



Seduction

SEDUCTION

BLACK HOODS MC#8

WALL STREET JOURNAL AND USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Dark
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TRIGGER WARNINGS

This book contains dark subject matter including references to loss of a child, abortion, domestic violence, and death.

Dark Seduction



To...

Booze? Caffeine? Yeah, those guys.

Avelyn & Geri



V

BUY A GARAGE, *Judge said. It'll be a great addition to our club's legit business plans.* On paper, yes. In working theory, hell no.

Being one of the only guys with mechanic experience in the club, I could have told Judge and the others that buying a garage and running it right is two different fucking animals. I had a couple years experience running a garage before coming to Austin with Mom when my own Black Hoods chapter and personal life had gone up shit creek. A change of venue had been much needed, but stumbling back into the garage business had not been a part of the plan.

Yet, here I am, managing the day to day operations under Judge's watchful, though semi-absent eye. It hasn't been easy getting this palace up and running. We'd had enough shit with the Ladrones and their theft ring putting us behind on opening day, but the shit just keeps on piling up. Today is no exception.

After the parts order showed up two hours late, and a tune-up went wrong, I have yet to take a break or eat lunch. Eating had been the last thing on my mind until my stomach began to revolt. I no sooner put my ass into the chair, ham sandwich in hand, before the phone starts ringing. I consider ignoring, and eating, but Judge would have my ass if he knew.

"Hoods Customs," I answer as my stomach rumbles yet again. My eyes staring at the sandwich. The mayo dripping off the corner of it onto the desk before I can stop it. Grumbling to myself, I tuck the phone against my shoulder while I clean up the mess with a Wipe All.

“Hey V, it’s Benny Snyder.”

Benny, one of our best customers, had just picked up his 1959 Cadillac Cyclone. His newest edition to his show cars. The thing had been found in a barn in upstate New York after the original owner had passed away and his kids had no damn idea their dad had a treasure trove of classic cars hidden away on their property. It had been in rough shape, but we’d spent four months working on it for Benny. By the time it left our shop last week, the Cyclone looked like it had just rolled off the assembly line and purred like a fucking kitten.

“How’s it going, man? How’s the new ride treating you?”

“That’s why I’m calling.” His tone is flat. I curse under my breath. Benny is an outgoing guy who usually stays hours after his pick up time to crack jokes or talk shop. This Benny is all business.

Shit.

I toss my uneaten sandwich onto the plate in front of me. My hand draws up to my face, scrubbing it. “That doesn’t sound great. What’s going on?”

“Took her out to the show in Dallas last weekend to debut her. By the time I got her there and unloaded, the paint job was bubbling and peeling.”

I sigh. Benny has climate controlled trailers. If she’d been baking in the sun, I’d be tempted to write it off as a fluke, but with his setup, she should have arrived in pristine, show condition like she’d left the shop.

“Shit, Benny. I’m sorry to hear about that. We’ll fix it, of course. Free of charge.” I reach for the garage calendar on the desk. The old paper calendar has red lines all over it. Cancellations. Shit. Judge hadn’t said anything when he was in

the office this morning, and with how busy my morning was, I hadn't had a chance to check in. I flip to next week. More red lines. What the fuck has been happening today? "Looks like I can get you first thing tomorrow if that works for you."

A pregnant pause echoes silently through the receiver before Benny audibly sighs, "That's the thing, V. I won't be. It's nothing against you or the club, but your paint guy does a shit job. I thought the paint job on my Mustang was a fluke, but this is twice now."

Fuck, I'd forgotten about his mustang a couple months back. Our paint guy, Ronnie, had just started, and we were just getting the paint shop up and running. Benny's requested powder blue mustard had come out more of a neon see it from space blue. Ronnie's excuse was that the paint was mislabeled from the previous owner's painter. The beginning of his many excuses.

Irritation grinds at me. We should have fired him weeks ago, but Judge didn't want to pull the trigger until we'd found a replacement, a process he didn't get started until earlier this week. Fucking figures.

"I'd hate to lose your business, Benny. Are you sure we can't fix it up for you?" The twinges of annoyance and anger at yet another hit to the business coil in my belly like a snake about to strike. Benny was a good guy. He spent a shit ton of money with us when he could have gotten the work done cheaper elsewhere. Losing him would be a hit to our bottom line—one we couldn't afford to take so soon after opening.

"If he's still there, not a chance." Benny pauses before sighing. "I mentioned his name around the show last weekend, and dude's got a bad reputation for shit like this."

“That so?” I mutter, trying my fucking hardest to tamp down my anger in my voice. I’d told Judge not to hire this guy until I could call around, but we’d been desperate to fill the spot. That desperation is now costing us time and money.

“I’m not one to tell anyone—least of all your club—how to run its business, but as long as he’s there, I won’t be back. I’ll take the refund on the paint job, though.”

“Of course,” I say with a sigh. “I’ll have a check mailed to your house first thing in the morning.” The coiling anger inside me swells. I knew this would fucking happen. I’d tried to tell Judge we needed to hire quality people up front, but it didn’t work out that way.

“I hate to do this, V. You do damn good work, but I can’t risk some of my classics with that guy.”

“I understand, and I appreciate your feedback. I’ll definitely be sharing it with Judge,” I growl. Benny apologizes again before hangings up. The second the call disconnects, my rage breaks free.

My fist makes contact with the desk the second I toss the receiver, the coiling rage no longer able to stay inside of me. My forgotten lunch slides off the edge of the desk and lands with a plop on the floor.

“God dammit, Ronnie,” I growl. I shove away from the desk and head for the garage bays. The paint bay is at the far end of the building. A couple of our civilian mechanics spot me and grimace as I pass by them. One of the guys, Billy, sighs in relief as I pass him, clearly happy no be the target of ire today.

