says. “This is club property. We don’t let just anyone stay here.”

I grit my teeth as I shoot him a scathing look. “She’s not just anyone, asshole. She’s carrying my kid.”

Kellan rubs at the stubble on his chin. “That may be true, but she isn’t club property. You don’t even know this chick, and technically, this place is for members only.”

“What the fuck?” I snap. “You didn’t have a problem with Alora—”

Kellan holds his hand up, silencing me. “Plus, now is not the time for a young woman who has ties to the club to be staying anywhere on her own.” He gives me a look that says, *‘Remember Brick?’*

Fuck! He’s right. Even though Brick and his band of cunts don’t know who Sicily is, if they’re watching, they’ll see several members going in and out of here. They’ll know she’s new, but still someone we’ve accepted into the fold. That alone will put a target on her back.

Kellan studies me, and I know before the words even leave his mouth, I’m not going to like them. “The only way she can move in here is if you move in here with her.”

I freeze. Is he fucking serious? I knew he was going to say some crazy ass bullshit, but I didn’t expect *that*. Glancing around at the rest of the guys, I find them all waiting for my reaction. Riggs and Declan shoot each other amused looks, and I silently curse every one of them for what they’re trying to pull. They think they’re so fucking sneaky. I mean damn, it was less than two weeks ago that I returned to Covington Falls after attempting to clear my head over a woman I couldn’t have. Now they’re trying to push another one onto me? Have they lost their fucking minds?

Kellan’s phone rings and he pulls it from his pocket. But before answering it, he directs his next statement at me. “If you’re not willing to—”

“Fine,” I snap. “What other fucking choice do I have?”

He grins as he swipes his finger across the screen and heads towards the front door. “Yeah?”

Fucking asshole.

Ryder clamps a hand on my shoulder. “Congrats on the new place, Brother.”

“Dick,” I mumble as he walks away, looking all smug.

Wren follows him out, as Riggs and Declan head off into the kitchen.

I glance around the dark room, wondering what Sicily is going to think of it. I'm pretty sure she's never lived in a place like this. It's hard to picture someone like her living here.

"You know, some paint, new furniture, and new light fixtures would make this place look a shit ton better," Riggs says. I turn to find him standing in the doorway to the kitchen. I sigh, tilting my head back as I stare up at the ceiling. "You could really turn this into a fucking awesome place," he says, walking back into the room. "It's not like you don't have the money for it. You make a killing, and stay at the club rent free."

"I'm not worried about the money." I frown. Which is true. I have a small fortune saved up in my bank account.

"Hey," he says, moving closer. "You okay, Brother?"

That's a million-dollar question. I feel like I have the weight of the world on my shoulders, and everything has just fallen in my lap. "Guess I'll have to be."

"Can I ask you something?" he asks.

Rolling my eyes, I smirk. "No, I won't suck your dick. You have a wife for that."

He smacks me in the back of the head and chuckles. "Yeah, I do." He picks up a blanket from the back of the couch and turns it over. "But seriously." He tosses the blanket onto the other end. "Are you gonna be okay with all this? I mean, you've been dealt some pretty serious blows over the past few months. I can talk to King if this is too much. Maybe Sicily can stay with Salem and me for a bit?"

I blow out a slow, deep breath, then flop down on the chair behind me. "How the fuck did my life get so complicated?"

"Women." Riggs smiles, sitting down on the edge of the couch. "They fuck everything up, but not always in a bad way."

I huff. “So, when does the good way start?”

He bumps his knee against mine. “Maybe it’s about to?”

Chapter 12

SICILY

I stand in the middle of the dark living room, my heart pounding. Not because the place is small and a little run down, but because these people I hardly know are stepping up and taking care of *me*, when my own family has turned their backs on me. I swear I'm about to cry again. I hate these pregnancy hormones.

“Excuse me, sweetheart,” some burly man says as he brushes past me. I scramble out of the way. The entire place is swarming with bikers, all shapes, ages, and sizes. They're hauling out old furniture, taking down light fixtures, and ripping up flooring. Paneling is being pulled off the walls in the living room and down the hall. It's a chaotic mess, and I have no idea how Cypher got so many people here in an hour's time. The fact that he's doing this for me makes my head swim.

“Hey, Sicily?” Salem calls out from the dining room where she, Alora, and Ember are sitting around a small table. I maneuver my way through the mess and men to join them.

“You need to decide on colors,” Alora says, shoving several paint swatches across the table towards me. “You'll have to redo every room. Sorry, I have a dark soul, so I liked all the dark paneling and walls.” I blink as I stare down at the pages of color samples.

“Lighter colors will make the place look bigger,” Ember says, rearranging the creams and whites.

Cypher enters the room, dropping several boxes of flooring against the far wall, and Salem quickly grabs his arm and pulls him towards us. “Maybe you two should be making these decisions together, since you'll both be living here.”

My head snaps up, eyes wide as I stare at the man in question. “What?” I gasp. I couldn’t have heard her right. When Cypher had Ember brought me to this house an hour ago, he didn’t give me any indication as to why. When we arrived, there was already a flurry of activity going on, and he simply said the club had agreed to let me move in here. He failed to mention that *he* was moving in here with me.

Cypher glares at her before meeting my gaze. Just as he opens his mouth, a loud bang makes me jump so hard, my hip slams against the table and I wince. Spinning around, I take in the wall separating the dining room from the kitchen that now has a huge hole right through the middle of it. Plaster rains down onto the floor as a small cloud of dust starts to fill the room.

“Hey, dumbass,” Alora shouts. She hurries to my side of the table while scowling at the young guy holding a sledgehammer. “People aren’t supposed to breathe this shit in.”

He glances between the two of us before lowering the hammer. “Shit, sorry.”

I cover my mouth, squinting at him through the cloud of white, when a hand grips my elbow. An electric current races up my arm as Cypher guides me out of the room and right out the front door. He makes sure I’m careful with where I’m stepping, kicking pieces of debris out of the way as he leads me over to his car. Opening the door, he motions for me to climb inside. “Let’s get out of here for a bit.”

Relieved, I nod, then climb in and watch as he shuts the door and hurries to the driver’s side. This is all so overwhelming, and I want answers. I don’t give him a chance to take a breath before I start firing off questions. “What did Salem mean back there?”

Sighing, he scratches at his jaw, then starts the car. The roar of the engine sends a shiver down my spine, and I briefly wonder when I found the sound of a car so sexy. Or maybe it’s just *his* car.

“The house is club property,” he says, pulling out of the driveway and heading towards town. “It’s used for members only. The only way Kellan would let you stay there is if I stayed there with you.”

My mouth drops open. “But... we can’t live together. I mean, we don’t know each other. We’re not... this is just crazy!”

He nods. “I’d agree under normal circumstances. But we’re having a kid together, Sicily. Don’t you think we should get to know each other before he or she pops out?”

My heart pounds in my ears. This is ridiculous. Surely, he must see how insane this all is? “Yes, I do, but over time. Like normal people do, not thrown together in a house where we’ll never have a moment of privacy and likely kill each other.”

His hands tighten around the steering wheel, then finally he looks at me, his features set tight. “It’s this or nothing. You can’t stay there alone.”

Something about the way he said that makes the hair on my arms stand up. I study his profile, like I’ll find the answers to all my questions. “Why? What aren’t you telling me? Is it dangerous?”

“Yes.”

“Then why the hell are we moving in there?”

He shakes his head. “It’s not the neighborhood that’s dangerous, Princess. It’s the lifestyle.”

The lifestyle. *His* lifestyle. I already knew they were men not to mess with, but to know that I’m not safe to live on my own now, because of him, terrifies me.

He sighs. “I know you have a lot of questions. We’ll sit down and talk, I promise.” He pulls into the parking lot of a small furniture store. “For now, let’s pick out the bed we’ll be sleeping in.”

I tense as heat rushes up my neck. “I’m not sharing a bed with you.”

He cuts the engine and flashes me that sexy grin that got us into this mess in the first place. “Wouldn’t be the first time, Princess.” With a wink, he shoves his door open and climbs out.

“How do you have the money for all this?”

Cypher lifts the box of dishes we picked out and places them in his cart that’s already holding silverware, glasses, and pots and pans. Mine is already filled to the brim with towels, both kitchen and bath, sheets and a comforter for the new King-sized bed that’s being delivered tomorrow. After picking out a massive wooden bedroom set and a new sofa and chair for the living room, Cypher whisked me over to Target, where we’re currently loading up two carts with brand new items for our new place. *Our*, it still seems crazy to me. If I didn’t feel so lost, I’d laugh at how out of place this sexy biker looks, pushing a cart through housewares.

“I do have a job, babe, and a pretty good savings.” He turns back to the shelves and grabs some glass baking dishes.

“I’m not much of a cook, just so you know.”

He lifts his head and winks after placing the box under his cart. “Neither am I. My talents lie in the bedroom.”

I watch as he stands and starts pushing his cart again. *Is he seriously flirting?* I bite my lip, my eyes dropping down to his ass. *Damn, he really does have a cute butt.* Shaking my head, I continue following him. We make our way over to the paint section, and he stops in front of the swatches. “What are you thinking for the bedroom?” He motions to them, and my gaze moves over the rainbow of colors. For some stupid reason, I get emotional all over again. My eyes water, making all the colors blur together. “Hey,” Cypher says, grabbing my shoulders and turning me towards him. “What’s wrong, Princess?” His fingers grip my chin, forcing my head up.

“This is just... a lot.”

He lets out a slow breath, then tugs on one of my braids. “I know, and I’m sorry. You’ve had one hell of a day.”

I nod, biting down on the inside of my cheek. I’m sure it’s my hormones making me so emotional, but he’s right, it’s been a really messed up day. “I’m sorry,” I mumble, staring at his chest.

He strokes his finger over my neck. “Nothing to apologize for. But I was hoping to take your mind off of the crazy for a bit. I was hoping you would have fun doing all this.”

I lift my head and sniff. “What? Remodeling?”

“Yeah.”

My heart flutters. How can a practical stranger show more compassion than my own parents? Cypher, hell, his entire club, isn’t what I thought they were. They’re kind, protective, and they take care of each other, and I haven’t even thanked them. Placing my hand on his chest, I rise up onto my toes and place a kiss on his cheek. “Thank you. For everything.”

Something flashes in his eyes, and he frowns. It’s gone just as quickly as it came, and he takes a step back. Clearing his throat, he nods towards the color swatches. “We should at least pick the color for the bedroom. That way, we can get it painted before the furniture comes tomorrow.”

The tone of his voice and the complete one eighty in his personality knocks me off kilter. Did I say something wrong? Did I cross some boundary by kissing him on the cheek?

Then it hits me.

Maybe he has a girlfriend. My gut clenches as reality slams into me. Of course, he has a girlfriend. One that dresses in leather, has a similar lifestyle, and fits perfectly into his world. Hell, a man like him probably has several. Then here I

come, the pregnant one-night stand who's just driven a dump truck full of garbage right through his life. He didn't want this baby, probably still doesn't. We're nothing more than an obligation.

Taking a step back, I turn to the color swatches again, forcing myself to focus on what we're here for. I glance down at the hunter green fleece comforter in the cart that we both agreed on, and my stomach clenches tighter. "Maybe we should pick out another bedroom set. I can take the smaller room; I only need a single bed. That's what I had in my dorm."

His head jerks around, a scowl on his handsome face. "Fuck no!" he snaps. "There's no fucking way I'd sleep in a big ass bed while a pregnant woman slept in a tiny single. We'll be sleeping in the same room."

My skin feels tight, and it's starting to itch. Why is he so insistent on us sharing a room? "But—"

"Sicily," my name vibrates from his chest as he turns towards me. "It's a two-bedroom house. The second room is going to be for our kid." He motions to my stomach. "We're sharing a fucking bed, end of discussion."

I blink, a little hurt by his harsh tone. "I'm not comfortable sharing a bed with a man I don't know," I whisper.

He chuckles, and the sound sends a chill up my spine. "The damage is already done, sweetheart."

Ouch! What a nice way of saying the mistake has already been made.

"Can I help you find anything?" an older man in a red apron asks as he approaches us.

I bite down hard, my teeth grinding together in an attempt to fight back the onslaught of tears as I turn back to the colors. I scan them for a second, then grab a few cream swatches. "I think we should go with one of these."

Cypher frowns as he takes them from me, looking them over. “Oatmeal, Antique Lace, or Pearl?”

“I honestly don’t care.” My throat feels tight. I’m starting to sweat, and I really just want to get out of here.

Cypher stares at them, that line between his eyebrows getting deeper. “Well, which one do you like better? It’s your ___”

“Just fucking pick one!” I shout.

His head snaps up, eyes wide as he looks at me. The old man takes a step back, like he’s about to turn and run. My face heats as embarrassment floods in. The tears I was attempting to hold back spill over, and I abandon my cart as I turn and head towards the front of the store. I need air. I’m too hot, and I’m getting lightheaded. I *need* air.

“Two gallons of this,” I hear Cypher tell the poor guy before rushing after me. “Sicily?”

I wipe my cheeks with the sleeve of my sweater, but I don’t stop. I can’t do this. I can’t move into a place with a man I don’t even know. I can’t have my future, or my dreams ripped away from me. I can’t screw up my life, or anyone else’s. I just... can’t.

Cypher catches up with me, rushing around to cut me off as he blocks my path. I have no choice but to stop. “Hey? What the fuck happened?”

I shake my head, unable to look at him as tears roll down my face. “I’m sorry, I can’t.”

He grabs my hand and pulls me down an aisle that no one is currently shopping in. When we’re halfway down, he spins around and grabs my shoulders. “Can’t what, Sicily?”

My chin quivers. There’s no stopping the flood of tears. “This...” I sniff. “Live with you, playing house, and acting like we like each other. I’m not going to fuck up all of our lives, Cypher. I don’t have to fuck up yours.”

He shoves his hand through his hair. “You’re not fucking up my life, babe. Just changing it, that’s all.”

A sob slips from my throat. I knew I was sending a wrecking ball through his world, but to have him all but say it still stings.

“Shit, I didn’t mean in a bad way. Just different from what I thought,” he says.

“I just don’t want us to end up hating each other.” My voice sounds frantic. My hand shakes as I reach up to rub at my temple. “This is too much. I don’t know if I even like you. You don’t know if you even like me? What if you—”

I gasp as his hands cup my cheeks and his mouth slams against mine. I’m knocked off balance, my back hitting the shelves behind us as he presses up against me. He holds me in place as his tongue slips inside and strokes over my own. An explosion rocks through me, and if it wasn’t for his body pinned against mine, I’d probably be a puddle of goo on the floor. My hands flap around, unsure where to go, before finally settling on his chest. My entire body tingles and when a low groan rumbles in his chest, I feel it all the way down to my girly bits. This is the best kiss of my life.

Just as I’m starting to relax and enjoy it, he pulls away, his forehead coming to rest against mine. My head is spinning, trying to catch up to what just happened. Our heavy breathing mixes together as his lips hover just an inch away. “Fuck,” he whispers. His eyes close, his nostrils flare, and I can tell he’s lost in his own thoughts.

“Why did you—”

He lifts his head, taking a step back, but his intense gaze stays locked on me. My body sags, missing the feel of his against mine. He shoves his hand into his pocket and pulls out his keys. “Go get some air. Meet me in the car. I’ll get our stuff.”

I open my mouth to respond, but he turns away. With long quick strides, he leaves me standing in the middle of the

automotive section, feeling slightly dejected and all kinds of confused.

I'm so over this day.

Chapter 13

CYPHER

Why the fuck did I kiss her? It was a huge mistake that has left me even more off kilter than I already am. Mostly because it was the hottest fucking kiss... ever. I haven't been able to get the way she tasted, the feel of her lips, her tongue, and the feel of her body against mine out of my damn head. I keep telling myself I did it because she was freaking out and I needed to snap her out of it, but that's a goddamn lie. I did it because I couldn't resist. Her fucking pouty lips have been taunting me since day one. I did it because I can't remember fucking her, but I know I've tasted her before, and I needed to know if it would spark some kind of memory.

It did.

An image of her spread out under me, her reddish blonde hair fanned out over my black sheets, eyes closed, lips swollen, and me pumping into her as she moaned my name, shook me to my core. The moment it flashed in my head, I went rock hard. It hit me with such force; it took my breath away, and I had to stop before I did something that would have had us thrown in jail for indecent exposure and lewd acts in a public place. But what really threw me... she kissed me back! She said she didn't know if she even liked me but... She. Kissed. Me. Back! If that's how she kisses someone she doesn't like, I'm more than curious to see how she kisses someone she desires.

“Wow, this looks great.”

I turn to find Ember standing in the doorway of the master bathroom. I've been so wrapped up in thoughts of Sicily that I've been in here installing a new vanity for the past hour, and it's still not done. My heart does a little kick as I take her in. She truly is a vision. My jaw clenches as I turn back to finish tightening the new faucet. “Thanks,” I mumble.

“I can’t believe you got this much done since yesterday. Jenna said you didn’t even come back to her place after dropping Sicily off last night.”

I shrug. “I needed to get the bedroom painted and the new floors down before the furniture comes today. The rest of the place we can work on overtime.”

I can hear her shifting closer. Why the fuck is she in here? Doesn’t she know it’s hard being so close to her? “Cypher?” I squeeze my eyes shut at the sound of my name. “We haven’t really spoken much since you’ve been back.”

That’s because her voice haunts me. I can feel her presence like a phantom touch, the air heating and growing thick. It was always like this when I was around her. My body has always reacted to her.

“You know, we used to be friends,” she says softly. “At least I thought that’s what we were.”

I snort. “Yeah, clearly we were on different pages.”

She sighs. “I had no idea you felt anything other than friendship for me. We never talked about it. I mean, yeah, we flirted, but you flirted with all the girls. I just thought it was a bit of fun.”

I snap my head around to look at her. Her doll-like eyes draw me in, a silent plea staring back at me. I stand, grabbing the rag from the sink and wipe my hands. “Fun.” I smirk. “Yeah, this is all real fucking fun for me.”

Hurt flashes in those mossy green orbs as her gaze drops to the floor. “I’m sorry it hurts you, but I love him, Cypher. And we both love you. I don’t want this to come between you and your family.” Her cute little nose twitches. “I don’t want you to hate me.”

My walls crumble as I watch her taking the first step in extending an olive branch. I move closer, closing the gap between us. Lifting my hand to her cheek, I softly stroke her porcelain skin. “I don’t hate you, Em. I never could.”

“Hey, I’m—”

Both our heads turn just as Sicily steps into the doorway. Her body tenses as she takes in what I’m sure looks like an intimate moment between Em and me. My hand drops from her cheek, and I take a step back, guilt hitting me out of nowhere.

“I’m... sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt. I...” Her mouth snaps shut, and she quickly spins around, rushing out of the room.

A crushing weight lands on my chest so hard I can’t breathe. My skin prickles like a thousand needles are being jabbed into me as my heart slams against my ribs. I practically shove Ember aside and I take off like a shot. “Sicily?” I catch up to her as she’s walking out the front door with Mia. “Wait,” I breathe as I grab her arm, pulling her to a stop. She’s looking at me, but she’s erected a fucking wall behind her eyes, and her expression is flat and guarded. It bothers me to see her shielding herself from me. She’s shutting me out, and I don’t fucking like it. “Can I talk to you?”

Her mouth curls up into a smile, but it’s polite and void of any warmth. It makes my pulse race, and not in a good way. “Can it wait until we get back?”

I glance between her and Mia. “Where are you going?”

Mia loops her arm through Sicily’s, smiling, completely oblivious to the tension surrounding us. “Salem and I are taking her to her dorm to clear her things out.”

I frown, feeling dejected that she didn’t ask me to take her. “I can do that.”

“I don’t need you to,” her voice cracks as she pulls out of my grasp. Her eyes flick over my shoulder, and it strikes me that she’s looking for Ember. “I think you’re needed more here.”

Turning, she heads off with Mia, leaving me feeling like the world’s largest ass. I clamp my hands behind my neck and let out a long-drawn-out breath. That, ‘I don’t need you

to,' was a big kick in the nuts. Fuck! The last thing I need is her thinking there's something between Ember and me. I watch as the girls pull out of the driveway, and a furniture van takes their place. The least I can do is get the room set up, so she has a place to sleep, because I have a feeling I just earned my place on the couch.

I feel like I've been looking out the window every two minutes, waiting for Sicily to return. It's been hours. All the guys have left after putting in some serious time since yesterday afternoon. Besides the master bedroom and bathroom being completed, the new hardwood floors have been installed throughout the entire house, and the living room and dining room have been sanded and repainted. The kitchen, however, looks like a bomb went off. Kellan is redoing all the cabinets, so all the doors and drawers have been removed. The countertops have been ripped out, and they're being replaced with granite ones, which should be delivered sometime next week. Since the kitchen is out of service, and I can't fucking cook anyway, I ordered dinner from the Italian restaurant a few blocks over. I hope she likes spaghetti and meatballs. Although, if she doesn't hurry the fuck up, it's going to be cold.

I jump up, almost knocking the TV tray over when headlights pull into the driveway. *Fucking finally!* I realized too late that we've yet to exchange phone numbers, so I haven't even been able to text or call her to see when she'd be back. I'll be remedying that tonight. Yanking open the front door, I hurry down the front steps and over to Mia's SUV, where the girls are quietly pulling boxes out. The moment I join them, I can tell something's wrong. Neither of them are smiling, and Sicily looks like someone kicked her puppy.

Reaching over, I take the box she's balancing in her hands. "What happened? Are you all right?" She nods, but I can tell she's lying. When she reaches for another box, I grab her wrist. "I've got this. I ordered some pasta, go in and eat before it gets cold."

She finally looks at me, but there's nothing there. It's like she's a robot. I bring her hand to my lips and press a kiss to the inside of her wrist before letting her walk away. Once she's out of earshot, I turn to Mia and Salem. "What happened?"

"Her roommates," Mia says. "The one girl, Penn, was nice, and seemed like she actually cared about Sicily, but the other two... yeah, complete bitches."

Salem hands me a second box, which she places on top of the one I'm already holding. "They looked at her like she was a diseased street rat. Whispering and giggling behind her back. Without mommy and daddy's money, your girl isn't worth their time anymore."

I grind my teeth. I should have fucking been there.

"Then her preppy ex-boyfriend showed up." Mia sneers.

My muscles tighten.

"He made a show of flirting with her so-called friend, Eliza. When Sicily didn't seem to care, he reamed her out in front of everyone. Told her she deserves everything her parents are doing, and that he won't be surprised when she winds up in a morgue when her, and I quote, 'sleazy, uneducated, thug biker,' beats the shit out of her. You know, 'cause that's what bikers do."

Rage slams into me. My vision clouds and turns red. If the motherfucker was here right now, he'd be the one in the morgue because I don't think I'd be able to stop myself. I should have kicked his sorry ass yesterday.

Salem grins as she slaps my shoulder. "Don't worry, I made sure he wouldn't be able to get a hard-on for a few days." I cock an eyebrow, waiting for her to explain.

Mia giggles as she throws an arm around Salem's shoulder. "Don't fuck with this woman. She has claws of death. When he called Sicily a whore, Salem here slammed

her hand over his dick and dug her nails in so deep, the asshole will be pissing blood for the next few days.”

“I got him to apologize though, didn’t I?” Salem grins.

Mia bursts out laughing. “If he didn’t want his dick ripped off, then yeah, he had no choice. You refused to let go until he said he was sorry.”

Salem shrugs.

I shake my head, a huge smile spreading across my face. “Fuck, woman. Remind me to never piss you off.”

The girls snicker as I turn and head back into the house. I don’t see Sicily when I walk in. Her food is still sitting untouched on the TV tray. Glancing down the hall, I find her standing in the doorway to the bedroom. I take in her posture as I walk up behind her. Her arms are wrapped around her waist; her shoulders slightly slumped like she doesn’t have any fight left in her. *Fuck! I wish I had been there to knock the shit out of that little cunt Christian.*

“Hey,” I say softly, hoping I don’t startle her.

Her eyes scan the room, and I take a moment to look around once again. The king-sized bed sits between two windows, done up with cream sheets and the hunter-green comforter she picked out earlier today. Two nightstands sit on either side of the bed, right in front of the windows with matching lamps on each one. Two dressers, one already holding my clothes, the other waiting for hers, are against walls on opposite sides of the room. Wren and Ryder brought us a flat screen TV as a housewarming gift and hung it on the wall directly across from the bed, and a new industrial looking fan is slowly spinning above us. It looks pretty fucking awesome, if I do say so myself.

“Did you do all this?” she asks.

I shrug my right shoulder. “I had some help.” I’m not going to mention that Ember and Alora did most of the decorating. I’m pretty sure mentioning Em had a hand in

setting up her bedroom wouldn't go over too well. I nudge her with the boxes. "Go check out the bathroom."