With long strides, I stalk toward the paint bay and find my target with his feet propped up on the desk, a sandwich half

out of his mouth, and his cell phone in hand with some fucking video playing on it. He stiffens when he sees me, tossing his phone onto the work station like I didn't fucking see or hear it land.

"Hey, V," he says, a nervous smile spreading on his lips.

"Ronnie, you have got to be fucking kidding me," I roar. "I just got off the phone with Benny, and guess what he just told me?"

"He likes the paint job I did?" Ronnie shrugs with a smile. All I want to do is smack that smile right off his face.

"The opposite actually. The paint job is bubbling, asshole. What the hell did you do?" My fists curl at my sides. *Don't hit the motherfucker, V. He's not worth the assault charge.*

Ronnie swings his feet off the desk in one move, planting them on the floor. "I did what he asked. I painted it."

"The hell you did. It's a four day old paint job, Ronnie. I'm going to ask you again. What did you do?"

"I didn't do shit," he seethes, his nerves seeming to disappear as he steps closer to me. Ronnie comes to a stop a few steps away, his chest puffed out like he's itching to take this fight one step further. A fight that would be entirely one-sided. Ronnie is lean and at least six inches shorter than my six foot five. Not short for a man, but compared to me, he looks like a little kid running his mouth to someone who could beat him into next week with one blow. "It's not my fault your shop orders shitty paint."

"Shitty paint?" I blow my stack, unable to tamp down the anger any longer. "You're blaming the paint?"

"I am," he doubles down, his arms crossing his chest. "Shitty paint equals shit paint jobs. This ain't on me, pal."

“Let me get this straight, Ronnie. The issue, which never happened until you joined our garage, is on the paint. Is that what you’re trying to tell me?”

“It is,” he nods. “I’m damn good at my job, and I don’t like what you’re insinuating, V. I could be working in way better shops than this trash heap, making way more money.”

“Then why don’t you, Ronnie. I’m done. I’m done with the excuses. I’m done with your costing this shop thousands of dollars and losing our clients left and right because you can’t mix fucking paint.”

“You can’t fire me,” he seethes. “No piss-ant errand boy on a power trip going to fire me. This ain’t your garage. You may *think* you own the place, but I know good and well who’s name is on the deed. It ain’t yours.”

“Listen here, asshole,” I say, but I’m interrupted as a set of heavy footfalls thunder from behind me. I don’t bother to turn around because there’s only one guy in our club that walks like that.

“It would be my name,” Judge growls from behind me before stepping next to me. “Problem, V?”

Ronnie’s face blanches and his mouth snaps shut.

Yeah, that’s what I thought. All talk. No fucking spine. “Ronnie’s paint job just cost us Benny’s business,” I inform him flatly.

“That so?”

“According to Ronnie, it’s our paint that’s the issue.”

Judge sighs beside me. “The “top of the line paint” that you insisted we buy, Ronnie? That’s the problem?”

“Look, Judge,” he stumbles over his words, but Judge brings his hand up to stop him.

“You’re fired, Ronnie.”

“But, Judge, I—,” he stutters again. “I need this job.”

“Thought you said you had other garages throwing you job offers and more money?” I fire back. “Isn’t that what you said?”

Ronnie’s mouth falls open for a second, but then snaps shut, defeat washing over his face. There’s nothing he can do or say to change his fate. We wanted him out. Would not having a painter hurt us? Sure, but our books were evidence enough that he would only cost us more business.

“Get out,” Judge growls. “Pack your shit, and get the hell out of my garage.” Ronnie’s shoulders slump in defeat. We’d given him enough chances, and he’d finally hung himself on his own rope. “Don’t bother waiting around for a paycheck. You’ve cost me enough money.”

Ronnie turns to his work station, retrieving his phone, then shoves his way between Judge and I and exits the garage. We both watch silently until he pulls out of the parking lot.

“Guess we need to step up the search for a new painter,” I mumble, my eyes still trained on the spot where Ronnie’s truck had been parked.

“I’ll make some calls,” Judge sighs before he stalks away.



BURNT

“DUDE, where the fuck are you taking me?” I ask, staring up at the abandoned warehouse. “If you wanted to take me out somewhere kill me, man, at least you could have sprung for something better than burgers and fries first.”

“Shut up,” V growls. “It’s just through here.”

“What’s through here?” I ask, following along behind him. “A tetanus shot?” The entire place looks like it’s about to cave in. The roof has holes big enough for a Buick to fall through them.

“You’re making me regret bringing you along.”

“Well, when you promise me a night of fucking debauchery, I didn’t think it would be this.” I wave to the building in front of me. “Seriously, if this is your idea of fun, you need to find a new hobby.”

V glares back at me from over his shoulder. “Just follow me.”

“To my death,” I mutter under my breath.

We keep on walking until we come to a cellar door at the far end of the building. V leans down, knocking four times, then stands back.

“Is this when the serial killer in a clown mask comes out asking if I float?”

“Stay out here then, asshole, but I’m going in there to see what his place is all about.”

“Tetanus. That’s what’s in there.”

A few minutes go by before a heavy metal clang comes from the other side of the cellar door. It swings wide, revealing a woman wearing nothing but a scrap of gauzy sheer fabric.

“Password?” she asks, crossing her tattooed arms over the perkier set of tits I’ve seen in awhile.

“Blueberry pancakes,” V replies.

The sexy as hell woman licks her lips and grins, stepping aside to let us enter. “Welcome to Vanilla Villa. Follow me, please.”

V shoots me a warning look over his shoulder before following the woman down the stairs. The metal cellar door slams behind us and my senses blur from the sudden lack of light, but the deeper we go, the more my heart races.

“You sure about this place?” I whisper to V. Even in a whisper, the sound of my voice echoes off the walls.

“Jesus, man. Say it a little louder,” he growls.

The clacking heels of the woman come to a stop, and I almost smack right into V’s back.

I hear the party before I see it. The thumping bass of music slipping through the crack of the door behind her. The woman knocks on something I can’t see and the door opens, light filling the space, revealing the crowd inside.

“Holy fucking shit,” I breathe, my eyes wide. This is definitely not grandma’s cellar. The entire place is filled to the brim with people. Some are dancing. Some are talking. Some are fucking in plain view of everyone else. Something brushes passed my head, and I crane my neck, only to find women suspended from the ceiling on wires with ball gags in their mouth.

“Told you,” V throws back at me.

“Dude, this is like fucking adult Disneyland.” I grab his shoulder, shaking the fucking shit out of it. “Remind me not to doubt you the next time you tell me to just follow you.”

“This is just the first room. Come on,” he beckons. “The good shit is in the back.”

“How the fuck did you find out about this place?”

“One of Liam’s guys,” he says over the music. V had had a shit day at the shop, and when he’d come back to the clubhouse, I knew he was looking to blow off a little steam. The invite along to this fucking piece of paradise just happened to be a bonus for me. “Apparently, the Vanilla Villa travels all around the country. Just happened to be in Austin this week.”

We weave through the crowd, only stopping when two women slide between us. Their tits are covered in cum. Clearly, they’d already had some fun tonight. Shit, who knows how many rounds these women had gone through already. They looked as if the circle jerk party had started at their house. Getting my dick wet is why I came along. Catching something isn’t.

“Hey, handsome. You wanna play?” cum tits asks, her voice sultry and flirty. “You look like you know how to fuck.”

V grins as her friend presses against him, whispering in his ear. I side eye V, with a slight shrug of my shoulders. He shakes his head no and whispers something to the girl plastered to him, and she grabs her friend and stalks away back into the crowd.

“The fuck did you tell them?”

“You don’t want to know. Liam’s guy warned me about some of the girls. If they have a red bracelet on, they’re looking to peg. You don’t strike me as a guy who likes something being shoved up his ass.”

Jesus. What is this place? “You’d be correct.”

“Come one. There’s some private rooms towards the back. More our speed, I think.”

We weave through more sweaty bodies before coming to a halt where two guards stand with a velvet red rope spanning the space between them. The big guy stares at us, his face void of all expression. V slips his hand into his back pocket and pulls out a black card, handing it to him. The guy nods, unclipping the rope between them and allowing us to pass.

“Remind me to thank Liam’s buddy the next time he’s in town,” I murmur under my breath. V’s need to blow off a little steam is warranted, but it had been a hot fucking minute since I’d gotten my dick wet. The club whores didn’t want a prospect like me, and with the shit I had to do for the club, it left little down time. I need this just as much as V did. Jerking off is getting a little old.

A row of rooms line the hallway behind the rope. Every single door is wide open, revealing couples and groups of people fucking loudly inside. The sound of slapping bodies and moans filling the hallway as we pass. V moves on ahead of me, but one open door in particular catches my eye. I skid to a stop, grabbing V by the shoulder to halt his forward pursuit.

“The fuck?” he groans, but his protests stop when he notices what caught my eye.

Inside this room, a woman sits in a high-backed leather chair. Her face is hidden by a black leather mask, her long, dark hair cascading down her narrow shoulders and falling just short of her bountiful tits.

She sits in that chair like a fucking queen on a throne. Her naked body is on display for any who pass. I lick my lips as I take her in. Tattoos cover nearly every inch of her skin, swirls of colors and designs flowing seamlessly together. A dragon on her abdomen circles her round hips and onto her thighs.

She's a fucking goddess ready for someone to worship her, and I'd bow down just to get a taste of her.

"Hello there," she says, her sultry voice beckoning to me like a siren's song.

"Hello, beautiful," V replies, stepping into the doorway. "All alone?"

"Seems that way," she sighs. "Never seen you two around before." Ah. She's a regular, it appears. With the kind of confidence oozes from her, it's not surprising. "First time?"

V leans up against the doorframe, crossing his tattooed arms against his chest. "Might be."

"What about your friend?" she asks. Her eyes are barely visible under her black mask, but I can feel them on me, the heat of her gaze going straight to my fucking cock.

"First timer."

"Well, then, why don't you two join me? I'll give you a proper welcome to the Vanilla Villa." She uncrosses her legs, baring her bald pussy. "No one has piqued my interest tonight, but I think the two of you will serve me well."

V looks at me, his eyes narrowed with uncertainty. We've never shared a woman at the same time. Sure, most of the unattached guys had shared the available girls at the club, but this is different. I'm a territorial bastard. Sharing has never my greatest virtue.

"Didn't come all this way to not enjoy ourselves," V says, raising a brow.

"Fuck it," I growl. "Let's do this."

I shove past him, my shoulder brushing V's as I move. I can't take my eyes off her. Her red painted lips twist into a smile, and I feel that smile in my gut. Fucking hell.

As I approach her chair, her hand comes up. "Take your shirts off," she says, sitting up a little taller. "And both of you get on your knees."

Never in my life have I had a woman instruct me when it comes to sex, but there's something about the lilt of her voice and the commanding confidence in the way she takes us in that has me scrambling to obey.

As my shirt hits the floor, I drop to my knees before her, and V does the same, his half naked body next to mine, his eyes also trained only on the vixen in the chair.

Her eyes flicker with desire from behind her mask as she takes us in. "Have either of you ever shared a woman?"

I swallow, my gaze frozen on her as I shake my head. V shakes his head as well.

"I wonder," she says, putting one knee over the arm of her chair. "Do you touch each other?"

"Fuck no," V growls as I shake my head, entranced by the glimpse of her pussy before me.

The woman grins. “Ok, then. No touching anyone but me.”

She moves, placing her other leg over the opposite arm of the chair, her legs now spread before us like an offering. “You,” she says, her finger pointing at V. “Do you like my pussy?”

V growls. “Fuck, yes.”

She nods, her hand coming down until her finger is circling her pretty pink clit.

“What about you, handsome?” she asks, her eyes now focused on me.