She moves into the room, and I follow, setting the boxes on the bed before joining her in the bathroom doorway. It had been updated when Al moved in, so the walk-in shower didn't need any work. We simply painted the room a light gray, installed a new toilet and double vanity, and upgraded the mirror and light fixtures.

"I can't believe how good it all looks," she whispers. When she turns to face me, I notice the shimmer in her eyes. "You really didn't need to do all this."

I reach out and take her hand, linking my fingers with hers. "I wanted to." We stare at each other, the air growing heavy and electrified. Against the dim lights, she looks like an angel. So beautiful and surreal. That feeling in my chest comes roaring back, squeezing tighter than ever, and I move closer, needing to be near her like I need my next breath.

"Oh my god," Salem's voice squeals from behind us. "This looks fantastic."

Sicily sucks in a deep breath and takes a step back, blinking like she's coming out from under a spell. Disappointment hits me like an uppercut, and I silently curse Salem for interrupting the moment. Giving Sicily's hand a tug, I walk her back into the bedroom, where Mia and Salem are looking around.

"Cypher, this is freaking awesome." Mia grins. "Can I hire you to decorate my house?"

"You couldn't afford me." I smirk.

She slaps my arm, then leans over to give Sicily a hug. "I have to go. I've been away from Becca for too long, and my boobs are screaming at me."

When they break apart, my eyes instinctively drop to her chest, which are double the size they used to be. I glance at Sicily's and stifle a groan. Fuck! If that's what happens after

having a kid, her tits are going to be huge! She's already sporting some D's.

"Thank you," Sicily says.

Mia nudges her shoulder. "Any time, hun."

Salem moves in and throws her arms around Sicily next. "If you have any more penises, I need to crush, just call me."

Sicily giggles. "I will. Thanks."

We follow the girls out, and once they're backing out of the driveway; I close and lock the door, then shoot off a text, letting Ryder and Riggs know their women are on their way.

"You should really eat." I nod my head towards the TV trays.

"Have you eaten?" she asks.

I shake my head. "I was waiting for you."

I swear I see her lips twitch with the hint of a smile, but she holds it back. I follow her to the couch, and once she's seated, I remove the lid to her food. "Do you like Italian?"

"It's one of my favorites."

I mentally fist bump the air. At least I managed to do something right. Taking my seat next to her, she turns towards me, and I brace for what I knew was coming.

"Can we talk?"

Does anything good ever follow those words?

Chapter 14

SICILY

I swirl my spaghetti around on my fork, then let it all slide off, only to do it again. If my mother was sitting here, she'd tell me to stop playing with my food. I should be hungry, but the last two days have been so stressful I haven't had much of an appetite. I've had no say in the events that are taking place. I lost my home but gained another. My family abandoned me and another took me in. My future was taken away, and a different path has formed, and I wasn't consulted about any of it. The only decision I made was that I'm keeping my child. Don't get me wrong, I'm grateful to Cypher and his friends. They could have turned their backs on me like my own parents did. He stepped in and showed me that family can be more than those you share DNA with.

“Sicily?”

Cypher's voice cuts through my thoughts, reminding me that I told him we need to talk, then I just zoned out.

“Sorry.”

He glances at my plate. “We can talk, but you still need to eat.”

Nodding, I twist some pasta onto my fork, then force myself to eat it. Despite the fact that it's only lukewarm, it still tastes fantastic, and I quickly shovel in another mouthful. The corner of his lip curls up into a satisfied grin before he turns back to his own plate.

“Are you sleeping with Ember?”

I freeze. So does he. That wasn't the first thing I wanted to talk about. It should be the least of my concerns, but apparently, it's what my mouth decided to ask before clearing it with my brain first. I'll admit, after walking in on them in the bathroom, I've been wondering all day what their story is.

Are they together? What about Declan? Are they screwing around behind his back? What about the woman at the club, Vera? Is he sleeping with her as well? How many women are there?

He pushes his plate away before turning to face me. “No, I’m not. We’re... friends.”

I shove one of the meatballs to the opposite side of my plate. “Didn’t look that way to me,” I mumble.

He reaches over and takes my fork. When I look at him, I find him studying me. His face is pinched, his eyes unreadable. I’m about to tell him never mind, but he cuts me off. “Ember is the reason I left Covington Falls.”

I swallow past the lump in my throat, reading between the lines loud and clear. “You love her.”

The muscle in his jaw tics. “She loves Declan.” He reaches over and twirls more pasta onto my fork before holding it up in front of me. I take it and place it in my mouth, even though I’m no longer hungry. He turns back to his food and goes right back to eating without another word. I have so many more questions, but he seems to be finished with this conversation.

“What about Vera?” I ask.

“What about her?”

“Are you... with her?”

He wipes his mouth with his napkin. “We’ve fucked, that’s it.”

That’s it? Just how many women has he been with? Scratch that, I don’t want to know. But I do need to know if I’m safe, since he seems to have a revolving door on his bedroom. Straightening my spine, I grip my fork a little tighter. “Should I be tested?”

“Should I?”

I jolt, feeling like I've just been slapped. Clutching my fork tighter, I glare at him. "I've been with a total of four men," I snap. "And other than with you, I used protection with them all."

He pushes his tray away, then grabs his plate and stands. "Well, I've definitely been with a lot more woman than four, but I've always wrapped my dick up." He stares down at me, a line forming between his brows. "Except when it came to you."

I can almost hear the 'and look what happened' in his voice. He walks away, and I watch him, wondering how he went from him being so sweet and caring when I first came home to now being snarky and closed off. I can't help but notice it happened when I brought up Ember. When I said he loved her, he didn't deny it.

Staring at my now cold spaghetti, I frown. *So much for dinner.* Picking up my plate, I walk into the kitchen and head for the trash can. Cypher is standing at the sink, rinsing his plate. When I press the foot pedal to open the lid, he reaches over and grabs it before I can dump its contents. "You didn't eat," his voice rumbles.

"I wasn't hungry."

His lips press into a thin line. "You need to eat, Sicily. It's not just about you anymore."

Anger builds in my chest. *Now he's scolding me like a child? Trying to make me feel guilty for not eating? Well, fuck him.* Shoving the plate upward, it slams against his chest as sauce and noodles cover his shirt. "Shove it up your ass for all I care," I snap, then storm out of the kitchen.

"What the fuck? Sicily?" he calls after me, but I ignore him and head straight to the bedroom. I slam the door behind me, then slump against it. I shouldn't have done that. He's trying, I know he is. But can't he understand what this is like for me? How helpless and lost I feel right now? How very close to breaking I am?

Pushing off the door, I walk towards the boxes on the bed. I'll apologize after I do some unpacking. I think we could both use a minute to ourselves. I just make it to the bed when the door opens and Cypher storms in. His jaw is clenched, his eyes hard, but more importantly... he's not wearing a shirt, and all his glorious muscles are on display. My gaze wanders over his thick arms, solid chest, ripped abs, and tattoos I only got a glimpse of the other night at Kellan's. I stand frozen as he stalks forward, grips my wrist, and starts pulling me back out into the hallway.

"What are you doing?" I gasp. He doesn't answer. I try to pull my hand from his, but his grip is tight. He drags me back through the living room and into the kitchen, where the pasta and sauce still cover the floor.

Finally letting go, he grabs the roll of paper towels and shoves them into my hands. "There is no maid here, Princess. If you make a mess, you clean it up."

Shocked, I stare at him. "I don't... you think I've had someone cleaning up after me my whole life?"

He doesn't answer, instead he turns and grabs the Swiffer mop and leans it against the counter.

"Is that why you call me Princess? Because you think I'm a spoiled brat?"

"Act like one, and I'll treat you like one," he says, then turns and walks out, leaving me alone to clean up my mess. I drop to my knees, pull several sheets of paper towels from the roll, and start cleaning up the pasta. Once all the noodles have been scooped up, I climb to my feet and toss the wad of towels into the trash. I snatch the mop and start scrubbing the entire floor, even where it doesn't need it. I can admit he's right; I should clean up the mess I made, but the fact that he sees me as some poor little rich girl who expects everyone to take care of her, explains so much. I have no control over my life right now because I'm *allowing* everyone to walk all over me. Well, not anymore. My pity party is done. I have some money, and I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself. At least until I

can get a job and figure out my own life. It's what I should have done from day one.

When I finish mopping the kitchen floor, I head back into the bedroom. The bathroom door is closed, and I can hear the shower running. Quickly changing into a T-shirt and sleep pants, I grab my pillow and head back into the living room, clicking off the lights along the way. I'm frustrated and exhausted, and I really want this day to be over so that tomorrow, I can start my own life on my own terms.

Dropping down onto the couch, I toss my pillow to one end and grab the Afghan from the back. Curling up on my side, I cover myself with the blanket and let out a deep sigh of relief. I don't know what I was thinking agreeing to move in here anyway—with a complete stranger no less. I can only chalk it up to temporary insanity. Tomorrow I'll call Aunt Julie. She isn't a big fan of my mother's and she's always been on my side. The only reason I didn't call her before now is because she'll insist on me coming to live with her in Texas. I'm not sure I want to move so far away.

I hear the bedroom door open and a second later, a beam of light from the hall spills into the living room. The sound of Cypher's bare feet hurrying down the hall has my muscles tensing, knowing he's going to argue with me about sleeping on the couch. But I don't even want to be in the same room as him, much less share a bed. I say nothing as he passes behind the couch and glances out the front window, looking to see if my car is still in the driveway. Finding that it is, he turns around, and his eyes finally land on me.

“What the fuck are you doing? You're not sleeping on the couch.”

He moves towards me, and I quickly sit up, holding my hand out in front of me. “Do not touch me!” I shout.

He freezes, his eyes wide as he stares down at me. *Why the hell can't he just leave me alone?* Grabbing the blanket, I jerk it back over my shoulder and flop back down, facing the couch instead of him.

“Sicily,” his raspy voice warns. “We discussed this. You’re not sleeping out here. Stop throwing a temper tantrum because I made you clean up after yourself.”

I grit my teeth as I spin back around. “For the record, asshole, mopping floors was my chore every Sunday. Along with doing the dishes, laundry, and vacuuming the house since I was nine-years old. I’ve also taken care of myself for the past three years at my dorm, and guess what, I didn’t have a maid. So, screw you for thinking I’ve always had everything done for me. You didn’t like it when I made assumptions about you and your club. Maybe you shouldn’t make assumptions about me.”

His eyebrows lift, and he nods slowly. “You’re right. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have assumed. Now, will you come to bed?”

“I’m in bed,” I snap, then turn away to lie back down.

“Sicily...”

“It’s for one night, Cypher. It’s not going to kill me.”

There’s a pause before he speaks, and when he does, his tone is threatening. “What the fuck do you mean?”

“I mean, I’m calling my Aunt Julie tomorrow. I’m thinking of going to stay with her in Texas for a while.”

I can hear his breathing grow harder. I don’t understand why he’s mad; this is a get out of jail free card. He can go back to living at the club, screwing a different woman every night, and pining for a woman who’s in love with another man. I don’t need any of his drama. I have enough of my own. I glance over my shoulder. “Look—”

He bolts forward, his hands sliding under my body, and I’m hauled into his arms before I have a chance to hold him off. “Stop! What are you... put me down!” I shove at his chest, my legs kicking out as I squirm against him, but his grip is like a vice, and I have no choice but to wait for him to release me. He storms back down the hall, slapping a hand on the light switch before kicking the bedroom door closed

behind him. I continue to fight him as he marches over to the bed and drops me down onto it. I figured I'd get a chance to climb out the other side, but he plants his hands on the bed, caging me in as he leans over the top of me. My pulse races as I stare up into those icy blues, which now look so pale, I can only see the black pupils floating in a sea of white. His breathing is heavy, his jaw clenched so tight it looks painful, and the heat pouring off his body makes the room feel twenty degrees warmer.

“You're not going to Texas,” he growls, and the low rumble makes me shiver.

“You can't tell me what I can and can't do,” I argue, my chest rising and falling. “I'm tired of everyone trying to control my life. I can take care of myself.”

“I'm not trying to control you, Sicily. I'm trying to support you. I'm trying to protect you. I'm trying to figure out...”

I stare up at him, waiting for him to finish. “Figure out what?”

His eyes search mine a moment before something in him snaps. His lips crash down over mine, and I gasp from the unexpected move. My body sparks, coming to life as his tongue dives in and dominates mine. The air crackles around us, and I swear I hear him groan the word mine against my lips, but my brain has turned to mush, and I can't even be sure it wasn't me who said it.

Just as his chest grazes against my nipples, his phone rings, shattering the intense moment like glass. His head jerks back, his lips leaving mine as he contemplates me, like he's still lost in the moment. Then he blinks and shoves himself away as he rushes to the other side of the bed and I'm left lying there, looking up at the ceiling, wondering what the hell just happened... and why did he stop.

Jesus, Sicily. Get a grip.

“Yeah?” His voice cuts through my cloudy mind. I turn my head, keeping him in my line of vision. His body goes stiff before he springs into action, yanking open the drawer on his nightstand and pulling out a gun. I gasp, bolting upright as I stare wide eyed at the weapon. “Fuck! Are they sure?” he asks as he rushes out of the room.

I scramble out of the bed and run after him, mostly because I’m scared shitless, and I don’t want to be alone. My heart races for a whole different reason, but something tells me I’m safer with him. “They’re fine though?” he asks as he moves through the living room, not bothering to turn on any lights and peering out the window like he’s looking for someone. “Yeah, yeah, I agree.” Inside my head I’m screaming for him to tell me what’s going on, but I’m trying to be patient. His eyes dart over to me and the muscle in his jaw tics. “Not a fucking chance. Not without going through me.” The look in his eyes has me clutching my hands to my chest. “Yeah, I’ll be waiting. Thanks, Brother.”

He hangs up and shoves his phone into the pocket of his sweats. “What happened?” I ask.

He goes back to looking out the window. “Mia and Salem were followed home.”

“What?”

He quickly moves past me and into the kitchen. Again, I follow, practically glued to his back as fear works its way deeper. “They’re pretty sure the car was parked just down the street when they left, but they didn’t notice it was following them until they were halfway home.”

My heart jumps into my throat. “Here?” I gasp.

He double checks the lock on the door then peeks out the curtain. My whole body is shaking. I scream as a loud knock cuts through the quiet house. Cypher jumps, then grabs my arm and pulls me against his chest. “It’s okay, baby. It’s Tazz and Lucky.”

I swallow hard as he guides us back into the living room and peeks out the window again before opening the front door. He greets the two men, who scarcely look like they're twenty, before shutting and locking the door behind them. "Tazz, Lucky, this is Sicily," he says, motioning to me.

They barely acknowledge me, instead focusing on why they're here, and what they need to do. "We checked the whole block before coming here," Tazz says. "We didn't see the car that followed Mia and Salem, and we checked every one that was parked on the street. They're all empty."

Cypher nods, seeming satisfied. "What kind of car was it?"

"Old blue Maxima," Lucky says. "Tinted windows so they couldn't see who or how many were in it."

My mouth drops open as an icy chill crawls down my spine. "I saw that car earlier today."

Cypher's head whips in my direction. "When?"

I grip the back of the chair, my legs suddenly feeling weak. "It was in the student parking lot at the college. When we went to get my stuff, I noticed it driving around the lot."

"Fuck!" Cypher growls.

"I think it's safe to say they know you're staying here," Tazz says.

"Who's they?" I ask.

Cypher wraps an arm around my waist, tucking me into his side. It reminds me of Kellan with Jenna. "The guys are going to be staying here tonight. Let's get them some blankets and pillows, and then we'll talk."

Nodding, I follow him back into the room. We get a few pillows and blankets, then return to the living room. Twenty minutes later, they've explained to me who Brick is and how he betrayed the club, although I can tell they haven't told me everything. They mentioned a few women, Rena, Larkin and Mary, but didn't go into much detail about who

they are. They did tell me they were helping Brick. I've asked so many questions, but none of them will give me all the answers I need. All they keep saying is that it's club business, and I don't need to worry because they'll protect me.

My god, who are these people?

Cypher stands and pulls me up along with him. "Let's get some sleep, Princess. It's been a really long day."

Nodding, I allow him to link our fingers together before guiding me back to the bedroom. I watch as he places his gun back in the drawer next to the bed. I'm not sure I like the fact that there is a loaded gun so nearby. I climb in and pull the blankets around me, while wondering how the hell I'm supposed to sleep when there's people out there who are so dangerous, he needs a gun to protect us. The light clicks off, plunging the room into darkness, and my eyes frantically dart around the room, trying to see anything that might be a threat.

The bed dips behind me as Cypher climbs in. "Sicily?" his voice vibrates through the mattress.

"Yeah?"

"Are you okay?"

I stare straight ahead into the darkness. "I don't know."

The bed shifts as he moves closer, then suddenly he's pressed against my back. His muscular arm wraps around me, and I'm pulled against him as he tucks me into his body. I swear my poor heart is getting quite the workout tonight. "I've got you, Princess," he whispers against my ear. "Get some sleep. You're safe."

He takes a deep breath before letting it out slowly. I relax into him, taking comfort in his arms. I do feel safe. From my parents, my friends, Christian, and whoever was in that car following Salem and Mia. Somehow, being like this in his arms, I feel like nothing can touch me.

I just wonder if someone should be protecting me from him?

Chapter 15

CYPHER

I stare at the goddess lying sprawled out in my bed. Correction, *our* bed. Her strawberry blonde locks fan over her pillow; the tan skin of her shoulder peeks out from under the cover that's practically glowing in the ray of light coming through the window. She has the sexiest fucking lips I've ever seen, slightly parted as she slumbers not two feet away. As I stand at the foot of the bed and study her, my cock twitches and a rush of possession jolts through me. It feels right having her in my bed. It feels right having her in my house. Hell, it feels right having her in my life. Every fucking thing about her just feels right. And it took every ounce of strength I had not to claim her body while I had her in my arms, because again, it just felt right. Thoughts of the kiss we shared tortured me all night long, playing out in my mind like a movie reel. The feel of her body under mine, her lips, her tongue, her whimpers. They all belonged to me, and in the heat of the moment, I growled the word *mine* against her lips. My cock aches at the memories, and I reach down to grip it, squeezing to give it some relief. This is what she does to me, and I'm not complaining. I bite back a groan as I remember the way her lips moved with mine the same as her tongue, and I struggle to contain the urge to wake her with my head between her thighs. I desperately want to taste her, but then images of Ember snake their way in, and I'm left wondering how I could feel something so powerful for two different women?

My phone chimes, and I quickly pull it from my pocket to check the message from Riggs.

Hospital. Jenna's water broke. Baby King is on the way.

"Oh fuck!" I gasp.

"What's wrong?"

My eyes lift to find Sicily's caramel ones staring back at me. She sits up, pushing her long locks off her face.

"Jenna's in labor." I grin as I type out the message that we're on our way.

Sicily scrambles out of bed. "Isn't she early? I thought she wasn't due for another three weeks?"

"This is Kellan's kid; they don't know the meaning of the word patience." I tuck my phone back into my pocket. "Go grab a quick shower. I'll get us both some coffee."

"Decaf," she says, moving towards the bathroom. "I can't have caffeine."

My eyes drop to her stomach and I'm hit with the realization, yet again, that she's carrying my kid. But this time, that feeling of possession knocks me for a loop. I should be terrified. I should feel trapped, but I don't. I feel... numb, maybe? Not happy, yet not angry either. I can't really describe it, let alone understand it.

Nodding, I turn and leave as she closes the door to the bathroom. An hour later, we're walking into the waiting room of the maternity ward of Covington Memorial, where it looks like half the club has shown up to welcome our Prez's first kid.

"How's she doing?" Sicily asks, as Salem and Mia greet us.

"Her water broke a few hours ago." Mia grins. "You should see Kellan; he's freaking the fuck out."

Salem snickers. "The great Kellan King was white as a ghost and barely able to stand. I thought for sure he was going to hit the floor when they told him the baby was coming today, whether he was ready or not."

"Isn't she early, though?" Sicily asks.

"A little over two weeks. She's fine to have the baby now," Mia says.

Riggs jerks his chin towards me, and I excuse myself to join him, Ryder, Wren, and Mac in the far corner. “We have a bet going on. Boy or a girl.” Ryder grins. “You in?”

“Hell yeah. What’s the pot?” I ask, fishing my wallet out.

“A hundred buy in, split between the winners. Right now, we’re at nine hundred.” Wren says.

I pull out two fifties and slap them in Riggs’ hand. “What’s your guess?”

Riggs tucks the bills in with the others. “Boy. King’s too macho to make girls.”

Ryder snorts. “Bullshit. I still say it’s a girl. Becca needs a friend.”

“I agree.” Wren nods. “Plus, I want to see my brother lose his shit over having a daughter.”

Mac crosses his arms over his chest. “You’re both wrong. My gut is telling me it’s a boy.”

“I’m going with Mac on this one,” I say, tucking my wallet away. “I think a future Prez is about to be born.”

“That doesn’t mean it has to be a boy.” I turn to find Kitty and Al walking towards us with several paper cups of coffee. Kitty hands one to Mac, her jaw set in a challenge. “Maybe by the time *she’s* old enough, the club will finally have come out of the eighteen fifties.”

Mac throws an arm around her. “If it’s a girl, Kellan is going to keep her locked up until she’s forty.” We laugh, knowing that’s probably not far from the truth.

“Did I miss anything?”

I glance over my shoulder to find Declan walking in with Ember. I drink her in, my gaze sweeping from her big green eyes to her gray ankle boots. Even at seven in the morning, she’s stunning. But something is different. That jolt of electricity I normally feel when I see her isn’t there. My

attention moves across the room and my stomach knots when I find Sicily staring at me. Hurt flashes in her eyes as she glances between me and Em, a small frown tugging at her lips before she quickly schools her emotions and looks away. It's still enough to make my chest ache.

“Just a little wager we have of whether my brother shoots X or Y chromosomes.” Wren chuckles.

“A hundred bucks. You in?” Riggs asks.

Declan reaches for his wallet, a huge grin spreading across his face. “Fuck yeah. Girl all the way.”

Just as he hands Riggs his cash, the door to the waiting room swings open and a frantic looking Kellan comes rushing in. “I need a priest.”

The entire room goes silent. Mia moves towards him, her face going white. “What happened?”

Kellan clutches at his hair; I've never seen him losing his shit like this before. “She... she's insisting on being married before the baby comes.” More silence as everyone glances around, confused.

“She... wait, what?” Salem asks.

Alora step forward. “So, the baby's okay?”

Kellan nods. “Yeah... the baby's fine. I just... I asked her to marry me, and now she... she wants to be married before the baby comes.”

My mouth drops open, as does half the room's. Kitty clasps her hands to her chest as she stares at her grandson. “You asked her to marry you?”

Kellan nods. My eyes dart from Declan to Ryder, to Riggs and Mac, then Wren. All at once, the room erupts into cheers. King has finally claimed his Queen, in every sense of the word. Kellan smirks, some of the color coming back into his face as everyone rushes forward and offers their congratulations. “I still need a priest,” he says. “She wants this

done before our kid arrives.” The moment the words come out of his mouth, he goes pale again.

“I’m more than happy to do it,” Mammoth says. “But it won’t be legal until you get a marriage license. Which you both have to apply for in person.”

I forgot Mammoth is an ordained minister via some online church thing in California. He married Salem and Riggs, so why not Kellan and Jenna?

Kitty wraps her hands around Kellan’s arm. “You can get the license in a few days, but for now, I think she just wants the marriage—to be your wife before bringing your child into the world.”

Kellan rubs his hands against his thighs. “Yeah. Okay, let me go run this by her. I’ll be back.” He turns and presses the button on the wall, then waits to be buzzed in. The moment he disappears back inside, I look for Sicily. I scan the room, but can’t find her. Moving towards Mia and Salem, I keep glancing around, hoping to spot her hair.

“Where’s Sicily?” I ask once I reach Salem.

She motions to the exit. “She had to step out to answer a phone call.”

Remembering the look on her face when Ember showed up, I quickly head to the exit to find her. Stepping out into the hall, I spot her pacing near the elevators, phone pressed to her ear. I take in her long legs that lead up to her sinful ass and curvaceous hips. The woman’s body is every man’s wet dream. As I move closer, her voice becomes clear, and the nervous tone has my footsteps growing faster.

“You can’t do this. I only have one more semester.” She chews nervously on her nail and as I step in front of her, her head snaps up, and I’m met with tears swimming in her eyes. I have the urge to snatch the phone away, and lay into whoever it is that’s upsetting her, but I rein it in.

“What’s wrong?” I ask.

She tilts the bottom half of the phone down so she can talk to me without yelling into the person's ear. "It's the school. My father cancelled the payment for next semester. If I can't pay it by next week, they're going to give my spot to someone on the waiting list." A tear rolls down her cheek, and something inside me cracks wide open.

As she starts to turn away, I snatch the phone from her hand. "How much?" I ask.

"Cypher," she gasps, reaching for the phone.