“It’s fucking perfect,” I tell her, my voice unrecognizable as I try to calm my breathing. I want to do so many wicked things to her and her perfect pussy, and I’m not sure I can wait.

Before I can stop myself, I lunge forward, my tongue aiming for her center, desperate for a taste.

Just as I get close though, her hand comes out, stopping my forehead as I descend on her.

“No,” she says, her voice husky but firm. “That’s bad. Very, very bad.”

I sit back on my heels, confused and ashamed, not liking her stern words directed at me.

“Bad boys don’t get treats,” she frowns. “Only good boys get treats.” Her eyes swing to V. “Are you a good boy?”

V nods quickly, his tongue darting out as he licks his lips.

“You are, aren’t you?” She crooks her finger at him, motioning for him to come even closer. “You want to kiss my pussy, good boy?”

The arousal in the room is thick and hot, and V's body is trembling next to mine. "Fuck yes," he growls.

"Come kiss it then, good boy. Show your friend how a good boy eats my pussy."

V dives forward, and my cock strains against the zipper of my jeans as I watch his tongue drag along the glistening space between her legs, dragging and circling and lapping up her arousal.

The woman's head falls back and her lips part, but her eyes stay trained on me as she moans. "Yes," she hisses. "That's a very good boy. You like eating my pussy?"

V mutters an unintelligible affirmation as he continues to devour her, his head buried in the very place I am aching to be.

"Take out your cock, naughty boy," she orders, her hand coming down to press V's face into her, her hips rolling as her cheeks grow pink.

Reaching down, I watch the pair before me as I undo my belt buckle and release the button on my jeans. My cock is so hard it hurts.

"That looks sore," she says, her voice barely a whisper as V's mouth works her clit. "Do you want me to kiss it for you?"

I can only nod, my throat too thick with need to utter a sound.

"Come bring it to my lips, baby. I want to kiss that swollen cock better for you."

I stand then, lowering my jeans as I go. I kick them across the room and move toward her.

The chair has her at the perfect level, her face at just the right height to take my cock.

Both of her hands are on V's head, her fingers tangled in his hair. "Put that cock to my lips, baby."

I'm not about to argue, so I take my cock in my hand, and from beside the chair, I lean forward and press the tip of my cock to her swollen lips. She doesn't part them. She simply presses one kiss to the tip, and then another, and another.

"Does that feel good, handsome?"

I nod, not trusting my voice to speak.

She grins, and her tongue darts out and traces a line along the underside of my cock. I watch, frozen as her eyes fall closed and she runs her tongue back to the tip. "What do you want me to do to you, baby?" she asks.

"Suck it," I breathe.

When her lips part, she takes the tip of my cock into her mouth, and it takes everything in me to hold it together. If you'd have asked me half an hour ago if I would ever come from a five second blow job, I'd have laughed in your face, but this blow job just happened to be from a masked woman getting her pussy devoured by V, and it was the most erotic thing I'd ever seen.

With her hand still in V's hair, she pulls his head back and says, "No more. You watch me suck this cock, baby, and as you do, I want you to touch yourself and pretend it's your cock I'm sucking."

I hear his belt buckle, but I don't dare look away from the vixen before me. Instead, I watch, entranced as her red painted lips wrap around my dick and she takes it deep, the tip hitting the back of her throat.

Her mouth is magic, her tongue finding every nerve ending I have, sending shivers down my spine.

“Fuck,” V mutters from beside me, still on his knees between her legs.

Jesus Christ. Why is the prospect watching me get my cock devoured so fucking hot?

My knees are about to buckle when she releases me, and when she stands, my head is spinning.

There are people at the door, but I’m too focused on what is happening inside the room to pay attention to the ones watching. Let them watch. This isn’t about them, but I would bet my life that they wish it was.

“Lay down,” she tells V, motioning to a flat table to our left.

V stands without hesitation and does as instructed. For the first time ever, I find myself naked and aroused with another man in the room, and I can’t bring myself to care. It’s not just any man. It’s V, and we’re in this scenario together. For some reason, I couldn’t imagine it any other way. This is right. This is the way it should be. This is fate.

As V lays down on the table, we both watch the woman as she walks towards him, grabbing my hand and pulling me along as she moves. Her hips are full and round, swaying with each step like a dancer.

“I’m going to fuck your friend,” she says, turning to gaze up at me. “And when I do, you keep your eyes on me the whole time. Do not look away. Do you understand?”

I swallow and nod, captivated by her spell.

She leans down then and presses her lips to V’s, capturing them in a kiss. Her hand trails along his naked torso, skimming over his cock and back up again. Jealousy and need bubble

low in my gut, but I don't move. I do exactly as she'd told me and I watch.

When she pulls away, she looks back over her shoulder, her mask doing nothing to hide the heat in her eyes. A sultry smile forms on her lips as she climbs up onto the table, first one knee, and then the other, then she settles herself astride V.

“Do you like your friend watching?” she asks him, her attention now on him.

V nods, his hands coming up to her hips, but she pushes them down.

“No touching.” Her gaze comes to mine. “Do you want to watch me fuck your friend?”

“Yes,” I manage to get out around the thick desire in my throat. I do want to watch that. I can't explain it, but I want to watch her fuck V almost as badly as I want it to be me she's fucking.

She positions V's cock between her legs, and slowly, she lowers herself down on top of him. V's groan joins mine as she buries him inside of her, taking his length entirely. Fucking hell.

Her lips part and a tiny gasp escapes past them as she begins to move. “You feel so good inside me,” she breathes, her hips rocking back and forth. “Does my pussy feel good?”

“Yes,” V gasps. His hands are curled into fists at his side, and I know he's as desperate as I am to touch her.

Her eyes slide to mine. “Do you want to be inside of me too, handsome?”

Fucking hell, my cock is throbbing. I can only nod.

“Come up here,” she says, nodding behind her. On your knees and get between his feet.”

I frown, my gaze dropping to V’s, who looks just as unsure as I feel.

The siren chuckles, her hips still swaying as she fucks him. “I promise, she puffs out between thrusts. “You won’t have to touch him at all.”

Glancing down at V one last time, I take his nod as approval, and before I can think too much on what she’s asking, I too climb up onto that table, positioning myself on my knees behind her. V’s feet are spread apart, providing a space just big enough for me to fit.

Her head turns and her eyes flash with wicked excitement as she grins and says, “You take me from behind.”

I’m dead. Dead and gone to heaven.

This dream woman has single-handedly broken me down to an obedient slave and as she fucks another man, her ass comes toward me until the tip of my cock hits the ring of tight muscle there.

I lean back as far as I can, watching as her pussy takes V, and her ass slowly swallows my shaft in a grip so tight, I know I’m not going to last long.

A satisfied smile takes over her face and she drops her head back, resting it on my shoulder. Her long red fingernails dig into V’s belly, and that’s when she proceeds to blow both of our minds.



V

HAD you asked before yesterday if I'd had considered sharing a woman with my prospect, I would have said you were fucking insane. This morning, I would result in a different answer entirely.

Our night with the raven haired beauty was the stuff you only hear of in magazines like Hustler. Or from TK before he meant Cora and went on the straight and narrow. That motherfucker would have walked out of the Vanilla Villa with his cock still swinging and singing Broadway style for the entire world to know. He wouldn't be awkwardly sitting in our morning Church meeting, avoiding eye contact with my damn prospect.

My thoughts drift to the woman we'd shared last night. Fuck. I've always been in charge in the fucking department with my past partners. Leading is second nature to me, just like fixing cars. Yet, for her, I had surrendered my control.

My cock throbs uncomfortably in my jeans the longer I think about the way her body writhed as she rode me. The way her eyes, despite being hidden by that mask, bore down deep inside of me with each shift of her hips.

She had held all the cards last night.

There had been something primal in letting her lead and fighting my own instincts to take charge. I like control, but giving it up... I've never done that before. In an odd way, it was soothing.

Soothing, and awkward knowing that moment was shared with the guy I am supposed to be mentoring for the club. *Some mentor I am.*

“You hear me, V?” Judge asks, snapping my attention away from replay in my head. “The fuck you do last night that has you drifting off into space?”

Burnt’s gaze snaps to mine before dropping back to his clasped hands on the top of the table. GP, who sits next to me, doesn’t miss it. He side eyes me with a grin on his face.

Way to keep it subtle, asshole.

“Sorry, Judge. Had a long night,” I admit. “Can you repeat what you said?”

“I shouldn’t have to,” he grumbles, his large frame leaning forward in his chair. He’s not wrong. I’m a patch, and the last thing I should be doing in a club meeting is daydreaming about last night. No matter how fucking much I’d like to see her again.

“Apologies,” I surmise. “Won’t happen again.”

“See that it doesn’t,” he mutters, clearly annoyed. Judge isn’t the kind of guy that you’d want to piss off on a good day. Disrespecting him in his own club meeting may be worse. “What I was saying was that I put a couple of feelers out about the new painter for the garage. Luck seems to be in our favor, because one of the best in business just happens to be in town. He’s going to swing by in the morning. I expect you to be there.”

“Yeah, no problem. Who’d you get? Truthfully, as long as he could keep paint on a vehicle, he’d be miles ahead of Ronnie.” Just thinking about Ronnie’s arrogance makes me

want to throw a wrench at the fucker's head. Good fucking riddance he's not our problem anymore.

“Mack Taylor.”

The name pings familiarity in my mind, but I can't place where I'd heard it before. Not that I am expert when it comes to paint jobs. Give me a wrench, and a blow torch, and I'll build you whatever you want. A paint gun? You'd be better off giving it to a Kindergartener. I know jack shit about that.

“Comes highly recommended. He did that custom Harley the Chamber of Commerce is auctioning off this weekend. That's why he's in town. City invited him to the auction. We got lucky.”

“Did you see that bike?” Hashtag says with a whistle. He taps on the iPad in front of him until an image pops up on the screen. He flips it around to show us all. “I have had wet dreams about this bike.”

“Dude, don't say that too loud. Your computers might get jealous and fry your ass,” Karma chimes in, a wide grin on his face. “Not to mention Shelby.”

“They both know where they stand,” he fires back, extending his middle finger. “It's not every day a 1936 Harley Davidson El Knucklehead shows up on the market. The last one that came to auction sold for almost two hundred thousand.” He rubs his hands together like a cartoon billionaire. “I've considered selling off some of my collectibles to bid on it.”

“Oh no, not your toys,” StoneFace laughs. One of those creepy laughs that serial killers make. Dude barely talks, but when he does, it's either weird as fuck like his slow speed

police chase or terrifying. There's zero middle ground with him. He keeps us on our toes. That's for sure.

"Well, that was terrifying," Hash says, his brows raised high. "But yes, I'm considering selling my action figures. They're not toys, asshole."

"Might want to put one of those on your to-buy list too, because Shelby's going to rip you a new one if you even try to bid on it."

"I can handle Shelby."

Laughter fills the room, because we all know there's no handling Shelby. Shelby handles Hash.

"She wants to build her new shop here in Austin. Can't do that if you're spending all the capital," Mom reminds him. Leave it to Mom to be the voice of reason. Probably how he got his nickname. Even after his wife Marie passed away, he still mother hens us. Hash flips them both off before crossing his arms in a huff.

"Aw, come on, Hash. Lighten up. You can get big boy toys one day," Karma teases, grinding against the irritation that normally is dished out from Hash, but rarely against him.

"Leave him alone," Mom chuckles before turning back to Judge. "You think this guy is going to work out for us?"