I tilt away, just out of her reach. "How much, Sicily?"

She bites her lip. "Twenty thousand."

Nodding, I lift the phone to my ear. "You'll have the money tomorrow."

"What? No!" she says, reaching to take the phone from me. I end the call and hand it back. "Are you crazy? I can't come up with that kind of money by tomorrow!"

"You don't have to. I'm paying it."

Her eyes widen as she stares at me like I've grown a second head. "You... no!" She shakes her head. "You are not paying my college for me."

I grip her chin, holding her so she can't turn away. "I told you last night, Princess. I've got you."

Her expression softens, no doubt remembering me whispering those exact words to her while I held her in my arms. "Cypher," she groans. "I can't let you do that. It's too much."

I take in her beautiful eyes, her breathtaking face, and that pull between us has me moving closer. That overwhelming feeling of rightness works its way in again, and I find myself leaning in, wanting another taste of those pouty lips. "I have a feeling it will never be enough when it comes to you," I whisper.

The waiting room door opens, and Mia's head pops into the hallway. "Guys, hurry up. We're starting."

We both turn to face her, Sicily's brows scrunching together. "Starting what?"

I grab her hand and start walking back to the waiting room. "Kellan and Jenna are getting married."

"Now?" she asks.

Laughing, I lead her back into the room. "She wants to be married before the kid is born." The moment we step inside, I spot Kellan holding onto a very uncomfortable looking Jenna, who's wearing one of those ugly hospital gowns and dragging an I.V. pole around behind her. A very annoyed looking nurse hovers right behind them. Mammoth is standing next to them.

"Jenna," the nurse huffs. "You need to get back to bed so I can check you."

"I am not having this baby until I am married," Jenna says through gritted teeth. "So, unless you're willing to let all these people back into my room, then it's happening right here."

The nurse shakes her head. "I'm afraid that's not—"

Jenna's face turns bright red, her head whipping around to glare daggers at the poor woman. "I will walk right out of this fucking hospital and over to the courthouse right fucking now if you don't shut the fuck up," she shouts, her voice growling like a demon. The entire room is stunned into silence, and the nurse's mouth snaps shut. My eyebrows lift to my hairline as I take in my favorite red head. *Goddamn, where did that come from?*

Kellan stares at her like she's a stranger, then cautiously touches her like she's a wild animal about to strike. "Babe, let's get started, so we can get you back into bed."

She turns to Mammoth, motioning for him to begin. He clears his throat, clearly nervous. "Well, I wasn't prepared for

this today, but what the hell? Let's do this."

Everyone shifts around, getting into place, and finding a spot to get a better view. "Just make it quick," the nurse mumbles.

Mammoth clasps his hands in front of him as he looks between Kellan and Jenna. "We're here today to celebrate the marriage of Kellan King and Jenna Bryant."

Jenna grips her stomach and groans.

Mammoth takes a step back. "Or the birth of their kid, whichever comes first."

Jenna shoots him a glare.

"Maybe just skip to the main parts," Mac suggests.

"Fine," Mammoth grumbles. "Do you, Kellan, take Jenna to be your wife? In sickness and in health, rich or for poor, and all that other marriage shit until death do you part?"

Kellan nods, and I can't help but snicker. "I do."

"And do you, Jenna, take Kellan, to be your husband —" Her hand shoots out, clamping down on his arm as she groans again. Mammoth goes white, and I swear I wouldn't be surprised if he pissed himself. "Uh, in every way I just mentioned?"

"I do," Jenna says through gritted teeth.

"I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss your woman," Mammoth rushes to finish. Kellan leans down and presses a kiss to Jenna's lips just as she doubles over in pain and lets out a high-pitched scream.

The nurse grabs the IV pole. "That's it! Back to the bed."

The room erupts into cheers as Kellan helps lead Jenna back through the maternity room doors, and not fifteen minutes later, he's bursting through them once again.

“It’s a boy!” he shouts, his eyes alert, and the hugest smile covering his face.

For the third time tonight, the room goes nuts. Mac starts handing out cigars to everyone, declaring he knew it was going to be a boy all along. The man was right, and I’m glad I went with his gut feeling when making the bet.

“What’s his name?” Mia asks.

Kellan beams, the previous anxiety long forgotten. “Jett Carson King.”

“Hell yeah,” Wren says. “That’s a strong fucking name for a future club prez.”

“Who knows?” Riggs smirks. “Maybe Jett and Becca will be the future powerhouse couple of the Road Demons one day?”

Ryder growls, his eyes narrowed on Kellan. “Fuck! Now I have to worry about your son putting the moves on my daughter.”

Kellan smirks. “He’s a King. No moves are necessary. Women fall at our feet.”

Al cocks a brow as she leans into Wren’s side. “I’d pay to hear you say that to your *wife* right now.”

Kellan snickers. “Please, she’ll be back in the saddle in a few days. She can’t resist me.”

“Uh, you do know she isn’t supposed to have sex for six weeks, right?” Mia asks.

The smile on Kellan’s face falls away. “Fuck. Seriously?”

Ryder grins. “Yup. Six long, torturous weeks, Brother.”

I grin as the twinkle in King’s eyes gets snuffed out. “Fucking hell,” he mumbles. “No one mentioned that shit yet.”

Mia laughs. “Do you think we just pop out a kid and don’t have to go through recovery time?”

Kellan stares at her. “Well... no, but... fuck... six weeks?”

Riggs slaps his shoulder. “Better start working on that stroking arm, Brother.” He holds his hand up in front of him. “Looks like the two of you are gonna be getting reacquainted.”

Kellan groans, then turns and walks back through the maternity room doors.

I glance at Sicily, taking in a deep breath when I find her still standing at my side with a smile on her face. In just over seven months, we’ll be doing this exact thing. My gaze travels down to her stomach, and I wonder if we’ll have a son or a daughter? I wonder if her family will get their heads out of their asses and be here for her? When she turns to me, her smile falters ever so slightly. I slip my hand back into hers, giving it a squeeze. No matter if her family decides to be there or not, mine will.

And I’ll be by her side every fucking step of the way.

Chapter 16

SICILY

“You got us a tree?” I ask as I walk into the living room, wiping my hands on a towel.

“I mean, Christmas is next week. I thought we should get one.” Cypher flashes me a smile as he and Riggs carry the bundled evergreen into the center of the room.

Salem comes through the door behind them, lugging several bags. “Figured you could use some decorations, too. There’s more in the car, including a wreath for the front door.”

I stand back and watch as Cypher sets up the stand and Riggs lowers the base of the tree into it. After cutting the string binding it, the branches fall into place, revealing a beautiful Douglas Fir.

“Something smells good,” Cypher says, eyeing the kitchen like it’s about to burst into flames. To be fair, I’ve made the smoke detector go off several times over the last week. The day after Jenna had Jett, I tried to make them a roast, which ended up burnt to a crisp and so hard it was like chewing on beef jerky. Tonight, I’m trying my luck with chicken and dumplings. I confess, I asked for a few pointers from the girls, and even did some serious research prior to starting. I had just taken the chicken out and started the dumplings when the three of them came through the door with their delivery of holiday cheer. The chicken looks pretty darn good, if I do say so myself.

“No fires tonight.” I laugh.

Salem sets all the bags on the couch, rummages through them, and pulls out a few boxes of lights. “Why don’t I finish helping you while the guys get the lights on the tree?” She tosses the boxes to Riggs and Cypher before following me back into the kitchen. “Damn, girl, that looks amazing,” she

says, lifting the lid to the roasting pan. “See, I told you you’d get the hang of it.”

“It’s one meal.” I snicker. “I’ve hardly mastered the art of cooking.”

“But you will. You’re smart, it’s not rocket science.”

I stir the dumplings, making sure they aren’t sticking together in a solid ball of dough. In the last few days, Kellan has finished the cabinets and countertops, and all new appliances were installed. The place might be small, but after all the renovations, it’s like brand new and looks like the type of home I dreamed of having one day. Cozy, stylish and, more importantly, welcoming. Cypher made sure I got pretty much everything I wanted. Including a double wall oven. I’m determined to become a master chef, even if it kills me.

Grabbing the broccoli from the fridge, I rinse it, then cut the stalks before putting it in a container to steam. “I was getting tired of takeout. It was either learn to cook, or go broke and get super fat on fast food.”

“How’s the morning sickness?” she asks, changing the subject.

I shrug. “It comes and goes. Some days I’m perfectly fine, others I can’t travel too far from the toilet.” I pop the broccoli in the microwave and start it. “Today was a good day, thus the dinner.”

Salem pulls a piece of skin off the chicken and pops it into her mouth. “See, this is why I have no desire to have kids.” She closes her eyes and moans. “Oh damn, girl. This tastes amazing.”

Smiling at the compliment, I grab two plates. “Did you guys want to stay for dinner? There’s plenty.”

“Ah,” she says, licking her fingers. “I was promised a steak dinner, and you know nothing comes between me and my rare meat.”

Scrunching my nose, I start plating the food just as the guys walk in.

“Except my meat.” Riggs grins, grabbing his crotch.

“Later, baby, you have to feed me first.” Salem winks. “Anyway, we’ll get out of your hair, so you can eat and finish decorating.” She gives me a huge smile as she bumps her shoulder against mine. “You’re first Christmas together is special.”

I roll my eyes and she giggles. All of them have been so obvious about wanting to see the two of us together. But it’s not that simple. Not when I suspect he’s still harboring feelings for Ember, even if he won’t talk about it. Cypher walks them out as I finish plating the food and then meet him in the dining room. He eyes the plate hungrily as I place it on the table in front of him. “Damn, babe, this looks great.” I take my seat next to him as he cuts into his chicken, then shoves a huge piece into his mouth. His eyes widen, his brows lifting to his hairline. “Fuck, Sicily.” He groans around a mouthful. “This *is* fucking good.”

I can’t help but light up like... well... a Christmas tree. “Yay!” I laugh, clapping my hands like a little girl. “I finally made a decent meal.”

He shoves a forkful of dumplings in next. “This is better than decent, Princess. This is fucking awesome.” He cuts off another huge piece of chicken. “I won’t complain one bit if you start cooking like this every day.”

I playfully shove his foot with mine. “I’m not going to cook for you every day while you keep me barefoot and pregnant, sir.”

His eyes flash, his tongue coming out to lick his bottom lip as he stares at me like I’m tonight’s dessert. I bite my lip, realizing what I just said. Clearing my throat, I return to my meal, doing my best to act like I didn’t just say that. Living with a man as sexy as he is, is a constant temptation. To say sharing a bed with him over the last week has been hard

would be an understatement. No matter how much space I try to keep between us, we always manage to wake up wrapped around each other. And there's no avoiding the huge tent in his boxers every morning. I almost feel sorry for him, but then I imagine he rubs one out in the shower to thoughts of Ember, and I manage to shove all my sexual desires back into their box. Although I'd be lying if I said I didn't get wet thinking about him pleasuring himself.

After finishing dinner and cleaning up, we finish decorating the tree. It's simple and fun, with colored lights and silver and gold decorations mixed in with whimsical ornaments of no specific theme. My mother always had white lights with white and blue ornaments. All handpicked by her, with no family decorations or sentimental value. It was more for show than functionality and although I always thought it was pretty and elegant, it never gave me that feeling of family. Not like this one. Sitting here in the dark with only the tree illuminating the room, I can't help but think about how this will be the first Christmas I'll be spending without my family. But they haven't reached out to me in over a week, and I stopped trying to call them. They never answer anyway. My father is probably pissed thinking I would agree to terminate my pregnancy in exchange for being able to finish my degree, but thanks to Cypher, he can't hold my tuition over my head as leverage now either.

"I think I'm going to go to bed." I sigh, pushing myself up from the couch. Cypher nods as he continues to type away on his laptop. He uses the dining room table as his home office even though I told him to set up the guest room as a temporary one until the baby comes. He says he's more comfortable at the table than cooped up in the small room. Personally, I think it's because he can watch me throughout the day, but who knows? I'm not going to argue with him about it. More than likely, I'll be at that same table when I return to my classes and have reports I need to do.

"Night," he says, not even glancing my way.

After brushing my teeth and washing my face, I grab my prenatal vitamins, but realize I forgot to bring a glass of water with me to bed. I always wake up in the middle of the night, needing something to drink. Leaving the room, I head back down the hall, only to freeze when I hear the sound of a woman moaning. My ears perk up, straining to hear if Cypher is talking to someone, but all I hear is the unmistakable sounds of sex. Curious, I creep to the end of the hall and peek into the living room. My eyes land on Cypher, stretched out on the couch, his laptop sitting on the table in front of him and...

Oh. My. God!

His hand is stroking his cock as it works slowly up and down his length. His *very* impressive length. I had forgotten how big he was. Although, to be fair, I only got to see it briefly before I ran out of his room after that first night. The light from the monitor illuminates his face and bare chest, his muscles flexing as he pleasures himself. I should feel ashamed watching him like this, but I don't. Instead, I feel turned on. Really turned on. My eyes follow the movement of his hand and within seconds, my panties are freaking soaked. Dear God, I've never seen anything sexier. I squeeze my thighs together as my pussy starts to ache, wanting desperately to feel that monster inside of me. I bite back a moan when he lets out a low grunt, his head falling back against the couch. Damn, I'd love to be the one touching him—stroking him. My heart is pounding at the thought of him ravaging me, and I'm so turned on, I physically ache with need. I don't even realize my hand is cupping my pussy until the feel of my fingers through my leggings sends a jolt of pleasure through my core.

"Fuck, Sicily," Cypher mumbles, and I gasp, my hand freezing between my legs when I hear my name. My god, he's thinking of me while jerking off. His head snaps up, his eyes locking with mine, and my breath lodges in my throat. We stare at each other, both shocked to be caught touching ourselves. *Abort!* My head screams, and I practically fall into the wall as I stumble backward. Embarrassed, I turn and run back to my room.

“Sicily?”

I hear his footsteps rushing down the hall, and I spin around to face him just as he enters the room behind me. He stops no more than a foot away, and once again we stare at each other, both of us breathing heavily from the chase. At least that’s what I tell myself. My eyes drop to the huge tent in the front of his sweats, and I lick my lips, remembering how he looked with his hand wrapped around it just moments ago. A low growl has my eyes snapping up to his, and my heart slams against my chest at the liquid fire I see blazing within those icy orbs. Lifting my hand, I clutch my throat as I swallow hard against the sudden dryness. “Cypher, I—”

He rushes forward, grabbing my wrist, and tugging me to him. I slam into his chest as his right arm wraps around my waist, my tits pressing against him. My breath rushes out of me; every cell in my body sizzling from his touch.

“Is this the hand I just saw you touching yourself with?” his voice rumbles low as his thumb strokes over the wrist he’s still holding.

I blink, his words not registering at first. My god, he’s fried my brain. When I’m finally able to comprehend what he asked, I manage a slow nod, unable to break eye contact. Without a word, he lifts my hand to his lips. My pulse races as I watch his tongue snake out and he licks slowly, but firmly, from my wrist to the tips of my fingers. My knees buckle as a whimper leaves my mouth, and with a grunt of impatience, his lips slam against mine. He groans as his hands slide up into my hair, gripping it to the point of pain. I gasp when he spins us around, walking me backward until I’m against the wall. I claw at his chest and his arms, trying to get a grip and gain some control, but I can’t. Honestly, I don’t want to. I want him to consume me. I’m tired of the torment.

“Fuck,” he breathes against my lips. My stomach flips when he reaches down, grips me under my ass, and lifts me into his arms. I wrap my legs around him, my back against the wall, and I moan when his hard length presses against my

aching core. We shouldn't be doing this, but I can't find it in me to care. I crave him—ache for him—and I need him in this moment more than I need my next breath.

“Cypher,” I moan as he rubs against my clit. The sweatpants allow me to feel every hard inch of him, and I'm left salivating.

He pulls away enough to work his hands between us. His fingers claw at the crotch of my leggings and in one quick move, he rips a hole right through them. My body jerks from the movement, my heart thundering in my chest. My god, that is the sexiest thing I've ever experienced.

“Fuck me,” he growls, staring down at the white scrap of lace barely covering me. He works his fingers underneath, tugging them to the side. His jaw clenches, the muscles twitching as he inhales my scent. I'm already so wet I should be embarrassed. But I'm beyond that at this point. My hands slide into his hair, and I grip onto it as he strokes his thumb over my clit. I jolt by the contact, my body overly sensitive. My nipples are so hard they hurt, and I'm already so close to the edge I could come just from the look in his eyes.

“Cypher... please,” I beg, my hips shamelessly grinding against his hand.

His fingers slip inside me, and I clench around them, desperate for some relief. “Is this what you want, Princess?” His voice has dropped lower, the vibration adding to my pleasure. My head falls back against the door, my mouth dropping open as his teeth graze my neck.

“Please,” I gasp. “I... I need you; I want you.”

The rumble in his chest sends a jolt of heat to my core. My stomach tightens, and I'm about to come, when suddenly his fingers disappear. I lift my head, ready to curse him for stopping, but my argument dies when he grips the waistband of his sweats and shoves them over his hips. My eyes widen as I stare down at his hard length. Long, thick, and just as beautiful as the man it's attached to. Seeing it from a distance

and in the dark did it no justice. Dear god, the man is perfection.

He wraps his hand around his cock, and I moan as he rubs the tip against my clit. His eyes snap up to mine just as he positions himself at my entrance and freezes. I shake my head at his hesitation. "I'm clean, and I can't get any more pregnant than I already am."

Pure lust flashes in those icy blues as he adjusts his stance between my thighs. "So am I," he grunts, then thrusts his hips forward. My back collides with the wall, and I cry out as he buries himself inside me. His left hand squeezes my ass as his right goes to the back of my head, fisting my hair, and tugging it back. He buries his face in my neck, licking and biting as he pounds into me, his hips moving at a punishing pace. "Fucking hell, Princess," he groans as he licks his way to my mouth once again. I cling to his neck and shoulders, desperate for more. Of him, of this moment, of what I'm feeling. It's intense, overwhelming, and I'm so consumed by it that I can hardly breathe. I can't think, I can only feel.

"Look," he growls as he pulls his lips from mine and tilts my head downward. Our panting breaths mingle together as we watch his cock slide in and out of me, slick with my arousal. It's erotic, sexy, and it sends me hurling towards my release. "Your pussy was made for my cock, baby. Perfect. Fucking. Fit!"

"Oh, god, Cypher, I'm..." I moan, gripping his arm and digging my nails in.

He grunts as he thrusts harder. "Fucking come, baby. Let me feel you."

I close my eyes, my thighs tightening around him as my stomach clenches. My breath seizes in my chest as my orgasm rips through me, and I shatter into a million blissful pieces. My nails dig into his flesh as I cry out, and my body shakes as I clench around him. His mouth slams over mine, swallowing my cries, and stealing my sanity.

“Fuck, that’s it, squeeze me baby. Fuck! Fuck!” His hips hammer against me, then he roars as he releases inside of me. His legs shake as he fights for control, but he never falters. He buries his face in my neck, lips pressing against my damp skin as we cling to each other while aftershocks of our orgasms pulse through us.

After several silent seconds, he lifts his head, and our eyes crash together like the aftermath of a violent storm. I don’t know what to say, and I don’t think I could speak even if I wanted to. Because this... this was the most incredible sex I’ve ever experienced, and I’m terrified of what that could mean. Because, looking into his eyes, I see the same uncertainty staring back at me. We both felt it. We both want more. But we both know there’s still something... someone in the way. The question is...

Can he let her go, or will she always be what stands between us?

Chapter 17

CYPHER

I run my fingers up and down Sicily's arm. Her leg is draped over my thighs, her head laying against my chest as her fingers draw circles around my nipple. Neither of us speaks, not having said much after the unexpected fuck against the wall. When I saw her standing in the hallway watching as I jerked off to thoughts of her, her hand covering her pussy, I snapped. The moment I touched her, my body came alive. When I kissed her, my mind became a scrambled mess and a primal need to claim her hit me like a speeding train. Nothing else mattered but the uncontrollable need to claim her. The moment I slipped inside her was like nothing I'd ever experienced. It was explosive, overwhelming, and... it felt like home. Like it was exactly where I belonged; it felt right. I couldn't get deep enough—close enough. I wanted more even while I was still buried balls deep,

I. Wanted. More!

And I took it.

After stripping her of her clothes, I tossed her on the bed and fucked her again. It was even hotter than the first time since she rode me so hard. I felt like a bucking bull. Goddamn, the woman can move her fucking hips like you wouldn't believe. It was all hands, teeth, saliva, and sweat. It was messy, and so fucking hot I wanted to do it again the minute I emptied my balls inside her for a second time. Maybe it's because it feels so much better and more intense without a condom; or maybe it's *her*. Either way, I think I'm already addicted. How the fuck could I not remember the night of the Halloween party? Sex with Sicily isn't something a man should be able to forget.

She lets out a deep sigh, and I tilt my head down, wanting to see her gorgeous face. "Are you okay, Princess?"

She closes her eyes, a frown pulling at her swollen lips. “Please stop calling me that.”

My eyebrows pull together, confused as to why she hates the nickname I’ve had for her for months. I continue to stroke her arm as I bring my other hand up under her chin, tilting her head back so I can see those eyes I love so much. “Why can’t I call you Princess?”

“Because now that I know why you call me that, I don’t like it.”

I mentally kick myself as I remember the way I assumed she was a spoiled little rich girl, but she’s wrong. Shifting my angle so I can see her better, I stroke my hand along her jaw. “I call you Princess because you’re too good for me, Sicily. You’re so far out of my fucking league, you might as well be royalty.”

She lifts her head, shifting further onto her side. “I don’t see myself that way. I’m no more important than you or anyone else. Yeah, we had different upbringings, different life experiences, but neither is superior to the other.” Her hand flattens over my chest, directly over my heart. The warmth of her touch is like an aphrodisiac, and need starts to pump through me once again. Jesus, will I ever get enough of her?

“It’s what’s in here that makes a person, not where they come from,” she says.

Fuck! This woman! After meeting her parents and her friends, I’ll admit, I’m shocked she isn’t a stuck-up bitch like the rest of them. Instead, she’s genuine, kind, and the type of girl any man would be lucky to have. Leaning down, I press my lips to her forehead and grin. “Can I still call you, princess, Princess?”

She closes her eyes and smiles. “As long as it’s not a jab, then I guess it’s okay.” She lays her head back on my chest and I pull her tighter into my side.

I chuckle. “Not a jab, I promise.” She falls silent again, and I go back to running my fingers up and down her arm. I

don't remember feeling so at peace.

“Cypher?” Her tone has me bracing for what I should have known was coming. “I’m not trying to bring up a sore topic.” She angles her head to look at me, and my heart kicks against my chest. “But considering what we just... I need to know what happened between you and Ember.”

A spark of anger surges through me, and I quickly dart my eyes away, focusing on the ceiling. Why the hell is she bringing this up now? “I told you; it was nothing.”

I can feel her tense against me as my words come out harsher than I intended. “That’s not exactly what you said. You didn’t really say anything, but I’m a smart girl; and I’ve seen the way you look at her. You—”

“Enough!” I snap, angry that she’s prying where she shouldn’t be. Angry that she brought Ember into this moment between the two of us. She jumps at my sudden outburst, then quickly pulls away. “Sicily?” I sigh, attempting to keep her in my arms, but she moves quickly to her side of the bed.

“I’m sorry, forget I asked.” Her tone is low and laced with hurt. I reach for her again, but she turns away and scoots as close to the edge as she can get before reaching up and clicking off the light on her nightstand, leaving the room only partially lit. Fuck! Now she’s upset, and I can’t say that I blame her. She’s right. I didn’t exactly deny I had feelings for Em, but it’s moot, anyway. Ember belongs to Declan. I’ve accepted that.

Turning onto my side, I scoot up behind her. “Sicily,” I breathe as I slide my arm around her waist, only to have her brush it off.

“I’m tired.” She sniffs, and I freeze. Is she...

Propping myself up on my elbow, I grab her shoulder and pull her onto her back. The soft glow of the lamp on my nightstand casts enough light that I can see the tears in her eyes as well as on her cheeks. My chest goes tight, aching like a bitch at seeing those tears. Tears that I caused.

“Fuck, baby,” I whisper, stroking my thumb over her cheek. “I didn’t mean to snap at you.” Her eyes search mine as another tear escapes, and the weight on my chest grows heavier. “Please don’t cry. I’m sorry.”

She takes a shaky breath, then lets it out slowly. “This is wrong.” I study her, trying to get inside her head. She bites her lip as more tears build, then spill over. It’s fucking killing me. “We shouldn’t have done this if you’re in love with someone else. It’s not right.”

I feel like I just took a roundhouse kick to the gut. Is she saying what just happened between us was a mistake? Hell no! “Okay... yeah, I have feelings for Ember.”

“You love her,” she whispers, her mouth drawing tight.

I stare at her, not sure if what I’m about to say is what she really wants to hear. But I owe her the truth. “I thought it was mutual, but it wasn’t. Shit was bad for a few weeks. I turned to the bottle and women. I reached my breaking point, and I almost quit the club, so I left for a few weeks to get my head on straight. I had to accept that she was with Declan, and I had to respect it.”

Her watery eyes run over my face, and I swear I see the moment her walls slam back into place. “Thank you for telling me the truth,” she mumbles, her tone flat and robotic. I have a sinking feeling I should have kept my mouth shut. She starts to turn away, and I’m hit with a sense of panic.

“Em?”

She freezes.

So do I.

Fuck!

Her eyes close, shutting me out, and I curse myself for that slip of the tongue. “Damn it, Sicily. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean... it’s just that we were talking about her.”

“I get it,” her voice cracks, and it’s like a shot to my heart.

“No, you don’t. Yeah, I have feelings for a woman I shouldn’t. But I also... feel something for you. I don’t understand any of it, but if I could move on with anyone else, it would be you.”

Annnnd I’m a fucking idiot. Her eyes slowly open, and it breaks me to see how dull and lifeless they are. “Wait! Fuck! That came out wrong. I—”

“I am not a consolation prize,” she says. “I deserve so much more than that.”

My heart pounds. God damn it, I’m fucking this all up. “Yes, you do. That’s—”

“I’m glad we agree.” She sniffs. “Now let’s agree that this...” She motions between the two of us. “...was a moment of weakness that will never happen again.”

I grit my teeth at the thought of never touching her again. Never feeling the perfection of her tight body, never tasting her. It’s not possible. I wasn’t lying when I said I was already addicted to her. “I do *not* agree with that,” I growl.

She stares at me, her tear-filled eyes unblinking. She shakes her head, turning away to lie on her side, leaving me staring at her back. That feeling in my chest intensifies to the point of excruciating pain as I watch her pull away from me, physically and emotionally.

“Sicily?” I move towards her.

“I’m tired,” she says, her voice barely a whisper. “Please, just leave me alone.”

As much as I want to curl up behind her, wrap her in my arms, and tell her how sorry I am, I don’t. I’ve hurt her enough, even though it wasn’t my intention. Now I need to respect her wishes. Maybe things will be better in the morning?

Moving back to my side of the bed, I click off the light and settle in against the headboard. I watch her unmoving form lying next to me, wondering how, or maybe why, my life

has become so complicated. A month ago, I was sure Em was the only woman I would ever care about. Now, as I watch Sicily, wishing I could just touch her—kiss her... I'm wondering how I could survive if I were to lose her.

“We might have a lead on Brick’s whereabouts,” Wren says.

I glance around the table, catching the alert looks of Ryder, Riggs, and Declan. Obviously, they’re just hearing this news too. It’s been over a month since the fucker went into hiding. The longer it takes to find him, the more time he has to plan something. I’ve been working my ass off, hacking into traffic cameras in town and looking for any signs of bank transactions. Not a fucking thing. The piece of shit has gone dark. I can’t get any info on Hulk, Rena, Larkin or Virgin Mary either. I’m sure since Popeye went ‘missing’, they’ve locked their shit up even tighter.

“Tazz thought he saw that blue Maxima heading out of town towards Towne Point Road,” Kellan says.

Ryder’s eyebrows pull together. “There’s nothing out that way for miles.”

“There’s gotta be something,” Riggs says.

“We need to send out some scouts, drive the full fucking thing, and make sure we cover every damn inch,” Declan scowls. “There has to be something we’ve missed.”

“Already on it.” Kellan nods. “I sent Tazz, Lucky, and Bull out a half an hour ago.”

Wren shoves away from the table and stands. “I want to know the minute they find something. This shit has gone on long enough. We should have dealt with his ass before he had a chance to run.”

Kellan leans back in his chair. “We needed him to keep feeding information to Buzz. If we took Brick out first, we

could still be dealing with the Henchmen. They were the bigger threat. Now it's just Brick, Hulk, and his cunts."

"I'll take those odds any day," Riggs says.

The rest of us stand; the meeting coming to an end. "Have you heard from Aero?" Wren asks.

Kellan walks towards the door. "They're working on setting up their new club. I told them if they needed anything to reach out."

"We need to have a serious fucking party once all this shit is over with." Ryder grins.

We walk back into the main room and my eyes immediately scan for Sicily. I find her sitting on one of the couches in the back with Jenna and Mia. Jett's cradled in her arms as she stares down at the newborn. The image almost knocks me on my ass. That will be her in about seven months. Except it will be my child she's holding. The thought has something shifting inside of me. She laughs at something Jenna says, then her head lifts, and she finds me. Her beautiful smile melts, then she looks away. She's barely spoken to me since last night, and it's fucking killing me.

"Cyph, baby."

Sicily's head jerks in my direction and I inwardly groan as Vera comes rushing up to me. I've tried to avoid her as much as possible. The woman is all hands whenever she sees me. It's easier now that I'm not living here, but surely, she's heard that I'm living with Sicily by now. Although the sweet butts don't care about that. They hit on every club member, married or not. She throws herself into my arms and I have no choice but to catch her, or we'll both fall on our asses. Her legs wrap around my waist, her arms around my neck, and I just manage to turn my head before her lips can land on mine. She catches my cheek instead.

"Ugh," Salem scowls, waving a hand in front of her face. She and Al are behind the bar, mixing drinks and

chatting with Mammoth. “Did anyone else get a whiff of dumpster juice the minute she opened her legs?”

Vera sneers at her as I pry her arms from around my neck.

Riggs and Declan burst out laughing.

“What the fuck is dumpster juice?” Mammoth asks.

Salem grins. “You know, the nasty liquid that sits in a dumpster and smells like rotting flesh and fish. It’s really bad when it’s been baking in the sun all day.” She glances at Vera. “By what I just smelled, you’d think it was August.”

Vera’s face turns purple. “You fucking bitch!” she shouts as she lunges towards the bar. I grab her around the waist, holding her back. “You think because you’re married to Riggs, you’re hot shit.”

“Honey, I was hot shit before I ever met Riggs.” Salem smirks.

Riggs moves behind the bar to join his wife. “Yeah, she was.” She grins up at him, and he leans down and presses his lips to hers.

Vera spins back around, once again throwing her arms around my neck. “Whatever. I prefer riding your dick, baby.” She grins up at me. “And you love it when I suck—”

“Vera!” I snap, yanking her arms from around my neck. “That’s enough.”

I glance over at Sicily, her face a blank canvas of emotion as she hands Jett back to Jenna and stands. She says something to Ember and Mia, then Ember nods and the two of them move towards us.

“Oh, come on, babe,” Vera whines. “It’s been weeks. I need you.”

I push her hands away, my eyes never leaving Sicily as she walks right by me without a glance in my direction and

heads for the front door. “Sicily?” She stops and looks over her shoulder. “Where are you going?”

“She’s going with me to the salon. I need to grab a few things,” Ember says, looping her arm through hers, pulling her along. Before I can say anything else, Em drags her out the front door.

Vera huffs. “Who cares? She’s clearly trying to trap you with that kid. Why else would miss goodie two shoes be hanging around?”

My eyes narrow on the woman. I’ve never had a problem with her before, but if she’s going to start disrespecting Sicily, then I have a big fucking problem with her now.

I round on Vera, jerking my arm out of her grip. I swear to God, it’s like fighting off a fucking octopus. “She’s here because I want her here,” I growl.

Vera blinks. She looks at the door Sicily just walked out of, then back to me. “Why? Just let mommy and daddy deal with her while she’s pregnant. It’s bad enough you have to deal with a kid you don’t want.”

I grit my teeth. I’ve never said I didn’t want this kid. Yeah, I said in the past I didn’t want them, but never once, since I found out Sicily was pregnant, have I said I didn’t want the kid. I left the decision up to her, and when she decided to keep the baby, I stepped up. I admitted I wasn’t ready, but I never told her I didn’t want the baby.

“Clean your ears, twat rag,” Alora smirks. “He said he wants *her* here. In fact, he wants her around so much, they’re living together.”

Vera takes a step back, her mouth dropping open. “Are you fucking kidding me?”

“What’s it to you anyway, Dumpster Juice?” Mammoth snaps, then grins as he looks over at Salem and Alora, like he’s proud he got to use the new insult. “You honestly think any of these guys want a girl that’s ridden every cock in this club?”

I swear you can almost see the smoke coming out of her ears as she stares daggers right through me. These bitches be crazy sometimes. They know the deal coming in, and they still get all offended when we decide we want something, or rather, someone else. It's their choice to open their legs, yet we're the assholes when we fuck 'em and move on. They're never promised anything. But damn if they don't expect it.

“You can't seriously want that... that...”

“Watch it,” I warn.

Her teeth grind together. “I'll be damned if I'm letting a stuck up, high society little slut come out of nowhere and claim what's mine. Just because she opened her legs and let you come inside of her doesn't mean shit. She. Doesn't. Belong. Here!”

That was it. Those words just unlocked my inner asshole. I step closer, pressing into the woman who's just stepped over the line. “First of all, you have no fucking right to call anyone a slut. Do you really want to compare numbers? Let's ask the club how many members have stuck their dicks in you compared to her.”

Vera's mouth flattens into a tight line.

“Second, I don't belong to you. I never promised you shit. Just because I fucked you doesn't mean I want you. You've been around this club long enough to know your place. Third, she belongs here because she's carrying my fucking kid, and I want her here. If you can't accept that, there's the fucking door.” I point towards the exit Sicily and Em just went through.

Vera's breathing grows heavier, her skin practically glowing with how red she is. She takes a step back before her hand flies out and connects with my cheek. “Fuck you,” she spits, shoving my shoulder as she walks past me. “Someone needs to knock all you bastards down a peg,” she shouts as she yanks the door open and storms through it, letting it slam behind her.

Chapter 18

SICILY

I can safely say I've never had a Christmas like this. There has to be well over fifty people crammed into the clubhouse, and every one of them has brought a gift for Jett and Becca. Those two are going to be so spoiled. Instinctively, I run my hand over my flat stomach. Will my child be treated just as well? Finding Cypher standing next to Riggs, both wearing Santa hats, and looking more adorable than they should, my smile drops away. My child will be accepted by these people because of him. If it weren't for Cypher, there would be no one except me who would be there for my baby. My own family wants nothing to do with us, and my friends have all ghosted me since I moved out of the dorm. I never thought Penn would turn her back on me, but I guess appearances and money are more important than our friendship. Here we are, almost seven o'clock on Christmas evening, and I haven't heard from any of them. Despite the close family environment of the Demons, it still hurts that my own family hasn't even sent a text on the day that's supposed to bring everyone together. I guess I truly am on my own.

Despite feeling like I'm hanging on by a thread, I've tried to be happy, smiling, laughing, and taking part in the comradery of the family Cypher is so much a part of, but it's hard when one: I'm in my own little world of depression and two: I've hardly spoken to him in the past week. Not that he hasn't tried. He's attempted to make dinner, tried to sit and talk in the evenings, but I just can't be who he wants me to be, and I will not fall for a man who is in love with someone else. Well... fall harder. That's another problem. I'm starting to have feelings for him, and I can't set myself up for more heartache. I've had enough in the past month.

It's growing more and more obvious that I don't belong in his world, and I'm doing everything I can to distance myself

from him and his friends. I've even resorted to putting several pillows between us at night to make it clear that I don't want him touching me, and to prevent me from curling up against him in the middle of the night. He hated that, even throwing the pillows across the room the first night, but after threatening to sleep on the couch, he gave in and accepted my pillow wall. Yeah, things have not been good, and that is the reason I called my Aunt Julie in Texas. I finally told her everything, and just like I knew she would be, she's on my side. I'll be moving there after the first of the year. I decided I couldn't stay here any longer; my mental health just can't take it. Now I just need to break the news to Cypher.

His head turns my way and our eyes lock. Like it always does when he looks at me, that spark of electricity shoots right through me. It still takes my breath away. *Is it one sided? Does he not feel it too?* The flash of lust in his eyes tells me he does, and it's just another reason on the list of many that I need to get out of Covington Falls. Cypher may want my body, but it's clear he's already given his heart to someone else, and I can't set myself, or my child, up for heartache if one day Em becomes available.

He gives me a smile and a wink, and I offer one in return, but I can tell by the look on his face he knows it's forced on my end. His sexy little smile fades and his eyes dull.

Yeah, Texas will be good for us both. Neither of us is happy with our current situation.

"Hey," Jenna bumps my hip with hers, drawing my attention from Cypher. "Are you doing okay?" she asks, studying my face. Kellan has been holding Jett for most of the night. The only time he's even given him to Jenna is when he needed to be fed. Other than that, the man has kept his son tucked securely in his arms. It's endearing to see a man like him being so protective of his child.

"Yeah, just tired," I lie.

She grins. "I thought I knew tired when I was pregnant. It's nothing compared to having a new born." Her gaze goes to

her husband, and there's no mistaking the love she has for him. "Although, Kellan gets up with him more than I do. He's been amazing so far. I bet Cypher will be just the same." I look down at the glass of water in my hand, trying to conceal the emotion in my eyes. "Are you sure you're alright?" she asks. I close my eyes as a tear slips free. I'm starting to feel like I'm drowning. Jenna places her hand on my shoulder. "Hey, what's wrong?"

My chin quivers as I glance back up at the first 'friend' I made within the MC. "I can't do this anymore," I whisper.

Her shoulders sag, her mouth dropping into a frown. "Can't do what?"

I wave my hand around the room. "This. I don't fit in here. With them, or you, or... him."

"You just need to give it time." She smiles. "I didn't fit in at first either, but look at me now."

I shake my head. "It's not just that." She waits quietly for me to continue. Lowering my voice, I take a deep breath. "I like him. A lot."

Jenna's face lights up. "I knew you two would—"

"I know about Ember," I say, cutting her off.

She tenses, her smile frozen.

"I knew before he even told me. I see the way he looks at her. He's still in love with her. I can't compete with that, and I don't have the energy to."

Her own tears shimmer back at me. She lifts her hand and wipes at my cheek. "Oh, Sicily. You don't have to compete with anyone. I've seen the way he looks at *you*, and let me tell you, it's way more intense than the way he ever looked at Ember."

"Or maybe that's what you want to see." I sniff.

She bites her lip. "You and Cypher are meant to be together; we all see it. Just give him some time, he'll see it,

too.”

“I’m leaving.”

She looks like she’s stopped breathing. Everything about her is tense. “What?” She gasps.

“I’m going to live with my aunt in Texas. I’ll be leaving after the first of the year.”

“The fuck you are!”

I spin around, coming face to face with Cypher. His jaw is clenched so tight the veins in his neck are protruding. His fists are clasped at his sides, and there’s a fire in those icy blues that tells me there’s a violent storm brewing inside of him. “You’re not going anywhere,” he growls.

Twisting my fingers together in front of me, I swallow hard. “I don’t want to talk about this here.”

“We’re not talking about this at all,” he snaps, his voice getting louder.

I glance around, looking to see if we’re drawing attention. For the most part, everyone is still enjoying the festivities, but I catch Kellan, Declan, and of course, Ember staring right at us. When I go to look away, I catch another pair of eyes locked onto us. Vera. The woman has been sending me silent death threats all day. “Could we please not have this conversation here?” I ask.

His jaw tics. Then his hand clamps around my upper arm. “Fine,” he mumbles, pulling me towards the kitchen. The moment the door swings closed behind us and we’re alone, I yank my arm away from him. He’s on me before I can even take a breath. “You’re not going to Texas. Not with my kid.”

My head jerks back. “You don’t have a say in the matter.”

He steps up to me, his chest heaving. “The fuck I don’t,” he shouts.

“Not before it’s born you don’t,” I shout back.

His teeth grind together, nostrils flaring like a raging bull. I knew he wouldn't like it, but I didn't think he'd get this angry. Taking a step back, I place my hand on his chest. "Look," I say, bringing my voice back under control. "I would never keep your child from you. I'll come back once I have the baby, but right now I just..." Another round of tears blurs my vision. "I'm not happy. I'm overwhelmed and barely hanging on. Can't you see that?"

His eyes are so wide they're bulging. "I have done everything I can to make this better for you, Sicily. What more do you want?"

You. It's on the tip of my tongue, but I bite back the word. That's the one thing he can't give me—not completely. "And I'm so grateful for all of it. You stepped up when my own family wouldn't." His eyes track my hand as it glides across my stomach, a habit I didn't even realize I'd started doing. "But I can't stay here."

He runs a hand through his hair, letting out a pained groan. "Fuck!" He paces in front of the door, his shoulders tense as he mumbles to himself. "I need... how do you expect me to... I can't let you... not again..."

I take a step towards him, confused by his ramblings as I listen to what sounds like panic in his voice. "Cypher?" I reach for him.

He stops abruptly, spinning to face me. The crazed look has me taking a step back, but his hands shoot out and grip my upper arms tight. "You can't fucking go," he roars, and a scream catches in my throat.

"Cypher!" Kellan's voice cuts through the room, but it's clear Cypher doesn't even hear it.

"You can't..." His wild gaze pins me in place, then he hauls me against his chest, his mouth crashing down on mine. I gasp as he grips the back of my head, deepening the kiss and demanding my surrender. It's forceful and desperate, and it's freaking me the hell out.

Placing my hands on his chest, I try to push him back, but he's holding me too tightly. I manage to turn my head, breaking the kiss. "Cypher, stop," I beg, tears spilling down my cheeks. It's wrong, all wrong, because it's a gut reaction to me leaving, not because he really wants me to stay. Not for the reasons I want, anyway.

"Enough," Kellan snaps, grabbing his arm and jerking him away. He lets me go, and I stumble backward, catching myself against the counter.

Cypher spins around, shoving Kellan so hard, he slams against the refrigerator, making it rock backward. "Am I not allowed to have one fucking thing?" he shouts as he keeps his friend pinned against it. "You want to take *her* from me too?" He rams his fist into the hard metal next to Kellan's head, leaving a huge dent. The door opens and Declan steps inside. "What the fuck more do I have to lose?" Cypher screams in Kellan's face. My heart pounds as I stand frozen at the sight of blood dripping from his knuckles. The door opens again, and several people come rushing in.

"She's *mine*!" Cypher roars.

Kellan manages to land a blow to his ribs.

Declan grabs his arm, attempting to pull him off, but Cypher is like a man possessed with the strength of two. He rears back and sends Declan crashing into a stack of pots on the counter behind him.

"What the fuck?" Wren snarls as he and Riggs rush towards him. Cypher grabs a heavy pan and hurls it at Riggs, who manages to block it before it hits him in the face. Wren ducks under his arm as Cypher takes a swing. He moves up behind him, locking his arm around his, and yanking it up behind his back in an arm lock. He spins him around and slams him face down onto the steel counter. Cypher grunts, snorting like a wild animal. "Calm the fuck down," Wren commands.

My body is shaking so hard my teeth feel like they're chattering. Everything is blurry and no matter how many times I blink or wipe them away, more tears keep falling. I feel sick, confused, torn between wanting to get as far away from him as possible, and running to him to tell him it's okay, I won't leave.

When his gaze lands on me, his eyes go wide and all of his fight seems to vanish. "Sicily?" he pants.

The look on his face is like an arrow through my heart, and I know in that moment he has the power to hurt me more than anyone else. Shaking my head, I take a step back. He struggles under Wren's firm hold; his cheek still pressed to the steel surface. "Sicily!"

I turn and rush out the back door, sobbing at the sound of him shouting my name—at the banging of metal and grunting that I know means he's fighting to come after me. I don't make it more than three steps before the door swings open behind me and the girls come running out. "Sicily, wait!" Salem shouts.

They catch up to me in the parking lot. Salem grabs my hand, forcing me to stop. "You can't leave like this."

I can barely talk. I'm crying so hard. "I need to. Please..."

She pulls me into a hug. "Okay, we can ride around for a bit."

"Let's go to my Salon, I need to grab some paperwork anyway," Ember says, brushing my hair from my cheek.

Al rubs my shoulder. "Come on, hun. I'll drive."

I nod, and the four of us climb into her car. Me in the passenger seat, and Salem and Ember in the back. We're quiet for several minutes, other than my sobs and sniffles as Al heads towards town. I've never seen Cypher so upset. I've seen him pissed sure, like when he confronted my parents and Christian, but this? He was almost frantic. Like he was

terrified of me leaving. Like he couldn't handle it if I left. And his words...

How do you expect me to... I can't let you... not again.

Not again what?

How much more do I have to lose?

I'm so confused, and I'm tired of only knowing half the story.

"What happened?" I ask, my voice cracking, my attention still focused out the window. Nobody answers me. I turn to look at Ember, her pale face lighting up as we go under the streetlights. "He told me that he was in love with you, but you chose Declan. I need to know what happened, because I don't know what to think, and I really can't take any more of this."

Alora glances at Em in the rearview mirror, a silent conversation passing between them before Ember clutches her hands together in her lap. "I don't know how much you know about me and what happened, but I... I was s... sexually assaulted," she swallows hard, and Salem reaches over and grabs her hand. "They left me for dead, but Declan found me. If it wasn't for the Demons, I wouldn't be here."

"Oh god," I whisper.

Ember turns to look out her window. "From the beginning, I felt an attraction to Declan. Well, not right in the beginning. I was in no state of mind for a relationship. Declan felt it too, but he knew I needed time to heal. When he got hurt, I stepped in to help him. Just like he did with me. My heart was already his from day one, but we fell in love the more time we spent together." She finally looks at me. "Cypher and I were friends, and yes, we flirted, but I just thought it was him being him. Everyone told me he was the club flirt, so I didn't think he was serious. We never even kissed." I can see the torment she's been through; it bothers her that she hurt him so deeply. "I never felt that way about

him, Sicily. It was always Declan for me. I couldn't imagine being with anyone other than him."

"I think Cypher is conflicted right now," Alora says, pulling up to a stoplight.

"What do you mean?" I ask, wiping at my soaked cheeks.

"Did you not hear him claim you back there?" she asks.

What the hell is she talking about?

Alora gives me a sympathetic grin. "I think he cares about you a lot more than he's willing to admit. Did he tell you that he left Covington Falls because of Em?" I nod. "He left for three weeks, licking his wounds," Al chuckles. She glances in the mirror at Ember. "No offense, babe, but if he truly loved you, he would have stayed and fought for you, and it would have taken him longer than three weeks to let you go."

Ember smiles. "No offense taken. I actually agree."

"I think Cypher *thinks* he was in love with you," Salem says, reaching over and squeezing Ember's hand. "But only because you were the first girl he's ever had any kind of feelings for. Doesn't mean those feelings were love." She leans forward and touches my arm. "After the way he flipped out tonight, I think the man is head over heels for you. He's just fighting it because he's afraid of history repeating itself."

"Amen," Al says. She pulls into the back lot of Ember's salon. "The way he flipped his shit back there, he was fighting for *you*. He wants *you*."

I bite my lip as I think about it. Cypher told me he felt something for me, but he's never said anything that would make me think he wanted me. Not like this, anyway.

"You're in love with him, aren't you?" Ember asks.

The word *yes* screams in my head without any thought. *What the hell? How can I admit that to them when I'm just now admitting it to myself?*

Alora's eyes sparkle as she slams her hand against the steering wheel. "I fucking knew it!"

"I didn't—"

Alora points at me. "That look on your face said it all."

Heat crawls up my neck and onto my cheeks. "Okay, fine. Yeah. I love him."

"Then you need to stay and claim your man, Sis." Salem grins.

Sis... only my closest friends have ever called me that. It feels right coming from her. Shaking my head, I lean my shoulder against the seat. "He scared me back there. I've never seen him like that."

Alora snickers. "Please, like the rest of them wouldn't have reacted the same way. Wren would have torn the whole place down if he thought I was going to leave him."

"Riggs too!" Salem chuckles. "That's what we mean, Sis. He was fighting for you, even if it meant fighting his own brothers."

"He certainly didn't act like that over me," Ember says. "Let me grab what I need and then we can continue this conversation." I watch as she climbs out of the car and hurries inside of her shop.

Salem leans forward between the two seats. "Why are men such animals?"

Alora laughs. "Bitch, please. You love it when Riggs is an animal."

Salem cocks her head. "I mean, yeah, in the bedroom."

I snicker, appreciating these girls and their ability to make me feel better. I open my mouth to thank them, but I'm blinded by headlights as soon as I turn around. I close my eyes, shielding them with my hand as a truck flies up on our back bumper.

“What the hell?” Salem questions, squinting through the back window.

“Oh fuck!” Al gasps. “Call the guys,” she yells just as her window shatters, and she’s yanked out by her hair.

I scream.

So does Salem.

Then glass rains down on me as my window comes crashing in.

Chapter 19

CYPHER

“Get the fuck off me! Sicily!” I shout, struggling to get free from Wren’s tight hold. She’s leaving. I can’t let her leave. I can’t. “Sicily!”