"He sounds promising," I reply instead. "A bike that rare wouldn't be painted by just anyone. Not with the kind of price tag that comes with it." This Mack fucker might be just what we need to get our customers back after Ronnie's fuckups. Snagging him up could mean a huge pay day for all of us. "Think we have a snowball's chance in hell of locking his ass down for the garage?"

Judge shrugs. “Guess we’ll see tomorrow. But that’s all I’ve got for today. Anything else needs to be brought to the table?” He scans the room.

The rest of the club sits back in their seats and no one utters a word. Then, he wraps his massive hand around the gavel in front of him and slams it down on the table, calling an end to the meeting.

As we all start to shuffle out of the room, Burnt sidles up beside me the second the room clears. “Can we talk?” His voice is barely a whisper over the loud ruckus of the rest of our club hitting the breakfast chow line.

I don’t bother glancing at him. We’d made an agreement last night to not talk about what had happened at Vanilla Villa the second we left.

“Nothing to talk about,” I reply. “Pact, remember?”

The reminder of our agreement stiffens his frame next to me. “Don’t you want to know who she was? I can’t get her or last night out of my head.” Neither can I, but I know the reality of the situation. This isn’t some meet cute in one of the books that Grace and Blair like to read. “Didn’t you feel it? She was fucking special.”

“It was a mistake taking you there,” I admit. It didn’t seem like it at the time, but I should have known better.

“The hell it was!” he snaps. “I want to go back.”

I turn, facing him, a twinge of anger flashing over my face before I can stop it. “Look, it was a great fucking time, but that’s all it was, Burnt. One night only. We blew off some steam. Don’t make this into something it’s not.”

Burnt rolls his eyes. “That’s not what I’m trying to do. You can’t tell me that you haven’t thought about her this morning.

You nearly got caught doing it in front of Judge. What I'm poorly trying to say is that I think we should go back and find her."

I raise a hand between us. "Let me stop you right there. Finding her isn't going to happen, Burnt. Woman like that go to places like Vanilla Villa to either satisfy an itch they aren't getting scratched at home or to blow off some steam. Tracking her down was never in the cards, man."

His mouth dips into a deep frown. "It was your first time going to a place like that. It's easy to catch feelings after having a good night there, but feelings don't belong in a place like that. Believe me. Chalk it up to a good time and move on."

"What if I can't?" Burnt vows.

"Then you're well and truly fucked, prospect, because chasing after something you can't have will never work out in your favor. Trust me. Just move on." I reach out and pat him on the shoulder. "Forgot about her. She's long gone."

Burnt's scowl deepens. He's a good guy. Mom bringing him back from the California chapter had been a good thing for him, and our club. He may not be that much younger than me but Burnt still has some growing up to do.

Maybe I do too though, because there's a part of me that wants to find her as well. But he and I differ in one way. I know when to walk away.



MACK

I REV the engine of my custom-painted vintage car as I speed toward the garage owned by the Black Hoods MC. The purr of the engine drowns out the memories that have been swirling in my head all morning. Those two men last night had taken up permanent residence in my head. What we'd shared was one of the most incredible experiences I've ever had. It's going to be hard to forget them, but I have to. I need to focus on this job interview; it's a huge opportunity.

The wind from the sunroof whips through my hair, offering some solace from the inner turmoil. I can't help but replay the scenes from last night in my mind—the caresses, the sparks, the undeniable chemistry. It's been an unbelievable night, no doubt about it. But it can't distract me from my goals.

As I pull into the garage's parking lot, I take a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Focus, Mack," I mutter to myself. "You can't afford to get lost in the past."

I park my vintage car and remove my sunglasses, shaking off the lingering memories of the two men. They are distractions, and distractions won't help me secure this job. I need to be sharp, confident, and above all, determined.

As a woman, getting any traction in my field is nearly impossible. It's like have a set of tits and a vagina makes you unworthy to hold a paint gun. But I can hold one just fine. I can hold one better than any man I know. I just have to prove it every single time I pick one up.

Determined to make this interview my bitch, I enter the garage, ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead. It's time to put last night behind me and focus on building my future. It's time to prove myself to Judge, which is who I'm here to see. He's the club president, so if I'm going to impress any one of the men here, it has to be him.

A bell rings overhead as I step through the door, and as I scan the room, I find him. The name Judge is stitched onto a patch over his chest, and on the opposite side is another patch declaring him as president. Holy hell. He's tall and broad, and covered in tattoos. His beard is long and straight, and though he's old enough to be my father, this man has aged like the finest wine. Are all bikers this fucking hot?

When his gaze falls on me, his eyes widen, and I can practically hear the gears turning in his head. He looks me up and down, clearly expecting someone else.

"Mack?" he asks, skepticism and worry dripping from his voice.

"That's me."

His brow creases in the center and I watch as he shakes his head slowly. "I thought you'd be a man."

I can't help but roll my eyes internally. Here we go again, another doubter who can't wrap their head around a woman doing custom paint jobs. It's nothing new. I'm used to it by now, but that doesn't make it any less discouraging.

I paste on my best professional smile and say, "Well, Judge, names can be deceiving, can't they? But I assure you, I'm the Mack you're looking for. And if you give me a chance, you'll see just how talented I am with a paint gun."

Judge's hand comes up, his fingernails scratching at his scruffy beard, clearly still unsure. "We don't usually hire women in the garage, you know."

I raise an eyebrow and smirk. "Oh, I've heard that one before. But you see, I'm not just any woman. I'm the one who turned a rusted-out junker into a work of art that turned heads at the last car show. So, if you want your bikes and cars to go from 'meh' to 'wow,' you're going to want me on your team."

I watch as Judge's expression shifts from skepticism to something resembling respect. Maybe, just maybe, he will see past the stereotype.

"So, are we gonna do this interview, or are we gonna keep playing the name game?" I ask, crossing my arms over my chest and giving him a challenging stare.