“Calm the fuck down!” Wren snarls, shoving my head harder into the steel countertop as he yanks my arm up higher behind my back. Pain shoots through it, but I’d gladly take a broken arm if it meant keeping her here.

“Enough!” Kellan roars. “Let him up.”

Wren releases me, and I jerk upright, spinning to face them. It’s four of my best friends, but right now I’d fight them all... for her. “No one is trying to take Sicily away from you, Brother. But it’s her choice if she wants to leave.”

Pain rips through me at the thought. I clutch at my chest, feeling like I can’t breathe. “Then I’ll go with her. If she needs to get the fuck away from here, I’ll go wherever she wants. I won’t fucking lose her.”

They stare at me, unblinking.

Then Riggs bursts out laughing. “About fucking time.”

I glare at him, rolling my shoulder as I try to work out the pain still shooting through it. “What?” I snap.

Kellan grins. “You don’t even realize you just claimed her, do you?”

I glance between them. “What the fuck are you talking about? I didn’t—”

Wren folds his arms over his chest. “Your words, and I quote... *she’s mine!*”

“And out of this whole tirade, not once did you mention your kid.” Declan smirks. “You. Claimed. Her.”

I wrack my brain, trying to remember everything I said, but it's all a blur. *Did I say that?*

Riggs slaps my shoulder. "Face it, Brother. You just lost your fucking mind because the thought of her leaving fucking killed you. That's exactly what it feels like when you've found your woman."

I glance at Declan, who's smiling and shaking his head. "You never loved Ember. If you did, you wouldn't have stepped aside and let me claim her so easily." He grips the back of my neck, staring me in the eyes. "What would you do if someone else tried to claim Sicily?"

I'd rip his fucking throat out. The thought smacks me in the face. His words rocking me to my core. He's right. What I felt for Em is nothing compared to what I feel for Sicily. I was just too stubborn to see it. "Fuck!" I mumble.

Declan nods, then smacks his palm against my forehead. "Fucker."

"About time you pulled your head out of your ass," Wren says.

My head jerks forward as Riggs' palm connects with the back of it. "The next time you throw a fucking pot at my head, it better have dinner in it."

I snicker.

Kellan places a hand on the counter beside me, leaning in. "Now, you need to fix this shit with Sicily because I'll be damned if you're getting another three-week vacation anytime soon."

A phone rings, and Declan and Wren both pull theirs out to check. "It's me," Declan says.

I rub a hand over the back of my neck, easing away some of the tension. King's right, I need to talk to Sicily. I need her to know she's mine, and I won't be letting her go without a fight.

"Slow down," Declan says.

All eyes snap to him.

“Fuck,” he mumbles.

My heart drops into my stomach. All the tension I just managed to let go of is now back in full force.

“No,” Declan snaps. “Stay inside and lock the fucking door. We’re on our way.”

“What happened?” I ask before he even ends the call.

“The girls went to Em’s salon. Em went inside to get some things and when she came back out, the windows on Al’s car were all smashed and Sicily, Salem, and Al were gone.”

“What?” Wren shouts.

My mouth goes dry, my chest seizing. Then we’re all bolting for the door, scrambling to our cars. Mine’s the closest, and the moment I close my door behind me, Kellan slides into the passenger seat. The engine roars as I slam it into gear, kicking up stones as I take off out of the parking lot. All I can think about is her. All I can see is her face. She’s my fucking one, and I can’t lose her—not now.

“Al, Sicily, and Salem are missing,” Kellan barks into his phone. “Someone snatched them from the parking lot at Em’s salon.” He’s silent for a moment, and I can hear Ryder’s muffled voice. “Fuck no,” Kellan snaps. “Tell her and Mia to stay put. No one leaves the clubhouse until I clear it. Grab Tazz, Lucky, Bull, and Moose and meet us at the salon.”

He ends the call, shoving his phone back into his pocket. “Backup’s right behind us.”

My hands clench the steering wheel as I blow through the first light. I’m not stopping for a fucking thing. I curse as snowflakes start falling, knowing it will only be a matter of minutes before the roads become slick. Not five minutes later, I’m sliding into the parking lot of the salon with Riggs right behind me. I don’t wait for anyone. I throw my door open and run up to the car, shoving my head through the broken

window, hoping to find her hiding somewhere inside. Foolish, I know. But I'm not thinking straight.

"Em, it's me," Declan shouts, banging on the door to the building. It opens a moment later and a sobbing Ember falls into Declan's arms. I run over to join them, my pulse pounding. "What happened, baby girl?" Declan asks.

"I came in to get my appointment book and some dye." Ember sniffs. "I heard glass breaking and when I peeked through the back window, I saw this big truck blocking Al's car in."

"Brick?" I sneer.

She nods. "He broke Al's window and dragged her out by her hair."

A low growl comes from Wren. Ember looks at me, her chin quivering. "Hulk did the same to Sicily, and Larkin and Rena forced Salem out at gun point."

My vision goes red. I clench my hands into fists as rage pumps through me. Images of Sicily being ripped from the car by her hair, kicking and screaming. I'm gonna fucking kill Hulk.

"Did they say anything?" Riggs asks, his jaw clenched.

Ember nods. "They did, but I couldn't really hear them over Al and Sicily screaming, and they were all talking at once. It was just a bunch of shouting and cursing."

"Fuck!" I roar, slamming my fists onto the hood of Al's car. Jerking upright, I grab my phone and dial. The minute Rook, one of our newer prospects, picks up, I'm barking out orders. "I want footage from the traffic lights in town. Specifically, Ember's salon."

"Already on it," Rook says. The kid's a hacker, and a pretty damn good one. I've been working with him for a few weeks. I can hear his fingers moving over his keyboard. "As soon as Ryder told us what was going down, I started pulling up the feed," he says.

“What do you have?” I ask, heading for my car. Ryder’s truck pulls in, along with Bull’s old Dodge, and I motion for them to stay out of my way.

Kellan follows me. “Get her back to the Den and keep everyone on lockdown,” he tells Declan as he climbs into my car and slams the door.

Rook’s voice comes through the speakers once it’s connected. “They’re in Brick’s old Tahoe, headed out of town fifteen minutes ago down Chapel Road. Five minutes later, I have feed of them passing the 7-Eleven. I’ve hacked into Fulton’s cameras, too. So far, I haven’t seen them entering the town limits. That tells me they turned off somewhere between Grove Road and Gypsy Hill.”

“What’s in that area?” Kellan asks.

I wrack my brain trying to think. “Not many houses. A few storage units.” I curse as my car slides around a corner and Kellan’s phone rings. He answers it, telling whoever it is to hang on.

“One of the old coal depots is a few miles off of Gypsy,” Rook says.

“I thought Wren said they were down Towne Point Road,” I ask. “That’s nowhere near where they’re headed.”

“Maybe they have something else up their fucking sleeve.” Kellan sneers.

Kellan starts relaying the info to whoever called him. I blow through another light, thanking God there’s no one on the roads this late on Christmas night. The image of Sicily being dragged from Al’s car keeps replaying over and over again. It’s fucking torture. My hands shake. I cannot lose her. Not now that I’ve finally accepted what she means to me. Her and my kid are everything, and I’ll do whatever it takes to keep them safe. Even selling my soul to the devil himself.

Rook was right. Brick's Tahoe is parked behind the old LaPera coal depot. It's empty, but the engine is still warm. Tazz, Moose, and Lucky have gone around back with Wren and Riggs. Bull and Ryder are with Kellan and me, and they brought plenty of fire power for us all. Chambering a round, Kellan nods, and we make our way inside as quietly as we can. It's completely dark, except for a dull light near the back of the open room. These coal depots are big warehouse type buildings, with several catwalks stretched between them. It's where they take coal once it's mined to be stored before being processed and shipped out. Fortunately, this one is no longer in service. The place is huge, and there's still way too much equipment to cause injuries if we're not careful.

My eyes scan the dark corners, looking to see if Brick or Hulk might be hiding there. We move closer and closer towards the light near the back. Sweat trickles down my temple, despite the freezing temps. My skin feels like a thousand fire ants are stinging me. I want to run in, guns blazing, but I can't. I'm starting to feel desperate. I have to find her. I need to see her with my own eyes. I need to make sure she's okay.

I jump when a gunshot rings out, followed by shouting. Then all hell breaks loose.

My heart pounds, panic hitting me from all sides. Kellan and I take off running towards the back room, guns raised as we get closer. Someone, female, darts out and runs across the open space, but we can't make out who it is. *Fuck! It's too damn dark to see shit.*

"Left catwalk," Riggs shouts. My head snaps in that direction and I can just make out the shape of someone running towards the front of the building. Wide shorts, stocky build, too big to be female. I aim and start shooting. Bullets ricochet off the metal, creating tiny sparks of light.

"Right catwalk," Riggs yells. "Females."

My head whips around, looking for Sicily, but I can't see shit. And that distraction allowed whoever it was to slip

past us. “I’m on it,” Ryder says, taking off back towards the entrance of the building. Kellan nods for Bull to go with him.

A scream rips through the open space and my stomach drops. I know that scream. I can feel it—feel her. My girl is just inside that room.

A door opens up on the second level of the catwalk, letting in just enough light to make out Al’s blonde hair. She’s fighting with Larkin, and if I’m not mistaken, it was Rena that just ran through the door. Both women are throwing punches, light and dark hair whipping back and forth.

“Alora,” Wren roars. He bolts to the steps and starts taking them two at a time. Another loud scream draws my attention to the room in the back just as Salem and Virgin Mary come tumbling out. Both of them falling to the ground, hard. They scramble over each other, Salem getting the upper hand and straddling her, driving her fist into Mary’s face over and over again. *Goddamn, it’s a fucking free for all.*

“Where the fuck is Sicily?” I shout.

More gunshots slice through the air, this time from behind us, then the sound of tires kicking up gravel. “Jesus Christ,” Kellan grunts, looking up at the two women trading blows above us.

In a move I can only describe as something she learned from Wren, Alora grabs Larkin by the wrists, falls backwards and plants both feet into her stomach. As Al’s back hits the catwalk, she thrusts her legs up, launching Larkin over the top of her. Larkin slams into the rusted-out railing, a scream ripping from her throat as the metal gives way. I watched, stunned, as Larkin’s body hits the ground with a loud thud. I don’t have to check to know it killed her. She’s not moving, her arms and legs twisted at odd angles. Wren runs towards Al, grabbing her and scooping her up into his arms as he stares down at Larkin’s body.

“Cypher!”

The sound of Sicily's frantic voice blasts through me, and I'm moving once again. All of us rush forward together. Riggs grabs Salem around the waist and hauls her off of Mary, but I don't bother stopping. I only care about one thing... Sicily.

The minute I enter the room, I skid to a halt. Hulk has Sicily by the throat, her back to his chest, with a knife pressed against her soft flesh. Tears flow from her panic-filled eyes, her chest heaving as Hulk presses the blade against her skin. Kellan almost slams into me as he rushes in behind me. Everything stops. The room goes deadly quiet. There are no more gunshots, no more shouting, no more fighting. Only Sicily's sobs and pleas as everyone watches the crazed man who's holding *my* woman at knife point.

"Let her go," I growl through my teeth.

"Fuck you," Hulk snaps.

"You're not walking out of here, Hulk," Kellan says. "No matter what you do right now, that won't be happening. Either way, this ends for you tonight."

Hulk's eyes flash, his pupils wide and dilated. The piece of shit is high as a fucking kite, which only makes him more unstable. My heart breaks as I take in Sicily's terrified face, pleading for me to save her. *I will baby, just hang on.*

Hulk sneers at me, his grip on Sicily's throat tightening. "Then I won't be dying alone." He yanks his arm back, then swings it forward, plunging the knife into Sicily's stomach.

"No!" I roar as I lunge forward. Sicily screams, but it cuts off as the blade is ripped back out. Her wide eyes lock on mine, and everything starts to move in slow motion. I catch her as she slumps forward, and a single shot rings out, catching Hulk right between the eyes. I'm not sure who fired. I don't know what's going on around me. All I can see is Sicily's face. Her skin going white, her eyes bulging. "No," I plead, hauling her against me. "Baby? Sicily?"

We collapse to the floor, my hand going to the wound on her stomach. I press down, trying to stop the blood flow. *So much fucking blood.* I hear voices, but it sounds like I'm in a tunnel. My chest feels like it's been ripped open. I can't breathe, I can't move. It feels like someone shoved a knife into my own stomach and they're twisting it slowly.

“Riggs!” Kellan shouts, his voice sounding like he's under water.

Panic claws at my throat as I hold her against me.
“Baby, I've got you. I love you, Sicily. Please, stay with me. Please.”

“Cypher,” she whispers.

Then her eyes start to flutter.

Chapter 20

CYPHER

I'm numb.

I can't move.

I can't breathe.

I'm frozen in place as I stand at the foot of the bed, my eyes locked on the weird thing the doctor has pressed against Sicily's stomach as the sound of my child's heartbeat fills the room. My legs wobble, and I grip the end of the bed to keep me from dropping to my knees. It's the best fucking sound in the world, and I'm man enough to admit, it's brought tears to my eyes.

The knife went nowhere near her uterus, and miraculously missed all of her internal organs. She got three stitches inside to repair the muscle, and three outside to close the wound. They even said she could go home tonight. I've never been so scared. I thought I lost her, but the doctor said she was lucky. She's going to be okay. They both are.

"Strong heartbeat, Miss VanLear. That's what we want to hear." The doc smiles as he removes the device and wipes the gel from her stomach. "As long as there's no cramping or bleeding, I have no problem letting you go home. Just take a few days to rest, and if you have any issues or concerns, then call your O.B."

"Thank you," Sicily says, her voice sad and weak. I watch her as the doctor gathers his things. She's hardly even looked at me.

"I'll sign off on your release and have them bring the paperwork in." He pats her leg through the blanket. "You should be out of here in about an hour."

He walks towards the door, and just before he exits, I turn towards him. "Any restrictions, Doc?"

He shakes his head. “No medical ones. She’s cleared for all activity, although I’m sure she’ll be sore for a few days, and she should be careful not to pull her stitches.”

With a nod, I turn back to Sicily as the doctor leaves the room. She’s staring at her hands clenched together in her lap. She hasn’t spoken to me since I was allowed in her room. I can’t tell if she’s still in shock, scared, or angry. Honestly, she has every right to be all those and more. I move to the side of the bed and cautiously sit on the edge. She still doesn’t look up, and it fucking kills me. Reaching out, I place my hand over hers, and she flinches. “Sicily?”

Nothing.

I pry her hands apart and grip one tightly. She doesn’t make it easy, but she doesn’t pull away either. When she still won’t look at me, I lift my right hand to her chin and gently force it upward, leaving her no other choice but to finally look at me. It guts me to see the tears swimming in those caramel eyes I love so much. The ache that’s been in my chest since I heard her talk about moving to Texas flairs up once again. Why the fuck did it take me so long to realize she was the one? Stroking my thumb along her jaw, I take in her beauty. She’s so fucking gorgeous.

“I thought I lost you,” I whisper.

Her chin quivers as I scoot closer.

“I’m so fucking sorry, baby—for everything. For flipping my shit when you told me you were leaving. For Brick getting his hands on you. For not protecting you.” I lean forward, pressing my forehead to hers. “For taking too fucking long to realize...” I swallow past the lump in my throat, closing my eyes as I slice myself open and hand her the knife. “To realize I fucking love you.”

She jerks away, staring at me with her lips slightly parted. “What?” She gasps as she tries to pull her hand from mine, but I hold it tighter.

“You heard me, Princess. I love...”

“No, you don’t.” She shakes her head. “You... you love Ember. You told me...”

I grip the back of her neck, bringing our faces closer. “I’m *not* in love with Em.” My voice comes out gritty and harsh, but I need her to hear me. “I never was, Sicily. I thought I was, but I was so fucking wrong. It’s you.” My lips hover over hers, my pulse racing in anticipation of tasting them—of claiming them. Fuck, I want so badly to kiss her. “It’s only ever been you.”

Her hand comes up and rests against my chest, fire shooting through my veins the moment she makes contact. My god, I’ve been so blind. Nothing has ever felt like this. Not even close. Sicily is mine; I just need to prove it to her. “I don’t understand,” she says, her breathy voice whispering over my lips.

My fingers stroke along the back of her neck, sliding up into her hair. “I told you before that I felt something for you. It’s always been there. I just refused to see it, Princess, until I thought I was going to lose you, and overhearing you telling Jenna you were going to move away.” I clench my jaw. “I couldn’t fucking handle it. The thought of you leaving sent me into a panic. After you left, the guys pointed out what I should have seen from the very beginning.”

Her fingers curl into my chest and she swallows. “What?”

I study her. The gentle slope of her nose, those amazing eyes, and sexy as fuck lips. The softness of her features and smooth skin. Yeah, I’m so fucking gone for her.

“That what I thought I felt for Ember wasn’t real. I didn’t fight for her. I didn’t claim her, but you... baby, I’d go to hell and back for you. I’d follow you to the ends of the earth if I had to. I’d fucking give my life for you.” Slipping my hand from hers, I slide it over her lower stomach. It’s the first time I’ve touched her like this. Acknowledging the life we created together. My gaze drops to my hand resting over the spot

where my kid is growing inside of her, and it's everything. Every. Fucking. Thing. "For both of you," I breathe.

She sniffs, tears rolling down her cheeks. "This is... so much. I don't..."

I scoot even closer, wishing I could pull her into my lap. "Do you trust me?"

"Trusting you has never been an issue," she says. "You stepped up and took care of me from day one, and I let you. So yes, I trust you."

"Do you love me?"

She goes still. The only movement is the rise and fall of her chest while I stop breathing, waiting for her to answer. "Yes," she whispers so quietly I would never have heard her if I weren't sitting so close. Her admission sends fire racing through me like lightning. I suck in a deep breath, needing a moment to compose myself, but I'm weak, and I couldn't keep my mouth off her if I tried. Pulling her head forward, I slam my lips to hers. She gasps as I take the opening and devour her. Teeth and tongues collide, feeding, searching, claiming. Her fingers dig into my chest just over my heart as mine fist her hair and holds her in place. It's like coming home, having her in my arms again. She's fucking perfect, and she's mine.

"Cypher," she moans my name, and the sound goes right to my dick.

"Fuck." I pant, breaking the kiss but keeping her lips close. "We have a lot of time to make up for, Princess," my deep voice rumbles. "When those stitches come out, and you're all healed, I plan to make sure you know exactly who you belong to."

She whimpers, and I grin as I press my lips to her forehead. It's going to be hell waiting for her to heal.

We both turn towards the door when someone knocks, and Kellan and Wren stride in. Their serious expressions have me on alert and I stand, turning to face them. "Cops are here," Kellan says. "They want to speak with Sicily."

I suck in a deep breath. We have to be quick. Squeezing Sicily's hand, I turn back to her. "I don't have time to explain everything right now, but you can't tell the cops what happened tonight. Not the truth."

Her eyes widen as she stares up at me. "What? Why?"

Wren moves further into the room, dropping his voice to a low rumble. "Because at least two people didn't walk out of there tonight, and if you tell them the truth," he motions to me, "You'll be bringing your kid to visit his or her daddy behind bars for the rest of his life."

Her throat bobs in a loud swallow.

"I hate putting you in this position, baby." I lift her hand and press a kiss to her knuckles. "But we told them you and Alora were attacked in the parking lot of Em's salon. Al and Ember have already given their statements; you just need to collaborate their story. We left Salem out of it. No one knows she was there."

"You and Al were waiting in her car for Ember. Two guys busted out the windows and attacked you and stole your purses. You didn't get a good look at them," Kellan says. "It was a robbery gone wrong, and when you fought back, one of them stabbed you."

"The video feed from the cameras in town shows a truck pull into the lot. The camera angle doesn't show what happened once they were in there. A few minutes later, the same truck hauls ass out of the lot. You can't tell who's in the vehicle, so the story will hold up," I tell her.

She doesn't get a chance to respond before there's another knock and two police officers walk in. Sicily looks up at me and I lean down to press a kiss to the top of her head. "Trust me," I whisper.

"Miss VanLear, I'm officer Hern. This is officer Pavel," the lanky forty something officer greets her. Officer Pavel, who looks like a rookie, tips his head in greeting before glancing around the room at Kellan, Wren, and me, his mouth

set in a firm line. Yeah, he clearly doesn't like us. "We have a few questions to ask about what happened tonight," Hern says.

"We'd like to talk to you alone, Miss VanLear," Pavel says, giving Wren and Kellan an irritated scowl.

Sicily scoots up in the bed. "Okay," she mumbles, her hands shaking. I can see the rapid pulse in the hollow of her throat. *Keep it together, baby.*

I follow Wren and Kellan out into the hallway, but it takes everything I have to leave her. I got a feeling I'm going to be sticking pretty close from here on out. We take several steps away from the door before Wren stops and spins around to face me. "You think she'll stick to the story?"

I nod. "Yeah. She trusts me, and I trust her." He doesn't look convinced, but I know my girl.

My girl. Fuck! I could have lost everything tonight. "We need to finish this," I growl. "We need to find Brick and bury that piece of shit."

"He's gonna be lying low after tonight. It's just him and Rena now. He's out of backup," Kellan says.

I clench my hands into fists. "I can't believe he fucking got away."

"Me neither," Wren sneers. "If they're smart, they'll get the fuck out of Dodge."

An image of Larkin falling from that scaffolding flashes in my head. "How's Al doing?"

Wren nods. "A little banged up from a few blows Larkin got in while she had Brick and Hulk as back up. But as soon as it was an even playing field, Al made sure that bitch got what she deserved." I cock a brow, letting him know what I'm really asking. He folds his arms over his chest. "She's good, Brother. Al's no stranger to this shit."

"What about Salem?" I ask.

Kellan snickers. “Riggs was so turned on after watching her kick Mary’s ass. He’s probably balls deep in her as we speak.”

I grin. *Lucky bastard.* “And Mary?”

“Declan and Ryder took her back to the Den. We’ll decide what to do about her after all this.” Wren motions towards Sicily’s room. “We’ll give her one shot to get the fuck out of the state, if she refuses...”

He doesn’t have to say it for me to know what will happen. Mary’s a smart girl. I’m sure she’ll be on the next bus out of town.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

The three of us turn towards the set of doors that lead out into the waiting room. My shoulders tense when I see Sicily’s mother and father stalking towards us; Mr. VanLear’s face set in an angry scowl. “Where is my daughter?”

Anger comes rushing back to the surface as I watch Christian come through the doors behind them. Time to finish taking out the trash. “You mean the daughter you threw out on the streets and haven’t spoken to in weeks?”

Mrs. VanLear glares at me like I’m the scum of the earth. “Where is my daughter?” she hisses.

I’m about to tell her to take her stuck up society ass and fuck off when the door to Sicily’s room opens and the two officers step out. They glance between the six of us, then approach me. “I gave Miss VanLear my card. If she can remember anything else, please have her call me,” Officer Hern says while Pavel continues to look put off. Pretty sure he didn’t buy Al and Sicily’s story, but he can’t prove anything. And he never will. We’re good at making sure evidence gets hidden, and I’m damn good at making sure it disappears from their database if they do find anything.

“We are Sicily’s parents,” Mr. VanLear says, stepping in front of me, his nose lifting in the air like he’s someone important. “I want to know what happened.”

“And if these... men are being arrested.” His wife motions to us.

Wren growls, and Kellan grips his arm to keep him in check. I clench my jaw, ready to fly into the snotty bitch, but Officer Hern speaks before I get the chance. “Since this is an ongoing investigation and Sicily is an adult, I can’t give you any information, but I can tell you, we have no reason at this time to arrest these men.” His eyes cut to me. “But that doesn’t mean we won’t have questions in the future.”

“I’m ready to answer any questions you have,” I say, reaching out and shaking his hand. I smirk when Pavel scurries off behind him. Turning back around, I find Sicily’s parents and Christian have darted past us and are entering her room. Just before Christian steps through the door, he glances back in my direction. His lip curls into a sneer. I don’t have to be a smart man to know the three of them are going to do everything they can to turn my woman against me.

I have to remind myself that Sicily loves me, or I’d be tempted to spill even more blood tonight.

Chapter 21

SICILY

I lied. And to the police at that. I can't believe me, of all people, would break the law by giving a false statement to an officer. But the thought of Cypher going to prison for something he didn't do was unimaginable. Especially when all he was trying to do was save me. I'm aware Hulk didn't walk out of that warehouse, but Wren said two people were killed. Who was the other? I haven't been told any of the details, and I have a million questions that Cypher promised he'd answer.

Cypher.

His words have been swirling around in my head since the moment they passed through his lips.

"I fucking love you."

"It's only ever been you."

"I'd go to hell and back for you. I'd follow you to the ends of the earth if I had to. I'd fucking give my life for you."

And that right there is the reason why I lied to the cops. Because he did follow me, right into hell that was the coal depot. And in that moment, when that knife plunged into my stomach, I knew he would have given everything to trade places with me. I saw it on his face, in his eyes, and I heard it in the anguished sound of his voice.