Judge's face cracks with a grin and he steps forward his hand extended. "Alright, Mack, let's get started. Show me what you've got."

I shake his hand firmly, a sense of triumph washing over me. It seems that even in the tough world of the Black Hoods MC, talent speaks louder than gender. And I'm more than ready to prove I have plenty of both.

Judge turns toward the door behind him and leads me deeper into the garage. Farther away come the clatter of tools and the lingering scent of engine oil. My head is on a swivel as he make our way to the back, taking in what could be my potential new place of employment. Finally, we stop in front of an old motorcycle that's seen better days. The paint job is a disaster, peeling and faded, as if it had been exposed to every harsh element possible.

“This, Mack,” Judge says, gesturing to the sorry excuse for a bike, “is your first task. The guys here love this old thing, but it’s been an eyesore around the clubhouse for years. Your job is to turn it into a masterpiece.”

I study the decrepit machine before me, my heart racing with anticipation and a touch of anxiety. This is it, the moment of truth. My chance to prove I belong here. Judge’s words hang in the air, the unspoken challenge of it all: my job depends on how well I can transform this wreck into something awe-inspiring.

Judge nods once and leaves me to my work, disappearing into the depths of the garage. Suddenly, I’m alone with my thoughts and the motorcycle, determined to prove to everyone that I’m not just a woman who does custom paint jobs—I’m the best damn custom painter they’ll ever meet.

Rolling up my sleeves, I approach the bike, running my fingers over its tired frame. It’s going to take everything I’ve got to breathe new life into this old beast, but that’s exactly what I’m here for. With a deep breath, I pick up a nearby sander and turn it, ready to begin this transformation.

Hours pass by in a blur as I meticulously sand, prep, and paint the old motorcycle. Dust covers my hands and face, and the garage is filled with the scent of paint and determination. Every stroke of the paint feels like a step toward redemption, toward proving my worth to the Black Hoods MC.

I pay attention to every detail, ensuring that each layer of paint is smooth and flawless. The once-peeling and faded surface now gleams with the vibrant colors I’ve chosen. It’s a labor of love and talent, a testament to my dedication.

As I step back and admire my handiwork, I can’t help but smile. The motorcycle before me has transformed into a work

of art. The colors blend seamlessly, creating intricate patterns that seem to dance in the dim light of the garage. It's unlike anything I've ever done before, and I'm proud of it.

I wipe my hands on a rag, knowing it's time. I need to call Judge over. With a sense of accomplishment, I stride over to where he's talking with a few of the club members and clear my throat to get his attention.

"Judge," I say, my voice filled with pride, "I think you're gonna want to see this."

He turns toward me, curiosity evident in his eyes. He doesn't say a word as he follows me back to my work area. Everyone else follows, laughing and talking, but as soon as the transformed motorcycle comes into view, the room around us falls silent as they take in the sight before them.

Judge's mouth drops open and he runs a hand over the smooth surface. "Mack, you did this?"

I nod, a sense of satisfaction swelling inside me. "I did."

He looks at me with newfound respect, and excitement and pride. "Woman, you've got some serious talent."

I can't help but grin. This is the moment I've been working so hard for, the moment my skills speak for themselves. It's not just about breaking stereotypes; it's about proving that I belong here, that I can be an integral part of the Black Hoods MC and their business.

Judge turns to the club members, a proud smile on his face. "Gentlemen, we've got ourselves a new custom painter."

The garage erupts into applause, and all I can do is stand there, basking in the recognition of my talent. It's a feeling of triumph like no other, and I know this is just the beginning of my journey.

I beam back at the men surrounding me, nearly swept away by the happiness in my heart. And then, from behind the crowd, two men step into the room, curious to see what's going on. That's when my heart falls.

No. No, not here. Not now. This can't be happening.

But it is, because as the two men approach the group, all I can think of is the way I felt having them both buried inside of me at the same time last night. I thought I'd never see either one of them again, yet here they are.

And there goes any shot I might have had at the men in this club taking me seriously at all.



BURNT

“WHOSE CAR IS THAT?” I point as V and I park our bikes up by the main office. V removes his helmet and shifts over to see the classic vintage Mustang. “That one of your customer’s cars?”

V peers over, a look of confusion mixed with adoration of the beautiful ride warring on his face. “None that I know of,” he replies. “Cars that look that good don’t need fixing, but, fuck she’s pretty.” He slides off his bike and stalks closer to the car, his hands hovering over its clean lines. The brilliant blue paint glitters like a blue lagoon beneath a starry sky.

“Damn good paint job. You should ask who did it, and hire them.”

V laughs and shakes his head. “Guys that paint like that don’t work in shops like ours.” He continues to stare at the mechanical work of art in front of us. “We couldn’t pay them a fraction of what they’re worth. This shop is limping along as it is. The kind of salary we’d have to throw at someone this good?” He scoffs. “It would break us.”

“Have a little hope, man. We’ve had this garage less than a year. Once you figure out your paint problem, it’ll turn around.”

“Fuck, I hope so,” he sighs. “You busy today, prospect?”

I shrug. “You tell me. Judge didn’t give me any marching orders.”

“Good,” V smiles and claps me on the shoulder. “I have a fuel line leak, a seized engine, and two more customers with

cars making a funny noise on my to do list today. You can help me.”

V turns and stalks towards the door with me hot on his heels. At first glance, the shop appears empty, and there isn't a single impact wrench or air compressors mixing with the heavy scent of motor oil and gasoline as we break through the threshold. Yet there's another scent in the air. One of jasmine and fresh summer rain. The scent of a particular woman who hasn't left my mind.

“It can't be,” I mutter under my breath.

Applause and cheers erupt from deep in the back of the garage, and V frowns. “What the fuck?”

I move toward the sound, V hot on my heels, and there at the back is every single fucker that works here, standing in a half circle with their backs to us, all of them clapping and hooting at something.

As we draw closer, I see her and that's when I freeze.

It can't be.