I also did it because I feel exactly the same way. I would do anything to protect him, because... I love him. I'm not exactly sure when it happened, but somewhere along the way, I fell hard and fast for the frustrating, handsome biker.

My gaze lifts to the door, a huge smile on my face as excitement rockets through me. Only it crashes back down to earth when my parents step inside. The smile completely vanishes when Christian follows them in.

"Sicily," my mother cries, rushing towards me. She throws her arms open, then wraps them around me as she pulls

me into a hug. I lift my arms, hugging her back. “Darling, I was so worried.”

“Really?” I ask.

She stiffens, then pulls away, but keeps her hands on my upper arms. “Of course, I was worried. You’re my daughter, Sicily.”

My father moves to the other side of the bed, then he leans down, pressing a kiss to my cheek. “We were both worried.”

My attention goes to the foot of the bed, where Christian is standing there, staring down at me. There’s concern in his eyes, but his voice carries an edge of anger to it. “What the hell happened, Sis?”

“I was stabbed during a robbery.”

His eyebrows scrunch together. Clearly, that wasn’t the answer he was hoping for. “Oh, come on, Sicily,” my mother huffs. “You expect us to believe that?”

I blink, a little taken aback by her tone. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“It means they think I had something to do with it.” All heads turn towards the door. Cypher is leaning against the frame, arms folded over his chest, a scowl appearing on his stupidly attractive face. He’s six foot two of deliciousness, and the man wants *me*. I’m lying in a hospital bed with a knife wound, but I feel so lucky.

“Whether directly or indirectly, I have no doubt you had something to do with it,” my father says.

I yank my hand from my mother’s and glare up at him. “Cypher didn’t have anything to do with what happened, period!”

“If you weren’t involved with someone like him,” Christian snaps, his face going red as he points a finger at Cypher. “Then you wouldn’t be lying here in the hospital from a knife attack like some commoner.”

“Commoner?” I hiss. “Because being robbed only happens to poor, average people? No one ever robs from the rich, right? And someone like him?” I wave a hand in Cypher’s direction, my temper rapidly approaching its boiling point. “You mean a kind, decent, and caring human being who has gone out of his way to take care of me when my own parents and friends turned their backs on me?”

“You are the one who chose that, Sicily.” My mother scowls in Cypher’s direction. “You’re the one who—”

“I chose to keep my child instead of being forced to terminate my pregnancy, and go on like nothing happened. I made a choice that wouldn’t haunt me for the rest of my life,” I bite back.

“Oh please.” She rolls her eyes. “You’re being dramatic.”

“Dramatic?” My voice cracks. “Really, Mother, you think something like that wouldn’t have bothered me?”

“That’s not what your mother is saying, Sicily,” my father says. He glances between me and Cypher. “Is... is there still a point... I mean, are you still?” he motions to my stomach.

“Knocked up with my kid?” Cypher asks, moving into the room. “The answer is yes, Pops. We’re still gonna be family.” He flashes a blinding smile at my father, and I bite my lip to keep from laughing.

“The doctor said you were stabbed in the stomach,” Christian says.

I wince as I try to push myself up into a more comfortable position. Cypher practically plows over my father to get to me. He slides one arm under my legs and the other behind my back and scoots me up before adjusting my pillows behind me. “Thank you.” I smile up at him. He winks, and it makes my heart flutter. I turn my attention back to Christian, who’s watching the two of us, jaw clenched. “I was, but thankfully, there was no harm to the baby.”

“You still want to keep this baby? Tying you to this man even after what just happened?” my mother asks, her tone dripping with irritation.

“It’s not too late, Sicily,” Christian says. “You and I can still get married, just like we planned.”

“That’s not fucking happening,” Cypher growls.

I grip his hand, giving it a squeeze to let him know I’ve got this. Christian doesn’t know how close to seeing God he is right now. And if Cypher isn’t about to send him to meet his maker, I just might be.

“First of all, yes, Mother, I still want this baby. Now more than ever, actually. Second, and I will not say this again, Cypher had *nothing* to do with what happened. Ask the fucking cops if you don’t believe me. But I will tell you this, there was a goddamn video of the men pulling into and then out of the parking lot, which happened right in town where *you* go quite often, Mother, so sorry to screw with your theory that it happened in the impoverished part of town.”

“Watch your language, young lady,” my father warns.

“And third,” I continue, ignoring him. I look Christian right in the eyes. “Whether there was a baby or not, I would never, ever marry you. I want someone who treats me with respect, compassion and like the *fucking*...” I raise my voice, enunciating the word as I cut my eyes over to my father. “... Princess that I am.” I use the nickname Cypher gave me, and when I look up at him, my heart practically jumps out of my chest. He’s watching me, his icy blue orbs darkening, and I swear to all things holy, my panties ignite with the way they are smoldering.

“You can’t be serious,” Christian says, a bite to his words.

My mother takes a step away, her gaze ping-ponging between the two of us. “My god, Sicily, you think you’re in love with him!”

“I don’t think.” I bite my lip, my eyes never leaving his. “*I know* I’m in love with him.”

Cypher’s chest expands as he takes in a deep breath. If he’s feeling anything like I am right now, he’s fighting to keep his hands off of me. How anyone could be in the same room with the two of us, and not see the way we feel about each other, is beyond me. Because it feels like the room is about to explode.

“Bullshit!” Christian shouts, breaking the intense moment. We both turn to look at him, and I’ll admit, I’m surprised at how murderous he looks. His hands are balled into fists, the veins in his temple throbbing. I’ve never seen Christian this pissed off before. “You belong with me, Sicily. Not some low-life thug who came crawling out of the gutter looking for an easy piece of ass, and then realized he managed to knock up a clueless little rich girl. He’s only with you so he can get to your parent’s money.”

Silence fills the room. I’m shocked. I glance at my parents, and it doesn’t seem like what he just said bothers them at all. Or that he just insulted me on so many levels. To them, Christian is right, and I’m clearly the idiot who’s throwing her life away on a person who’s not worthy of breathing the same air. Well, fuck them all. I’d rather have Cypher and the Demons than the three people standing in front of me who clearly don’t give a shit about me or my baby. If I have to choose, then I will choose my child and his father every single time. Cypher moves, like he’s about to launch himself at Christian, but I tug on his arm to keep him in place. Gritting my teeth, I stare at my ex, wishing I could burn his skin off with my angry glare.

“Get. Out.”

“You know he’s right, Sicily,” my father says. “You don’t belong with someone like him. Are you really going to give up your education when you’re so close to finishing?”

“Oh, I’m going to finish my degree,” I snap.

“Where?” My mother huffs. “Community college?”

“Sicily will be getting her degree from Faulkner, despite your attempts to have her removed,” Cypher cuts in, looking at my father with a curl of his lips.

“And how did she manage that?” my mother asks. “We pulled her funding, and I know she doesn’t have twenty thousand to cover the last semester.”

Cypher squares his shoulders. “No, but I do.”

“You?” my father snorts.

Cypher smirks as he turns to face the man head on. “I wouldn’t act so smug, old man. I know exactly how much you make a year.”

His mouth snaps shut, then opens and closes again. “How did you—”

“Faulkner might be a private college, but yours and every other employee’s salaries are public record,” Cypher says. “I can afford to send Sicily to her choice of college, but she chose to stay here.” He cocks his head to the side, giving my father a smug grin. “Could you say the same?”

My father’s face turns red. “I earn my salary honestly.”

“So does he,” I say, not letting him get the degrading jab in I’m sure was about to come. “Cypher is somewhat of a genius with computers.”

“Oh, come now, darling.” My mother laughs. “You can’t possibly believe he makes enough money to support you and a child.”

“Why not? He makes twice as much money as Daddy, and he did just fine supporting you and me.”

The smile on my mother’s heavily made-up face fades. My father stares at the ground, looking like he’s about to have an aneurysm, and when my eyes land on Christian, he’s standing like a statue at the foot of my bed. Yeah, even with

his plans to become a lawyer, he probably won't make as much as Cypher.

"You know, Dad, I'm sure some people thought the same thing about you." His head snaps up, and he pins me with a fiery look. But I'm so far done with caring. "I'm sure a lot of people accused you of marrying mom for her money."

"Sicily," he warns.

My mother came with a trust fund, and from what they told me, it was enough to keep them comfortable for their entire lives, but they never relied on it. My father always prided himself on supporting his own family through honest, hard work. I cock my head as I study him. "See how it feels to be judged?"

He shakes his head, then turns and stomps out of the room without so much as a goodbye.

My mother scowls in Cypher's direction. "Don't expect us to welcome *him* into our family, or any of his spawn."

I won't lie and say her words don't sting, because they do. But if they won't love their grandchild the way he or she deserves to be loved, or look at them like they do Cypher, then I'd rather they not be in his or her life, anyway. I swallow the golf ball sized lump of emotion in my throat as tears fill my eyes. "That's your choice, Mother. But my child will know nothing but love, even without you or Daddy in their lives." I smile up at Cypher. "They'll want for nothing and have the kind of family every child deserves. One that will love them and protect them, no matter what. Because that's what good parents do."

"You got that fucking right," Cypher says, lifting my hand to his lips before kissing it.

I don't even look her way when she scoffs and walks out of the room. I have no idea if that's the last time I'll ever see them again. I hope not. I do love them, but I won't let them

dictate my life or shame me for choosing a good man simply because it's not the one they picked for me.

Movement at the foot of the bed has my head turning towards Christian. The moment our eyes meet, he shakes his head. "I thought you were a smart girl."

"I am." I grin. "Smart enough to see through you and walk away. That was the smartest thing I ever did."

Christian huffs. "Don't expect to come crawling back when he dumps your ass."

Cypher sits on the bed next to me, wrapping his arm around me until I'm leaning against him. "The only time Sicily will be crawling on her hands and knees is when she'll be crawling to me, ready to take my cock down her throat."

I have to fight to keep a straight face as Christian turns bright red. He shoots me a deadly look before hauling ass out of the room after my parents. The minute the door closes behind him, I smack Cypher in the chest. "Oh my god, can you be any more crude?"

"At least I waited until your parents left." He grins.

I giggle. "I guess you do have some morals, and I thank you for that."

He leans against the pillows, pulling me back, and tucking me into his side. I rest my head against his chest as I curl up with him, breathing in his scent. "You doing okay?" he asks.

I let out a heavy sigh. "I hate the way they treat you, and how they try to manipulate me, but they're my parents. I'll always love them."

He squeezes me tighter. "Which is why I held my shit together just now. If there's a chance they'll ever get over themselves, I don't want to make it worse by creating a more hostile relationship."

I tilt my head back so I can see his face. "You held back for me?"

He strokes a hand down my arm. “You have no idea how much I just held back. If it were anyone else, they’d be lying in another bed somewhere in this hospital.”

Warmth spreads through my body. I reach up and stroke my fingers over his jaw, taking in his strong features. “That’s just one of the reasons I love you.”

He grips my hand and lifts it to his mouth. “What are the others?” He smirks as he presses a kiss to my fingers.

I roll my eyes and smile. “I mean, your cock is pretty amazing, too.”

“Yeah?” he growls, leaning down towards me. “I can’t wait to see how amazing you think it really is.”

He presses his lips to mine, and I open for him, allowing his tongue to slide inside. He groans when I bite down on his bottom lip, and the sound shoots straight to my lady bits.

Yeah, I can’t wait either.

Chapter 22

CYPHER

“What exactly do you do?” Sicily asks from her cocoon of blankets on the couch. She’s crunching away on her afternoon snack of carrots and ranch dressing. It’s been nine days since I brought her home from the hospital, and nine days that I’ve had to throw myself into my work to keep from burying my cock inside her, and ravaging her like the beast that I am. It’s been fucking hard. Literally. She just had her stitches removed yesterday, and I’ve been waiting for the green light from her. I’m not about to do anything that will hurt her or cause more damage. But sleeping next to her every night, holding her in my arms, and feeling her soft body pressed against mine has been nothing short of torture.

“I set up network security boundaries for organizations like police departments, hospitals, and well-known retail companies.

She stops mid chew. “Umm, English please?”

I grin. She’s so fucking cute. “I set up firewalls and VPNs.”

She pops another carrot into her mouth. “Now that I understand.”

My gaze zeros in on the small blob of white in the corner of her mouth and instantly I’m hard. I push away from the table and stalk towards her, unable to resist being near her for more than an hour. “Do you?” I smirk. Her grin grows wider, and she wiggles down into her blankets as I approach. Leaning over, I brace my hands on either side of her and lower myself until I’m covering her with my body. “Do you really understand what you do to me?” I swipe my tongue over the blob of ranch, the creamy tang exploding on my tastebuds. Her pupils dilate, her breath hitching from the contact. She tosses the small bag of carrots down by her feet, then grabs the front

of my shirt and pulls me down on top of her, her lips crashing against mine. My already hard dick strains against my jeans, desperate for some attention. The woman is fucking killing me.

“Sicily,” I groan.

“I want you,” she whispers.

I close my eyes, a growl vibrating through my chest. Fuck, I’ve been dying to hear those words—dying to finally claim her—to slip inside her for the first time as my woman. The thought makes my cock throb painfully. “Sis, babe, you’re still sore. I can’t—”

“Please,” she begs, her hand sliding down and cupping me through my jeans. My dick jumps in response. “I’m fine, Cyph.” Her tongue snakes out and licks over my lips. “I need you, please.”

And that’s all she wrote. All my good intensions go right out the fucking window. I yank the blanket from her lap and collapse between her legs, still mindful of her right side, and press my aching cock against her hot pussy. She gasps, wraps her legs around my waist, and slides her hands up into my hair, her nails digging into my scalp. Our tongues clash, our breaths mingling together as I cup her left breast through her thin tank top. Her back arches when I stroke my thumb over her hard nipple.

“Warning, Princess,” my voice rumbles. “Once I slide my dick inside of you this time, you’re mine forever.” I pull away so I can see those eyes that slay me with one heated look. “Do you know what it means to be claimed?”

Her breath fans across my mouth as she stares up at me. “Kind of,” she murmurs.

I rub my cock against her again. Her eyes flutter as she bites down on her lip. The image is enough to make me want to explode already. “Mmmmm,” I groan, pressing into her again. “It means no other man will *ever* be inside you again. It means no other man will *ever* touch you again. It means you

belong to me and *only* me. It means I'll protect you, and my club will protect you." I press my lips to hers, this time a little less forcefully. "It means I'm yours, baby. We'll belong to each other, now and fucking always. Are you ready for that?"

She studies me as I hold myself above her, waiting for her to respond. My girl doesn't leave me hanging for long. "I'm so fucking ready." Her eyes flash as her nails bite into the back of my neck. "Now fuck me," she demands with a hard edge to her voice.

I spring up off the couch, grip the waistband of her leggings and yank them down, along with her underwear. She kicks her legs in a feeble attempt to help rid herself of the stretchy material. The minute they're off, I toss them aside and my eyes lock on her bare pussy. Her legs spread wide to give me a clear view. "Fuck!" I groan.

"Jeans off," she demands, and my hands scramble for my fly and fumble it open. My movements are frantic, like if I don't hurry the fuck up, the delicious snack will be snatched away. I stumble out of my pants and boxers as she pulls her tiny tank top over her head, her heavy tits jiggling once they're freed. Kicking my jeans aside, I quickly yank my shirt over my head and discard it somewhere behind me. I have no fucking clue where, nor do I care. All that matters is the naked woman spread out in front of me. My woman! And she's so fucking perfect I want to bow at her feet and worship every inch of her. Sicily is no longer my princess. She's my goddamn queen.

Planting one knee on the couch, I hook my arms under her legs and pull her towards me until my dick presses at her entrance. The moment the tip touches her wetness, I almost lose it. Giving myself a moment to regain control, I tell myself to go slow, and not ram inside of her like I really want to. No matter if she says she's fine or not, I'm still going to be easy. My gaze moves to the fresh scar to the right of her belly button. It's still red and swollen and the bruising has started to turn yellow and green. I grit my teeth at the memory of Hulk

plunging that fucking knife into her. I never felt so scared in my life.

“Hey.”

Her voice pulls me from my dark thoughts, and I stare down at her, where she’s waiting and wanting me to fill her. *Who am I to disappoint?* Hitching her ass up higher, I watch as my dick slowly enters her, inch by torturous inch. “Fuck me, Sis,” I groan. “That is the sexiest fucking thing I’ve ever seen.”

I’m transfixed as I slide in, until my balls press against her ass, and her inner walls squeeze around me. The sensation is so damn powerful I have to grind my teeth to keep from throwing her legs over my shoulders and slamming into her like a rutting beast.

She moans, moving her hips against me. “Cypher, please.”

“I really don’t want to hurt you, Sis.”

Her head snaps up, eyes flashing as she plants a hand on my chest in an attempt to push me away. “If you’re not going to fuck me, then move. I’ll go find my vibrator and do it myself.”

I swear to God, I’ve never been so jealous of a piece of plastic before. I snatch her wrist and yank it from my chest as I bend my body over hers. “The fuck you will.” I sneer. “I told you; this pussy is mine. Nothing touches it anymore but me. You want to come? I’ll make you come. You want me to fuck you?” I pull out of her, leaving only the head of my cock inside, and she whimpers in protest. “Then hold the fuck on, Princess. You’re gonna be walking funny tomorrow.”

With that, I slam into her. Like flipping a switch, my hips thrust violently and repeatedly against her. My cock rams into her at a punishing pace, her tits rocking back and forth with every thrust. My fingers dig into the soft flesh of her thighs as I pull her into me over and over again, and I have no doubt I’ll be leaving more bruises on her perfect body.

“Oh fuck, Cypher!” She gasps, her hands flapping around, trying to find something to grab on to. She claws at the back of the couch, the cushions beneath her, and the arm rest above her head. She writhes beneath me, her eyes fluttering closed as her mouth parts with every breath and moan. She. Is. Fucking. Perfect!

Leaning down, I slide my arms up under her, gripping her shoulders as I pound into her like a jackhammer and take possession of her mouth once again. The feel of her tight walls stroking my dick with every thrust sends shock waves pulsing through me. The urge to breed her makes no sense because she’s already carrying my kid, but it’s still there. Urging me on like a fucking neon sign... mate her! Possess her! Claim her! I’m so far fucking gone for this woman I want to pump her full of my cum and fill her belly with kid after kid. Who the hell would have ever thought I’d be the one thinking of kids in the double digits? But I want it because this... with her... it’s my fucking end game.

“You like that, baby?” I growl against her lips as I swivel my hips, letting the friction work against her clit. She gasps, then moans as she nods. Her nails find my back, tearing at the skin. I grunt with each hard thrust of my hips, wanting to go deeper. “You’re mine, Princess. Fuck, tell me you’re mine.”

“I’m yours, Cyph. God, so yours,” she cries out. Her words send another shockwave of desire right to my balls. I push myself off of her, flip her around, grab her hips and lift them into the air, then drive my cock back inside of her. “Oh fuck, shit, fuck!” she screams as the sound of skin slapping against skin fills the room. Her fingers claw at the couch. She pounds her fist against it, then slams her hand against the arm rest to hold herself in place as I pound into her like the raging beast that I am. Sweat drips from my temple. It rolls down my chest. It shimmers along her back, and I have the urge to lean forward and run my tongue up her spine just to taste it.

“Fuck, Sicily, keep squeezing my cock, baby. Fuck.” I grit my teeth as she clenches around me. She’s close, and I’m ready to blow right along with her.

“Oh god, I’m gonna come.” She pants against the black leather.

Leaning over her, I reach around, pressing my finger against her clit, delivering a punishing pace as I circle it against the hard little bud. “Let me hear you, Princess. Scream my fucking name.”

Her breath catches in her throat, her skin flushes red, and her inner walls clamp down so hard I almost go cross eyed. “Oh god! Oh fuck! I’m coming. Fuck, Cypher! Yes, yes, yes!”

My name on her lips has my balls tightening. I grip her upper arms, pulling her chest up off the couch as I pin them behind her back and ram into her over and over again. Within seconds, I’m exploding inside of her, my dick jerking hard. “Fuuuuck!” I roar, my balls aching as they empty themselves. I collapse on top of her, my face buried in her neck and my dick still pulsing inside of her. I groan at the feel of her walls squeezing with aftershocks of her orgasm. Best fucking feeling ever. Normally, I’d be pulling out as quickly as I could to get rid of the condom. Now, I want to stay buried inside of her until I’m hard enough to do this all over again. I have a feeling it won’t take long.

“Cypher?” Her voice is muffled against the couch.

“Yeah?” I pant against her neck.

“I fucking love you.”

And just like that, I’m hard again.

I stare at Sicily, one bare leg hanging off the couch, an arm slung up over her head, and her long hair fanned out messily in every direction as she sleeps like the dead after our second round of animalistic sex. I smirk; yeah, I wore her ass out, and she loved every fucking second of it. So did I. Sex with Sicily is wild as hell, and after pinning her hands above her head and not allowing her to touch me for the entirety of round two, it appears I opened Pandora’s sexual box for my

girl. Following my second, and her fourth orgasm, we laid there talking about things she wants to try but hasn't felt comfortable doing until now. My little princess has a bondage kink, and I'm so down for helping her explore that hidden desire any time she needs a test dummy.

The buzzing of my phone drags my attention away from the goddess snoozing peacefully on my couch. Kellan's name flashes on the screen, and I swipe my finger over it as I pick it up and press it to my ear. "Yo," I answer, keeping my voice low so I don't wake her.

"Bad timing?" he asks.

I grin, settling back into the dining room chair. "It would have been thirty minutes ago. Now she's passed out cold."

Kellan groans. "At least someone's getting laid."

I chuckle. "With Jenna's pussy closed for repairs, I know you're having to rely on Rosie palm and her five friends."

"Laugh it up, shithead. You know your ass is gonna be in the same boat in about seven months."

My smile fades as my eyes cut back over to Sicily. "Fuck," I mumble.

Now Kellan's the one laughing. "Yeah, not so fucking funny, is it? Anyway, I'm headed to your place. I made a little something for Cypher Jr."

He made a bassinet for Jett and Becca. I have a feeling he made one for my kid, too. Kellan is a damn good wood worker. His stuff has been selling like hot cakes over the past few months. He started Jett's and Becca's bassinets when Jenna and Mia first found out they were expecting. He must have done the same for Sicily if he's finished it already. It speaks volumes that he started making it for us before we even knew if she was going to keep the kid or not. I guess he saw this outcome before we ever did. Fucking insightful bastard.

“What the...”

The hairs on the back of my neck prickle. “Kellan?”

“Fuck! I’ve got no brakes.” His voice comes out sharp with an edge of panic.

I shove my chair back, causing it to topple over and bang against the floor. Sicily jumps, sitting up and brushing her hair from her eyes. “Pull the emergency brake,” I snap.

“What happened?” Sicily throws the covers off and scrambles to her feet.

“Fuck! I’m gonna lose it!” Kellan shouts.

“Pull the fucking brake!” I yell.

I listen as tires squeal, metal bends, and glass shatters.

Then the fucking line goes dead.

Chapter 23

SICILY

“Fuck!” Cypher shouts.

“What’s going on?” My heart is racing as I watch him freak the hell out.

“King... Kellan?” he yells into the phone. I clutch my hands to my chest, already praying, but I don’t know what for. Cypher yanks the phone from his ear, presses a few buttons, then lifts it back to his ear. “Come on,” he mumbles.

“Cypher?”

His eyes dart to me and my heart drops into my stomach. “Get dressed.”

He runs down the hall, leaving me frozen in place until my mind decides to kick into gear. Spinning around, I grab my leggings off the floor and pull them on. Followed by my tank top and socks. I’m just stepping into my UGGS when Cypher comes rushing back into the room.

“Can you please tell me what happened?” I ask.

He yanks my coat off the hook and tosses it to me, then shoves his feet into his boots. “Kellan just wrecked his truck.”

“Oh my god!” I gasp, rushing out the door behind him as he sprints to his Camaro. The engine roars to life just as I’m sliding into the passenger seat. The minute I slam the door shut, he throws the car into gear, and takes off out of the driveway, fishtailing when we hit the gravel road. I grab my seatbelt and lock it in place when his phone rings and Kellan’s name flashes on the screen on his dash.

“Kellan?” Cypher barks after hitting the button.

The sound of heavy breathing and the clomping of boots fills the interior of the car. “Somebody cut my fucking brakes.” Kellan pants.

“Where are you?” Cypher asks.

“I wrecked at the end of Oakwood. I’m headed back to the house. Jenna’s not answering, neither is Lucky.” He grunts, his words coming out strained and labored. “Something’s wrong. I’m telling you, they cut my fucking brakes.”

“Are you hurt?” I ask.

“I’m fine.” He pants. But he doesn’t sound fine. “Fuck. I need... fuck!”

“I’m on my way, Brother. I’m ten minutes out.”
Cypher shifts into another gear.

“Call Wren. Call—”

Cypher’s hands tighten around the steering wheel. “I’m on it. I’ll be there soon, Brother, just hang on.”

The line goes dead, and Cypher slams his hand against the wheel. “Fuck!” I blink back tears at the thought of Kellan hurt and running back to his family. He’s worried something’s going to happen to them. I could hear it in his voice; and I can see it in Cypher’s expression. He presses the phone button on his steering and shouts, “Call Wren.” A second later, the sound of a ringing phone comes through the speaker.

“What up, asswipe?” Wren’s deep voice answers.

“Kellan just wrecked his truck. He’s sure the brakes were cut,” Cypher rushes out.

“Fucking hell,” Wren mumbles, a rustling sound coming through the phone. “Where?”

“End of his road. I’m five minutes out.” The muscle in his jaw flexes as he clenches down on it. “Something’s going down, man. King’s hoofing it back to his house on foot. Lucky is there, but neither him nor Jenna are answering their phones.”

“Fuck!” Wren snaps. Two doors slam and then the sound of an engine roars to life. “Dec’s with me. We’re at the gym. We’ll meet you there.”

“Oh my god!” I gasp when Kellan’s truck comes into view. It’s upside down in the ditch. The windshield shattered.

“Jesus Christ,” Cypher says, turning onto Oakwood and slamming his foot down on the gas. “Call Riggs. There’s no way he walked away from that without getting a little fucked up.”

“Goddamn it,” Wren curses.

“I’m on it,” Declan’s voice cuts in.

“I got him,” Cypher shouts. My pulse races as I spot Kellan running down the side of the road. Cypher lays on the horn, and when Kellan glances over his shoulder, I think I stop breathing. The whole left side of his face is covered in blood and he looks so pale I’m sure he’s about to pass out.

“Cypher!” I cry, pleading with him to help.

“Fuck! Get in the back, baby,” he says, slamming on his brakes and skidding to a stop. I unclip my seatbelt, and scramble between the seats as the door opens and Kellan gets in.

“Go!” he barks.

Cypher throws the car in gear and hits the gas just as I’ve managed to settle into my new position.

“King, what’s going on?” Wren asks.

Kellan clutches his side, breathing hard. “Brick,” he spits through gritted teeth.

“Right,” Wren growls. “Dec’s already making calls. Be there in ten.”

The call ends and I hang on for dear life as we fly down the last two miles to Kellan’s driveway. The minute we make the turn and emerge from the trees, I almost scream. The entire front of the house is engulfed in flames; thick black smoke is pouring up into the night sky as the treetops dance in the flickering orange glow. I frantically look around. *Where are Jenna and the baby?*

“Jenna?” Kellan shouts as he throws his door open and all but falls out before the car even stops. He stumbles but catches his balance as he sprints towards the house. My eyes dart over to a man staggering from behind the workshop, blood running down the side of his neck.

“Lucky!” I gasp, grabbing Cypher’s shoulder.

“Stay in the car. Lock the doors. If someone tries to get in, run their ass over.” He leaves the keys in the ignition, then shoves his door open and bolts towards the house. I quickly climb into the driver’s seat, pull his door shut, and hit the locks.

“Jenna?” Kellan’s frantic voice has tears streaking down my cheeks. I watch as Cypher and Lucky grab Kellan and pull him back from the flames surrounding the front door. They can’t get in that way. Kellan’s head whips to the side, then he throws the two men off and runs towards the back of the house. Cypher and Lucky rush after him. Even with the windows up, the sound of cracking wood fills the silent car. I stare, watching, waiting, my eyes scanning from one corner to the other. Minutes seem like hours, my pounding heart like an echo in a quiet room.

I spin around as headlights spill into the car, then a pickup truck jerks to a stop beside me. Riggs and Ryder jump out, running past me, towards the house. “Kellan?” Ryder shouts.

I scream when someone knocks on the passenger window, only to find Salem staring back at me, eyes wide. I quickly unlock the door and she climbs in, pulling me into a tight hug.

“What the hell is going on?” she asks.

I open my mouth to speak, but the sight of Kellan carrying a flailing Jenna, followed by Cypher holding a screaming Jett, has me pulling away and fumbling for the door handle. I’m out of the car and running towards them, not caring that Cypher gave me an order to stay put.

Riggs grabs Kellan's arm and helps him as he limps towards me.

"Jett!" Jenna screams, struggling against Kellan's hold. "Give me my baby."

Cypher cradles the newborn against his chest, one big hand cupping his butt, the other his head as Jett wails and cries. When they're far enough away from the house, Kellan finally places a hysterical Jenna on her feet and she immediately rounds on Cypher, reaching for her son. He hands him over, and Jenna clutches onto him as she breaks down into tears. I cover my mouth, fighting back a sob. They could have died. This could have ended so much worse.

Riggs pulls on Kellan's arm. "Come on, King, I need to ___"

"I'm fine," Kellan shouts. "Check on them." He motions to Jenna and Jett.

He's not happy about it, but Riggs moves to Jenna. "Let me check him."

Jenna nods as she presses her cheek to Jett's head, then follows Riggs over to the shed. Cypher walks towards me, and when he opens his arms, I fall into them, needing to touch him and make sure he's okay. He holds me against him, kissing the top of my head. "Are you all right?" I ask.

"Yeah," his chest vibrates beneath my cheek.

The sound of gravel crunching under tires has all of us turning back towards the driveway. A huge Diesel truck stops behind Cypher's car. The doors open, and Ember climbs down from the driver's side, then Alora emerges from the passenger; but she's not alone.

"Get the fuck off me!" a tall blonde screams as Alora drags her out of the truck by her hair. She trips and falls to her knees, but Alora jerks her back up, and continues pulling her towards us.

"Rena," Kellan snarls.

The blonde's head jerks up, and she goes stiff as she stares at Kellan. Alora shoves her forward, causing her to fall on her hands and knees at Kellan's feet. "We saw Brick's car pulling out of the woods. Wren ran them off the road and Brick took off into the woods on foot. He and Declan are chasing after him." She glares down at Rena. "Em and I grabbed this bitch."

"Kellan, baby, please. I didn't do anything," Rena cries, her voice shaking. "It was Brick, he... he made me help him."

"Bullshit," Alora snaps. "You're in this just as deep as he is."

Rena reaches for Kellan, but he jerks away. "Please, I swear. I didn't do this." She motions towards the house, which is now fully consumed by flames. "You know I'd never hurt you."

"Hurt me?" Kellan sneers. His lips curl as he darts forward, grips her by the throat, and hauls her up to her feet. Rena gasps, her fingers clawing at his hands as he tightens his grip. He looks demonic, with half of his face covered in blood as he pulls her in so close their noses are practically touching. "You tried to kill my wife and my son!" he snarls.

Jenna wheezes, trying to suck air into her lungs.

"Big fucking mistake!" He tosses her back down to the dirt.

She lands on her side, her head almost cracking against the ground. "Wife?" She coughs, gripping her throat and spinning around to glare up at him. "Are you kidding me? You fucking married that—"

"You bitch!" Jenna screams. She's a blur as she rushes past Kellan and Cypher. Everything happens so quickly, no one can react fast enough. She raises a long pointy tool and brings it down into the side of Rena's neck.

"Jenna, no!" Kellan shouts, but it's too late. Blood pours from the wound and Rena's mouth drops open; but her

scream never makes it past her lips. She clutches her neck, her wide eyes unblinking as she stares up at her attacker.

I scream.

Kellan grabs Jenna around the waist as she swings the weapon again. Her feet lift off the ground as he hauls her up against his chest and away from Rena. She's screaming, thrashing around, and fighting against her husband's grip like a rabid animal. Lucky manages to pry the object from her fingers, catching a foot in the chest for his efforts.

Rena coughs, blood flying from her lips, and I spin around and bury my face against Cypher's chest, unable to stomach the sight before me. His arms wrap around me, and he turns us away, his hand covering my ear in an attempt to block out the gagging sounds of Rena choking on her own blood.

I have no idea how long we stand there, but then there's chaos.

"Sicily," Cypher says, pulling me from his chest. He cups my face, his thumbs wiping away my tears. "I need you to focus, baby, okay?"

Riggs hands Jett off to Jenna and shoves the keys to his truck into Salem's hand. "Take them to Breaker's. Stay there until you hear from me." Salem nods, then wraps her arm around Jenna's shoulder. Kellan has calmed her down, but she's still shaking pretty hard, and I'm sure it isn't because she's cold.

"Babe," Cypher says, still cupping my cheeks. I need you to go with them. He nods at Alora. "Al and Em will drive you. You'll be safe, I promise."

Alora takes my hand and squeezes it. "Come on, Sis. We have to go."

Cypher presses his lips to mine before letting his hands fall away. "I love you," he whispers.

I nod, too numb to say anything. When Al tugs on my arm, I close my eyes as I allow her to lead me away, not

wanting to see the dead woman still lying on the ground. Ember climbs into the back of Cypher's Camaro as Al places me in the passenger seat. She slams the door and quickly runs around to climb behind the wheel. The engine roars to life and the next thing I know, we're racing back down the driveway behind Salem in Riggs' truck.

Glancing in the side mirror, I can just make out two figures lifting Rena's lifeless body as part of Kellan's house collapses in on itself. There's no saving his home. No saving the woman whose heart no longer beats, and I wonder if there will be anything left of me to save after tonight.

"Your thoughts are so loud I can hear them," Alora says, watching me as I stare out the side mirror even though I can't see anything anymore. Nothing but blackness. "How about you, Em?" Alora asks. "You doing okay?"

"I'm... yeah, I'm okay." Ember's voice is raspy.

Alora reaches over and touches my arm. "Sicily, I know you're freaking out. This is a lot all at once."

I still say nothing.

"Remember we told you about the Henchmen? Brick, Hulk, Rena, and Larkin were working with them. They were feeding the Henchmen information, and Brick's goal was to kill Kellan and take over the club."

That has me turning to look at her. Her eyes are glued to the road, her hands gripping the steering wheel as we fly towards town. "If he killed Kellan, he would have had to kill Wren, too."

"And Declan," Ember says.

Alora nods. "And Ryder, Riggs and—"

"Cypher," I whisper.

Al frowns. "None of the guys would have let Brick get away with taking out the club president. Brick wouldn't have stopped until he killed them all. It's either our guys or him."

The thought of someone hurting Cypher has the numbness in my body starting to fade. Although the nausea is still churning in my stomach.

“What just happened back there was a mother protecting her child,” Al says. “Rena just tried to kill Jenna and Jett.” She glances at me, her jaw clenched, eyes flashing with deadly fire. “The bitch got what she deserved.”

She turns her eyes back to the road, and I stare at her profile, asking myself would I be capable of murdering someone who tried to kill my child? My hand rests over my stomach as an itchy feeling starts to spread through me. The answer is yes. I’d do whatever it took to protect my baby.

Whatever it took!

Chapter 24

CYPHER

She's freaked the fuck out, and I don't blame her. She didn't see Larkin fall to her death or Hulk when he was shot between the eyes. Rena's death was up close and personal, and it was the first time she's ever seen it. If I have my way, she'll never see this shit again. None of us want our women exposed to this, let alone be a part of it. I know Kellan is just as worried about Jenna. Taking a life isn't easy, even if she snapped because someone attacked her family. This is going to affect them both.

But I can't think about that right now. Right now, my focus is on what I have to do. I'm helping Ryder carry Rena's body into the woods, deep enough to bury her where no one will find her. Lucky is following behind us with shovels and lighter fluid. We plan to burn the body just in case someone happens to stumble upon her. It will be harder to identify. We need to find Wren and Declan. Fuck, who knows where they are or what's going on? If they found Brick yet, they would have called by now.

The good thing about Kellan living in the middle of nowhere is that no one has reported the fire. Although, King should have made the call by now. When the cops do show up, he'll be ready with a fake story of how he wrecked his truck when he got a call from Jenna that there was a fire. If they ask where she is, he'll tell them he sent her and the baby to a friend's rather than have a newborn out in the freezing cold. We've gotten good about making shit up on the fly.

"This has to end tonight." Ryder scowls. "One way or another."

I adjust Rena's legs under my arms. "Agreed. The stupid piece of shit has gone too far."

Ryder huffs. “That’s probably why he did it. He knows he’s lost the club, now the fucker just wants revenge. What would fuck Kellan up more than killing his wife and kid?”

I’m quiet as we continue further into the woods. According to Lucky’s phone, we’re about two and a half miles from Kellan’s house. “Do you think this is going to fuck up Jenna?” Lucky asks.

“I think Jenna’s stronger than we all give her credit for. She saw Wren kill her crazy ex after he attacked her and Al. She knows about the Henchmen that attacked Salem and Spike, and the ones who fucked with Mia and Em. About Capone and Declan.”

“Knowing about them and actually being the one to do it are two different things.” I sniff, my nose starting to run from the cold. It’s fucking freezing out, which means the ground is going to be frozen solid. We’re gonna get a workout digging a hole for this bitch.

“What about your girl?” Lucky asks.

Dread snakes its way back in. I honestly don’t know how Sicily is going to react to what she witnessed tonight. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t worried. Will she be able to live with it? Or will this push her over the edge and have her running as far away as she can get? “She’ll be fine,” I mumble. But I honestly have no fucking clue.

Ryder stops. “This is good enough. We need to get this shit done and get back.”

I nod. Puffs of white smoke expel from our lips into the cold air as we set Rena down, and the three of us start digging. I was right, the ground is hard as fuck. We work quickly and despite the freezing temps, we’re sweating after only a few minutes. My phone rings, and I drop the shovel as I fish it out of my pocket. “It’s Dec,” I say, swiping to answer. “Tell me you have the bastard.” I scowl. The hole is only about four feet deep, but Ryder motions to Lucky, and they

shove Rena's body into it as he starts dousing it with lighter fluid. *Guess we're finally done digging.*

"Where the fuck is Riggs? Wren's been shot," Declan snaps.

"Fuck! How bad?" I ask. Ryder's head jerks in my direction and he hands the lighter fluid off to Lucky to finish.

"In the shoulder, but it's bleeding pretty bad."

"And Brick?" I ask, tightening my grip on the phone.

"Staring down the barrel of my gun as we speak." I can hear the fury in Declan's voice, and I nod at Ryder, letting him know they got the fucker. "Wren is sending you our coordinates; we need a lift out of here asap."

"Light it," I tell Ryder. He nods, digs the lighter from his pocket and within seconds, Rena's body goes up in flames. I turn to Lucky. "Call Tazz, tell him what's going on and to pick Declan and Wren up at the location I'm sending him. Give him a heads up about Brick. Tell him to make it quiet and fucking fast."

"On it," Lucky says, grabbing his phone and making the call. I take a few steps away when my phone pings with the location of Wren and Declan. I click on the notification and forward it to Tazz. "You're a few miles out. We're handling an issue here, then we'll head your way."

"I'm assuming Al and Em made it back with a certain blonde?" Declan asks.

"Yup."

"Kellan handle it?"

"Jenna," I mumble.

"Fuck, seriously?" Declan says.

"Yeah. We'll be done here soon, then we'll head your way. Don't take your eyes off that piece of shit. Kellan wants his ass."

Declan lets out a humorless laugh. “I’ll put a fucking bow on him.”

Ending the call, I snatch the can of lighter fluid out of Ryder’s hand and spray more onto the flames. I cover my mouth and nose with the crook of my elbow, the smell of burning flesh making me almost gag. Twenty minutes later, we’re shoveling dirt back into the hole, leaving Rena’s charred remains for some animal to finish off. I send Tazz our coordinates, hoping he’s already picked up Declan and Wren... and Brick. Collecting the shovels, we start walking in the direction of the road.

Ryder was right. This fucking ends tonight.

I slam my fist into Brick’s stomach. His body sags, his breath rushing from his lungs with a loud grunt. His arms are tied up between two posts, holding him in place as we work him over in Mac’s old barn, waiting for Kellan and Riggs to show up. My fists are split and sore from the blows to his face, but I don’t care. It’s fucking worth it. Between Mac, Declan, Ryder, Wren, and myself, the man’s face is barely recognizable. Even with Wren working with only one arm. The bullet went straight through his shoulder, and I’m no doctor, so don’t quote me on this, but it looks like it’s a clean shot. Though it was bleeding like a bitch when Tazz scooped us up from the side of the road. Ryder stripped his shirt off and tied it over the wound, using it as a tourniquet. So far, it seems to be working. But I’ll feel better once Riggs takes a look at it.

I’m about to go in for another upper cut, when the door to the barn swings open and Brick’s great uncle, Mammoth, steps inside. The old man’s hands are held stiffly at his sides, his eyes wide, feral, and locked onto his nephew as he approaches. The white of his hair makes the flush of his skin appear even redder. He stops right in front of Brick, chest heaving as he grips his hair and yanks his head back. He studies his face, then grips it in one hand, squeezing so hard his fingers dig into the skin. “After everything I did for you;

took you in when your parents dumped your ass on my doorstep, this... this is how you fucking repay me? Your club?"

Brick spits in Mammoth's face, and I pull back my fist, ready to punch him again, but Mammoth holds his hand up to stop me. He grinds his teeth, looking over the man he thought of as a son. Then shoves him away as the doors open again. The minute Kellan steps inside, he charges for Brick, and Mammoth steps out of his way. Brick braces for impact as Kellan's fist rams into the side of his face. Blood flies, and Kellan swings again.

"Motherfucker," he roars. "You fucking piece of shit!" He rains blow after blow into Brick's face and stomach. Eventually, Ryder and I have to pull him off. We're not ready for things to end, not like this anyway.

"Fuck... you," Brick mumbles, his jaw clearly broken. Kellan strains against our hold, snarling like a Pitbull about to be thrown into a fighting ring.

"You're fucking lucky Jenna and her son weren't hurt," Declan says. He moves closer, leaning down to look Brick in the face. "That's right, motherfucker, you failed." Brick makes a grunting noise as Declan moves around behind him. "I don't think this piece of shit deserves to have this club's mark on him."

Kellan yanks himself free. Gritting his teeth, he stalks towards Brick's battered body. I notice Mac grabbing a huge buck knife from a cabinet and hands it to Wren. Then he grabs a flint and a blowtorch. There are only a few ways to remove a club's tattoo from one's flesh. Acid, cut it off, or burn it. Guess I know which one we're doing tonight.

Wren circles Brick, stepping up behind him and leaning down until his mouth is close to his ear. "It will be my pleasure to get rid of it for you." He slides the blade under Brick's cut and starts sawing through the leather. Then he rips his shirt down the middle, exposing his back where, like all the other Demons, our club colors are tattooed. Kellan moves in,

making sure to turn the handheld torch on and light it with the flint right under Brick's nose. Brick fights against his restraints, cursing and grunting in an attempt to get free. Kellan hands the torch to Wren, and Mammoth lowers his head, then turns his back. I clamp a hand on his shoulder and jerk my head towards the door. He nods, then walks out, and I motion for Tazz and Lucky to go with him. Wren waits long enough for Mammoth to be out of earshot before running the flame over the top of the tattoo. Brick screams, jerking away, twisting and turning, but Wren keeps the fire close to his skin. For the second time tonight, the smell of burning flesh hits my nostrils, but this time I breathe through it. Brick's screams continue through the entire process of burning the club's image from his back, and just as Wren shuts off the torch, Kellan is back in Brick's face. His body covered in sweat, hanging there limp.

“That was for Jenna and my son,” Kellan growls. Brick somehow manages to lift his head, looking Kellan in the eyes. With a thrust of his hand, Kellan shoves the knife Wren used to cut through Brick's vest into his stomach. Brick grunts, his eyes going wide. “This...” Kellan sneers. “...is for my father.” He jerks the knife upward, sending the blade up under his ribs. A mixture of blood and saliva trickles from Brick's mouth as he stares at Kellan until his eyes go dull and his head falls forward.

Finally, this nightmare is fucking over.

Chapter 25

SICILY

It's after one in the morning when Cypher and I walk through our front door. I'm wide awake despite feeling rundown. My brain has never hurt so much, and that's saying something, considering all the times I've studied for exams and the amount of medical terminology I've had to remember. Tonight has taken its toll on all of us, and I've done nothing but think about what happened and how to go forward from here.

Breaker stayed in the kitchen with Kitty and a few other members I've not had the pleasure of meeting as us girls sat around his living room; a few bottles of wine shared between us. Jenna was doing surprisingly well, but she wouldn't let anyone take Jett from her. I think she's still in shock, and it'll probably hit her later. Mia, Al, and Salem did their best to talk me off the ledge, assuring me that what happened tonight was not typical. I just happened to come into Cypher's life in the middle of a war. A war that Cypher, when he finally showed up at Breaker's, freshly showered just like all the guys, told me was finally over. I'm smart enough to know that means they found and 'dealt with' Brick.

Kicking off my shoes by the front door, I remove my coat and hand it to Cypher, who hangs it on the hook. I roll my shoulders and head for the bedroom. I doubt I'll sleep, but I really need to bury myself under the blankets. I just can't seem to get warm. Cypher follows me, saying nothing as we both strip and climb into bed. The blankets are tugged up to my chin as I lay facing him in the dark. He shifts closer, then I feel his hand on my hip. When I don't push him off, he moves even closer, pulling me into his chest as his arms wrap around me and he presses his lips to my forehead.

"I'm sorry," his baritone voice vibrates between us. I place my hand on his chest and sigh as his arms tighten around

me. "I never wanted you to be a part of this."

I tilt my head back so I can look at him. It's so dark I can't see his features, but I can make out his outline. "Tonight was a lot."

He says nothing for a few drawn out seconds. When he speaks, his tone sounds nervous. "I know. I never wanted this part of my life to touch yours, but sometimes it bleeds over." He pauses. I can feel his eyes on me, and I wish I could see them. "I can't promise you something like tonight will never happen again, but I can promise you I'll do anything I fucking can to protect you from it."

"Al said this wasn't normal."

"It isn't. I won't lie. This isn't the first time we've had to... defend ourselves. But never like this. Brick, the Henchmen, this was something we never saw coming two years ago." He reaches up and brushes his fingers along my jaw. "I swear, we're normally just a bunch of idiots who like to party and make bad decisions."

I grin and lean into his touch as he continues to stroke along my jaw.

"Tonight was the worst this life has to offer, but it's over." I hear him swallow. "Please tell me you're going to stick around for the best?"

"And what is the best?" I ask.

"Me."

I smile. "Is it worth it?"

He moves closer, his hand sliding under the covers and settling on my lower back as he holds me against him. Like he needs to feel me everywhere. I get it, I feel the same way. His face moves closer, our noses brushing as his lips whisper against my own. "You tell me, Princess." He presses a soft kiss to the corner of my mouth. "Am I worth it?"

"Yes," I breathe, that one simple word holding more meaning than any I've ever spoken before. I still have

questions. So much to work out with my conscience—my sanity. But I can fully admit that, yes, Cypher is worth it. I wasn't naïve coming into this. I knew they weren't perfect law-abiding citizens. I knew they were dangerous. I knew there would be risks involved. I could have walked away from all this day one, but I *chose* to stay. It was my choice then, and it's my choice now. And I'm choosing him. I'm choosing the man I love, because he is fucking worth it. "We're worth it," I whisper.

His fingers dig into my lower back, a low growl rumbling from his chest. "Fuck yeah we are," he groans as he presses his lips to mine. Our mouths open at the same time, our tongues finding one another. I press my hands to his chest, sliding them up over his shoulders, then up into his hair. He leans over me, forcing me to my back as he slips one hand up under my tank top and starts running his fingers over my nipples. "I love you, Sicily. So fucking much."

I close my eyes as his lips travel over my jaw, down my neck, between my breasts as he squeezes and kneads them, pinching the nipples until they're hard points. I'm panting, my fingers already digging into his scalp by the time he rips my thong from my body, tossing the shredded scraps onto the floor before burying his face between my legs. "Oh fuck," I gasp, my eyes fluttering closed as he flattens his tongue and does one long stroke from opening to clit. My hips move on their own with every flick and flutter of his tongue. He circles, sucks, then two fingers ram inside, curling upward and hitting the spot that has me hurling towards oblivion at lightning speed. "Oh god, yes, I'm..." My words cut off as my orgasm slams into me embarrassingly fast. I don't know if it's from all the insanity of the evening, or his tongue is just that damn good, but my entire body locks up. My back arches, my breath ceasing in my chest as my thighs clamp down around his head. "Fuuuck," I cry, my body quivering as he continues to pump his fingers into me, his head jerking back and forth as his tongue continues its assault.

Then he's crawling up my body, positioning himself between my legs, which instinctively wrap around him as he presses into me. Slowly. His mouth finds mine once again, and what I thought was going to be hard and fast is instead slow and gentle. When he's buried balls deep inside of me, he stills, groaning when my inner walls flutter around him, still rippling with aftershocks from my orgasm.

"Fuck, baby. This," he presses a kiss to my jaw as he pulls out and presses back in just as slow as the first time. "Is everything. You're everything." Another slow thrust. "My everything."

I grip his face between my hands and move him back to my mouth. "God, Cypher, I love you so fucking much, but, baby..." I try to thrust my hips upward. "...I need you to fuck me, please."

He moans, sliding out, then back in at the same torturous pace. "Are you sure that's what you need?"

I nod. "Yes. God yes."

He grabs my hands, pinning them above my head. "Then I *need* you to hold the fuck on." He growls his warning just as he slams into me, stealing my breath. His grip tightens on my wrists, pressing them into the bed as his hips start to thrust furiously. My legs squeeze around him, my eyes slamming shut as he sets a punishing pace, and I lie there pinned down, helpless to move, restrained, and I freaking love it.

He buries his face in my neck and when he bites down, I see stars, crying out as the shock of pain shoots right down to my clit. Holy fuck, that felt so good. "Again," I gasp. He shifts his head to the other side and sinks his teeth in, and I explode. I come so hard my vision blurs. My muscles burn and I scream his name so loud I'm surprised the windows don't shatter. My god, who would have thought I would get off from a little pain?

“God damn, baby,” he breathes as he runs his tongue over the sensitive flesh he just bit. “That was fucking hot!”

I plant my hands on his shoulders and shove, rolling with him as he flops onto his back until I’m straddling him. “Your turn.” I pant, leaning over him and pressing my lips to his. Bracing my hands on the mattress on both sides of his head, I start curling my hips as I ride him. His hands grip my hips, unable to resist guiding me toward how he wants me. I don’t mind. I’ve had my pleasure. It’s all about him now. I move my hips, grinding hard against him as fast as I can. He thrusts upward, taking what he needs—what we both need. Sitting up, I plant my feet on the bed beside his hips and start bouncing my ass up and down.

“Oh fuck, baby,” he grunts. “Fucking ride my cock. Fuck.” His voice is deep, raspy, and such a turn on. I reach behind me, cupping his balls, and he hisses as I tug down on them. “God damn.” He grunts. I ride him until my thighs start to burn, then I drop back down to my knees. “Grab the headboard,” he demands. Leaning over him, my tits hanging in his face, I do as he instructed. I gasp when he sucks a nipple into his mouth and bites down. Then he’s fucking me from below. His hands holding me in place as his hips piston up into me. The entire bed rocks, the room filled with sounds of sex, grunts, and cries of pleasure. I can already feel another orgasm building.

“Yes, right there, right fucking there,” I demand, and he doesn’t disappoint. He stays right where I need him, ramming into my g-spot over and over again. And when he bites down on my other nipple, I detonate. My fingers grip the headboard so tight, they ache. I scream as I come and Cypher slams me down onto his dick and stills.

“Fuck,” he groans, his body going stiff beneath me as he explodes inside of me. I pry my fingers from the headboard and collapse onto his chest. He pulses inside of me as he wraps his arms around me and holds me against him. Our breathing is labored as we lie still, letting our heart rates settle and our bodies relax after such a vigorous but hot workout.

He rolls us to our side. His arms stay wrapped around me, our noses touching. His fingers stroke over the marks on my neck I'm sure he's left. "Is this a new kink?" he asks.

I laugh. "I think anything with you is going to be a kink."

I can just make out the smile that spreads across his face. "We may need to explore a few more things. I think there might be a bit of a masochist locked inside of you."

"Does that make you a sadist?"

He strokes my neck again. "I never want to cause you pain, Princess. But I'm completely down for trying new things and figuring out a balance that works for us both."

I press my lips to his as my hand slides down to his ass. He jerks, breaking the kiss and sucking in a deep breath when I press my finger into his asshole. "As long as I get to try a few things out on you, too."

"Uh, I'm not sure about anything going near my ass." He frowns.

I cock a brow. "All's fair in love and sex toys."

He groans, pulling me back on top of him. "I'm going to remember you said that."

Oh, I look forward to it.

Epilogue

CYPHER

“Cameron Uvedal.” The nerdy looking guy walks across the stage and, like several people before him, he shakes a few hands and collects his degree before returning to his seat. “Elizabeth Vairo.” I perk up. *Fucking finally, we made it to the Vs.* This damn ceremony has taken hours. Hours of not being able to touch my girl, and that’s a problem. These days I can’t seem to go thirty minutes without touching, kissing or breathing her in. Especially once my son started moving, and I was able to feel it.

My son.

The day we found out she was having a boy; I was shoving cigars into everyone’s mouth. I didn’t care if they were male or female. Hell, I even gave one to Becca and Jett. That’s how fucking excited I was. I’m sure Kellan and Ryder will enjoy the extra stogie. The best part was fucking with Ryder about his swimmers being all girly and shit. Yeah, he’s going to be locking Becca in her room until she’s forty, with Jett and C.J. running around. No, we haven’t named him yet, but I’ve been calling him Cypher Junior, aka C.J.

“Sicily VanLear.”

Salem, Ember, Declan, and I jump to our feet, whistling, shouting, and clapping to show how fucking proud we are of her. A huge grin covers her face as she walks across the stage and shakes her father’s hand. Yeah, as the Dean of the school, he’s the one handing out the degrees. When she places her hand in his, they stare at each other for a few tense moments. Then he pulls her in and wraps his arms around her. Ember and Salem scream louder, pleased that her father has finally taken the first step in hopefully repairing their relationship. If nothing else, I’m sure he just made this day even more special, and that earns him a little respect. I’m sure

they'll never accept me, and I couldn't give two shits either way, but I know Sicily would like to have a relationship with them again, and I'm fine with that. As long as they treat her and my son right, we won't have a problem.

When she pulls away from her father and he hands her the degree, I cup my hands around my mouth and shout, "That's my girl!" Her eyes find mine in the crowd, not hard to do since we're the only ones standing and hollering like idiots at the moment, and she gives me that smile I've come to adore as she wipes a tear from her cheek. My woman is officially a nurse. I'm fucking proud of her.

And I plan on showing her just how proud later tonight.

"You couldn't even tell you were pregnant with that baggy robe on," Ember is saying as I slide onto the bench next to Sicily. The entire club is here, celebrating her graduation Demon style. Beer, music, and a bonfire. It's been a while since we've had one of these, but with the Henchmen and Brick no longer an issue, things are back to the way they should be. Life is fucking good.

"I feel huge already," Sicily says, rubbing her soccer ball of a belly. She keeps complaining about her weight, but honestly, I think she's fucking sexy. And let me tell ya, those tits of hers have only gotten better. The woman is my kryptonite.

I slide my hand around her waist and over her stomach, spreading my fingers wide to cover almost all of it. "You're fucking perfect," I whisper in her ear, and just like every time I touch her, goosebumps break out over her arms. I love the way she reacts to me.

She turns her head, glancing over her shoulder as our noses brush together. "You're biased."

"Maybe, but I'm also the only one that matters." I lean in and kiss her lips before sliding a glass of peach tea in front

of her.

Her eyes move to the glass, and she lights up. She's been craving peach tea for the past two months, and I've practically bought stock in that shit to keep her happy. What my girl wants, she gets.

"I knew I loved you for a reason," she grins, grabbing the glass and taking a drink.

"And here I thought you loved me for my cock."

"Who would like that monstrosity?" Riggs asks, tossing a roll at my head. It bounces off and lands in Sicily's lap after smacking her in the tits. They can't be avoided.

She picks it up and tosses it back at him. "I think you mean monster; it is pretty big."

I smirk at Riggs. "Jealous?"

"He has nothing to be jealous of." Salem winks. From the way Riggs jumps, I can guess she just reached over and grabbed his junk.

"Are we comparing dick sizes?" Ember asks.

"I want in on this bet if we are," Mia says, smiling up at Ryder. He's bouncing a seven-month-old Becca on his lap, and he covers her ears with his hands as he frowns. "As much as I appreciate the compliment, babe, our daughter doesn't need to hear about her father's dick." He glances around the table. "Or any of you fuckers."

"Before we leave the subject," Sicily says, turning back to me with a grin I know all too well. The little vixen has something up her sleeve. She leans down and picks up a small black bag with red tissue paper sticking out of it. "I got you something."

My eyebrows pull together. "It's your party. Shouldn't I be giving you a gift?" Which I already have. It's just sitting at home on our bed waiting for the party to be over. I can't wait for her to see it. More importantly, I can't wait to see her in it.

She places the bag in front of me. “This is just my way of saying thank you. You’ve been my biggest supporter over the past few months.”

Smiling, I grab the bag and pull the tissue paper out. *Who am I to say no to a gift?* Reaching in, I pull out the tall square box. The first thing I notice is the bright red image of a vibrator. The second is the word prostate.

“What the fuck?” Wren asks as he reaches over my shoulder and grabs the box. I try to snatch it away, but his big ass moves way faster than someone his size should be able to. “I always suspected you were into having things shoved up your ass.” He tosses the box to Kellan, who starts to open it and peek inside. Wren holds his hands up in front of him. “Hey, no judgement, to each his own.”

“I’m so glad you feel that way.” Al grins. She reaches down and pulls an identical bag from under the table and holds it out to him, dangling it from one finger. His eyes go wide as he stares at it like it’s a bag of flaming shit.

Mia, Salem, Ember, and Jenna all move at the same time, pulling their own bags out and placing them in front of their guys. All eyes go to Riggs’ bag, which is twice as big as everyone else’s. “I got you an extra-large, baby.” Salem grins.

His face goes red as he snatches the bag, tucking it back under the table like we didn’t just see her give him a giant butt plug the size of her fucking forearm. Everyone bursts out laughing.

“Is it called the Penetrator?” Kellan asks.

Salem pops a grape into her mouth. “The Penetrator 2000.”

“Fuck, babe, really?” Riggs scowls.

“What did I miss?” Tazz asks, sliding into the seat next to Riggs. Declan grins, glancing around the table. We each grab our vibrators out of the bag and toss them at him. Kellan’s lands right in his plate of food, sending potato salad splattering over his T-shirt. The look on his face is hysterical

as he takes in the five vibes, and the one super-sized one scattered around him.

“And that’s my cue.” He abandons his plate and walks away, leaving all of us in a fit of laughter. Damn, it feels good having things back to the way they used to be. I know everyone was walking on eggshells around me with the whole Ember thing. My mood was too fucking dark for playful banter. But I’m back, baby, and better than fucking ever.

Sicily leans back into my chest and my arms automatically go around her. “If that thing works as well as your finger, then I can’t wait to get you home,” I whisper.

She leans to the side, her hand sliding along my knee. “I have a few more surprises waiting for us. Tonight, we get to unlock more kinks.”

I growl into her ear, my dick growing hard against her lower back. I don’t know how I ever thought I could be in love with someone else, not after what I’ve come to feel for Sicily. There is no fucking comparison.

“I have a surprise for you, too.” Namely the ring that’s been sitting in my nightstand for the past month. I’ve been dying to give it to her, but she was so busy studying for exams and landing a job at the hospital, it didn’t seem like the right time. Now... I’m done waiting. Tonight, I plan to make her mine completely. I grin as an image flashes in my mind.

Would it be inappropriate to ask her to marry me while I had her strapped down to our bed?

Nah!

Bonus Epilogue

KELLAN

She looks sexy as fuck! Jenna's dark red hair is pinned up, a few loose strands falling down around her face and looking like fire as it catches the sunlight. In a long white, skintight dress with tiny ass straps and a slit that goes almost up to her panty line, which doesn't look like she's actually wearing any, she's a fucking wet dream. My wife is the hottest woman on the planet. And I'm about to marry her... again.

I promised Jenna we would have a real wedding after the baby was born. We're officially married, but she wanted a party to celebrate, and since I'm the only man she'll ever do this with, I want her to have the wedding of her dreams. Honestly, if I had known she was going to look like this... I would have done it months ago. But she insisted on waiting until she lost all of her pregnancy weight. If you ask me, she's sexier now than she was before. Her hips are fuller, and so are her breasts. Thank you, Jett, for breastfeeding, and I swear to you, she looks hotter and hotter every fucking day. You'd never tell she had a kid eight months ago.

As she makes her way down the makeshift aisle between the chairs Wren, Ryder, and Cypher set up earlier, I want nothing more than to skip the wedding and go right to the honeymoon. AKA a single night Jett free. Thank you, Mac and Kitty. I reach out and offer her my hand, which she takes, and I help her step up onto the small platform that I made for us and Mammoth to stand on. All of my boys have my back, standing beside me in their white T-shirts and cuts with Declan as my best man. And all the girls are in black leather mini dresses, with Al as Jenna's maid of honor. *We're really fucking doing this.*

"You look sinful, baby," I whisper, pressing my lips against her ear. "I can't wait to get you out of this dress." I

glance down at her strappy high heels. “But the shoes can stay on.”

Jenna snickers, then bites her lip when Mammoth clears his throat.

Reluctantly, I pull away, giving her a quick wink.

“Eight months ago, I married these two in a hospital waiting room just minutes before that little boy was born,” Mammoth says, pointing to Jett, who’s bouncing and squealing on Mac’s knee. I grin, and he smiles that toothless, drooling smile that I love so goddamn much. My boy looks just like me, except he has his mother’s green eyes.

“I know you like to do things backward, Son,” Mammoth says. “But let me get through the ceremony before you start on kid number two.”

“Where’s the fun in that?” Aero asks.

“Oh my god,” Jenna blushes, dropping her forehead onto my chest.

I wrap my arm around her, smirking at the old bastard. “Then you better hurry the fuck up.”

The crowd laughs, and Lennox lets out a whistle loud enough to wake the dead. Yeah, our new friends fit right in with us Demons. We invited Aero and his club to join us, seeing as they’re our allies now. There’s talk of making a slight change to their club’s name and considering all the shit Buzz did under the old one, I think it’s a good idea. They want to keep the Henchmen name, just tweak it a little, keeping its roots. New club, new name, fresh start.

“Over a year ago,” Mammoth says. “The prettiest redhead I’d ever seen walked into our clubhouse and brought a certain asshole to his knees. I knew the minute I laid eyes on her; she was going to be the one to tame the eldest King brother.”

I smile at Jenna, her eyes shimmering as she looks up at me. I wonder if she’s remembering that night at the bonfire?

The night I stopped being a dick for two minutes while we sat together talking. I tried like hell to push her away, but from the moment I found her broken down on the side of the road, sporting bruises from her piece of shit ex, she was under my skin. I was a fucking idiot back then. Thank God Jenna was strong enough, sweet enough, and fucking brave enough to take a chance on a jackass like me.

I really am fucking lucky.

“It took him long enough to put a ring on that finger of yours,” Mammoth says, angling his body towards Jenna. “But he’s a slow learner, so be patient.”

Jenna laughs, and the sound is like an aphrodisiac. My dick perks up, and I have to will the half chub to go back down before I’m sporting full blown wood in front of my kid and my club. Not that Jett’s old enough yet to know what that is, which is a good thing because I’m always walking around with a hard-on. I can’t help it; my wife is just too damn sexy.

“I was told to keep this short and sweet,” Mammoth says. “There’s food to eat and beer to drink, so... Jenna, my sweet girl, do you still want this asshole as your husband? To clean your hair out of the drain and put up with all your girl shit on the bathroom sink?”

The smile on her face is stunning. “Hell yeah I do.”

Mammoth looks at Breaker and shrugs. “I tried.” Everyone laughs again. Mammoth turns to me and smirks. “Alright, Prez.”

“Yeeaahhhh,” someone cheers. A few others whistle.

“Do you still want this gorgeous, way too smart and way too good for you woman? To wash your dirty underwear ___”

“He doesn’t wear underwear,” Jenna says at the same time I say, “I don’t wear them.”

We laugh as Mammoth throws his hands in the air. “Jesus Christ, I did not need to know that. Fuck.” He narrows

his eyes at me. “Do I even need to ask? You’d be stupid not to still want her.”

Giggling, Jenna nods. “Yes, you still need to ask.”

Mammoth motions to my wife. “You want her, right?”

I tug her against me, tired of waiting to feel her body against mine. I’ve been tortured enough. “Hell yeah,” I growl, planting my hand on her ass.

“Then, by the power vested in me, I pronounce you husband and wife again. You can—”

I slam my mouth to hers, my tongue diving in and claiming what has always been, and will always be... Mine!

The End... for now.

What a ride this has been. Thank you so much for following the Road Demons journey. I can’t believe we’ve come to the end. I hope you loved my guys as much as I did.

If you enjoyed this book, please leave a review on Amazon. Reviews are like gold to indie writers like me.

Heads up, the Henchmen want to tell their story. Get ready for Aero, Wolf, Lennox, Chap, Blaze and Keno, because the ride isn’t over just yet.

Henchmen MC coming 2023!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

T.L. Drake was born and raised on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. A married mother of two, she has a degree in paralegal studies. Although she enjoys the life of law, her passion has always been writing. Dabbling in writing since a young age, she never considered it anything more than a hobby, until now. After writing her first novel, Heart of Stone, in 2017, she was compelled to bring more of her stories to life. With a weak spot for hot alpha males and happily ever afters, her stories will bring to life fantasies you only ever dreamed of! With powerful characters that grip you from beginning to end, her books will have you begging for more.

Find out more about TL Drake

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BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR

Kellan (Road Demons MC – Book 1)

Family isn't always about the blood you share. It's about those willing to bleed for you!

KELLAN

As the Road Demon's VP, this club is my life, and I'm loyal to my MC family. They're the only thing that matters to me. But when I decide to play hero for a damsel in distress, everything changes. Normally, I would've used my charm to convince her to take me for a ride, but the moment I see Jenna, something about her calls to me in a way no other woman has. With all her secrets chasing after her, she's a complication I don't need, but everything in me shouts with a primal urge to protect her and I'll do whatever it takes to keep Jenna, even if it means facing her skeletons head on.

JENNA

A woman on the run isn't supposed to make pit stops, let alone consider putting down roots. I know the only way to stay safe is to keep moving forward, but I can't fight the burning attraction I feel for Kellan, the ruggedly handsome biker who came to my aid. I can't afford to let anyone get close to me, it's too dangerous for me and them, but I've felt more at home with the Road Demons MC and Kellan than I ever felt back home. They've proven to me that family isn't always about blood, and now that I've found them, I'll stop at nothing to prove I belong, even when my demons show up on their doorstep ready to drag me back to hell I ran away from.

Riggs (Road Demons MC – Book 2)

When life throws you a curve, lean into it!

RIGGS

Serving my country is my past; my club is my family. As the Road Demons secretary, I'm in deep, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I have a reputation with the ladies, one that's never bothered me before. Getting attached is a complication. I kick them out of my bed the minute I've had my fun. Then *she* walks into the gym, and I know I'm in trouble. Salem is sex on two legs with an attitude to match my own. I try to fight against the pull I feel towards her, but damn, the woman is my perfect match.

SALEM

Starting over after losing everything isn't easy. My shop is my number one priority. Making friends with a biker's Ol' Lady was just what I needed to help pull in customers. Having an instant connection with the club's playboy was not what I was expecting. I didn't leave one arrogant man just to fall for another. But here's the thing about me: *I* like to be in control. Good thing Riggs seems to like that too.

Ryder (Road Demons MC – Book 3)

The brave don't live forever, the cautious don't live at all!

MIA

I've been in love with Ryder since I was fourteen years old, admiring the older man from afar, knowing I can never have him. My grandfather didn't want this life for me, so he put a do not touch order on me with his club, keeping me at arm's length for more than half my life. I've made it known, painfully, that I wanted him. But Ryder had never shown a hint of interest in me. That is until I finally noticed a man who's

been under my nose for months. A man on the verge of making it big. Now Ryder was all in, and my heart is torn between the two men. One of them makes me feel wanted, and the other has held my heart since the moment he walked into our club twenty years ago.

RYDER

My life officially began when Breaker took a chance on me and offered me a place within his world. Patching in as a Road Demon gave me the family I lost as a kid. His only rule was that Mia, his granddaughter, was off limits. It seemed easy enough, since she was only a kid back then, but something changed when the skinny fourteen-year-old girl I first met suddenly turned into a woman I can't stop craving. What makes it worse is that I knew she wanted me, and I'll never be able to have her. After two decades of ignoring her advances, I finally get the green light, only to find her in the arms of another man because she's done waiting. Fighting for her is the only option, and I don't care if I have to walk through hell to get her. I'm determined to claim what was always mine—*my Mia.*

Wren (Road Demons MC – Book 4)

Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass, it's about learning to ride in one.

ALORA

It's been eight years since Wren broke my heart and only months later my world crashed around me. I should have left Covington Falls, but my past keeps me here. Walking away

means leaving the last of my heart behind. Now Wren wants me back. He's determined to prove that he's changed, but I vowed to never let him break my heart again. Because it wasn't just my heart he broke, it was my trust. How can he fix that when the woman he chose over me years ago is still a part of his life?

WREN

I was a kid when a blue-eyed goddess walked into my club. Barely nineteen, I was just finding my way into the ranks of my family's MC. I thought Al and I were just having fun until she sent me into a tailspin with three little words and I royally messed up. I got lost in a bottle of Jack, as well as a woman I should never have touched. Years later, I'm still paying for my mistakes. No matter what I do, Al refuses to let her walls down. I want her more than I've ever wanted anyone. It can't be too late to fix the mistakes of the past. But how can I get her to trust me, when she's been hiding the truth from me for eight years?

Declan (Road Demons MC – 5)

Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations. Live to Ride!

EMBER

My whole life I've been a victim. Touched, tormented and eventually, taken. Trust isn't something I give easily. But I trust Mia, and eventually I found my place within her family. When her cousin Declan gets hurt by the same men who haunt me, I feel it's my place to help him through the nightmare.

After all, he's the man who saved me. Declan has always respected my boundaries, staying firmly on the other side of the wall I built around me long ago. But the thing about walls? They're not indestructible.

And Declan's busting through, one brick at a time.

DECLAN

Beaten, broken, and left for dead, my last thought wasn't about my family or my club. It was about an angel with silver hair. Ember's voice brought me back, pulling me from the depths of hell, but now my soul is as damaged as hers. She wants to fix me, but she's a distraction from the revenge my club craves. The revenge I need. I was meant to die that night, but I wasn't ready. I still had so much to live for, including her. I have to focus on dealing with the threat, but once it's eliminated, I plan to claim her in every single way.

The problem is, I'm not the only one captivated by Ember.

Southern Comfort

Sometimes perfect has to fall apart before you can find exactly what you need.

Life for Dr. Melanie Holland is damn near perfect. She loves her job, and her wedding is in a few months. But as the big day gets closer, her fiancé, Drew, gets farther away.

A chance encounter with a sexy cowboy only adds to her chaos. She fights her attraction to Beau, but when a cruel twist of fate throws her in his arms, she loses that battle.

With her life derailed, Melanie decides she needs to make some changes. New town, new job, new love. But of course,

new beginnings can't go smoothly.
Is a dose of southern comfort just what the doctor ordered?

Heart of Stone (Book 1)

LEAH

A year. Twelve months. Three hundred and sixty-five days. Sounds like plenty of time, right? But it's nowhere near enough when you're saying goodbye. After the devastating news of my mother's illness, I packed up and moved back home. I need to make the most of the time we have left. My new job at Stone Investments is just supposed to be a way to support myself. Catching the eye of my notorious playboy boss isn't part of the plan. But plans change.

AADEN

I never saw her coming, but the gorgeous redhead is consuming all of my thoughts. She's an employee, and therefore off limits, but it appears my brain hasn't gotten the memo. Leah is quickly turning into my obsession. After returning from a trip with my friends, it seems they have also developed an interest in my auburn beauty. When I find out why, it's too late. I'm in too deep, and risk losing everything I've built with the woman who's won my heart.

A lot can happen in just a year—saying goodbye, falling in love, even melting a heart of stone.

Carved in Stone (Book 2)

LEAH

Brokenhearted, pregnant, and alone. Aaden shattered my world when it was already cracked and fragile. Once again, I trusted the wrong man and found myself in the same position I was in during college. The difference is, Aaden isn't running. He's chasing me. Saying all the right things and offering me his heart, I fall back into his arms and find myself wearing his ring. As my pregnancy progresses, the chaotic mess of both of our lives hits us from every angle. Aaden's ex, his former psycho friend, and my mother's health make my already high-risk pregnancy even riskier. Through it all, Aaden is there, giving me the love and support I need.

In the end, will it be enough to save us both?

AADEN

I almost lost her. The only woman I've ever loved. When tragedy struck, I thought she would be taken from me, and I felt the most excruciating pain rip through my chest. I couldn't lose her. I couldn't lose either of them. With a second chance, I promise to make everything right. She's carrying my baby, and now I want her to share my last name. They say the first year of marriage is hard, but ours feels like it's us against the world. My wife is strong, though, and I've kept my promise to be there every step of the way. When a new threat comes out of the woodwork, I vow to protect her and our baby at all costs.

But when the threat is closer than I ever thought possible, will my vow be enough?