A woman stands before them, an exquisitely painted motorcycle behind her. I blink once. Twice. Even a third time, and without a doubt I know it's her. The woman I've been obsessing over. Same lean, toned body. Her dark hair is wrapped tightly in a top knot on her head. The profile of her face is the same from last night. I'd never seen her face without the mask, but I'd memorized everything I could see. The pert little tip of her nose. The roundness of her cheeks. A mask kind hides many things, but even the minute details are still there if you look hard enough.

“V?” I call back over my shoulder, my eyes trained on her. I can't look away. It is her. Isn't it?

It's not until I spy her dragon tattoo peeking out from the hemline of her black shirt that I know I'm right. Confirmation that I'm not fucking crazy. It's really her. She's here. Did she come looking for us? For me?

She laughs, and casually touches Judge's arm. A coiling pang of jealous stirring inside my belly at the simple gesture. "V!" I call out again, this time looking back at him. With a wave of his hand, he ignores me. Fucker.

If he doesn't want to pay attention, fuck it. I sure as hell will. I have to know.

I move closer to the group, maneuvering myself to the front of the crowd, but keeping myself hidden. That's when I hear her voice. Oh, it's her. Same smell. Same profile. Same draw. The electricity running through my body is the same. It has to be her. She and Judge disappear into the back room then, and I pivot, nearly jogging over to V's station. He's under the car tugging on a wrench beneath it.

"How are you not losing your shit right now?" I bark at V whose attention is not on her, but back on the car on the rack .

"About this car? Trust me. I'm about to take a torch to this fucking harness bolt," he growls back. "Hand that ten millimeter socket, will ya?"

Grabbing the socket from the open tool box next to me, I chuck it at him. It lands with a light thud against his chest before falling down his front and rolling away under the vehicle next to him.

"Dude, what the hell is your problem? Do you know how many of those fucking things I lose on a daily basis?"

"Fuck the socket. Do you know who's in Judge's office right now?"

He peers over and frowns before looking at me like I've lost my mind. "There's no one there."

"She's in there," I demand.

"She who?"

"Her, V. You know who I am talking about."

He freezes mid tug on the wrench. "Burnt, we've talked about this. That girl is long fucking gone. Stop looking for her. The last place she'd be is in this garage."

The clack of heels from behind me sends me spinning like a top, nearly losing my balance in the process. The woman and Judge are walking right towards us.

A wrench hits the cement floor behind me and echoes off the walls of the garage. "Shit," V mutters.

"Guys, I want you to meet our new painter, Mack Taylor."

V curses again, but I hear nothing other than my own heart thudding in my ears.

We're both fucked.



MACK

“HELLO,” I say, extending my hand to the one Judge had called V, struggling to keep my voice even. “Nice to meet you.”

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Maybe they don't recognize me. Last night, I had been wearing a mask and nothing else, lost in the thrill of the moment. Today, I'm maskless, clad in practical clothes, and even though I'm fully dressed this time, I somehow feel more exposed than ever.

V shakes my hand, his eyes drilling into mine. His grip is firm, sending a shiver down my spine. “Nice to meet you.”

“Mack here did an incredible job on old Scabby. Been working at it all day. Wait ‘til you see it,” Judge says, his voice resonating with pride.

I cock my head to the side, forcing my eyes away from V's piercing gaze. “Scabby?”

Judge chuckles heartily. “That's the old girl's name. She's been around for a while, but nobody's ever fixed her up. She's kind of a long-standing joke around the clubhouse. But not anymore.”

Pasting a confident smile on my face, I nod and say, “Nope. She's the sexiest motorcycle in the country now.”

Judge grins while the two men, V and his nameless buddy, just stand there, watching me intently. Their presence sends a

turbulent mix of nervousness and excitement coursing through me, like a storm threatening to break loose.

I play it cool, ignoring those unwelcome feelings and flash them a confident smile, willing myself to appear in control. “Well, I’m off to find a place to stay. I guess I’ll see you all on Monday,” I say, trying to sound composed, even as my heart races like a thoroughbred.

“We have a place across the road,” Judge offers, pointing to a building visible through the open bay door. “It’s not much, but it’s furnished, and you wouldn’t have much of a commute.”

The man beside V is still studying me with those intense eyes, the same eyes that had held mine while I’d ridden him just last night.

Fuck.

“That would be awesome,” I say, shaking off the memory and returning my attention to Judge. “I’m not picky. As long as I have a place to sleep and take a shower, I’m happy.”

Judge nods. “It’s settled then. You have a place. Let me go grab the keys, and you can get yourself settled in.”

A lump forms in my throat as he makes his way back to his office, leaving me here with V and his friend.

“So, your name is Mack, huh?” he finally says, his voice a low rumble.

I shut him down before he can say more. “Stop,” I command, bringing some of the dominatrix firmness back into my tone, but keeping my voice low so nobody else hears. “Don’t you say another word.”

The man's lips snap shut, and there's something about the way he obeys me in an instant that reignites the ember of desire smoldering deep inside.

“What happens at Vanilla Villa stays at Vanilla Villa, you understand?” I say, my voice firm but tinged with an underlying heat.

He swallows but only nods, and I can't help but notice the heat in his eyes.

“What's your name?”

“Burnt,” he says, standing a little taller, his name almost a challenge.

“Ok, Burnt—which is an interesting name by the way—last night was a one-off. I have a certain...kink, and that is something I like to keep strictly to myself and the select few I choose to share it with. Now that I work here, that will never again include either of you. We clear?”

Burnt's brows dip low, and as Judge reappears with a set of keys hanging from his finger, I can't help but notice that he never does agree with my terms.

The two men remain silent, their gaze locked onto me as I accept the keys from Judge and bid them all a farewell. Neither one of them are going to let this go. That much is clear. And deep down, I'm not so sure I want them to, but I can't afford to dwell on that now. I need to focus on this new job, and on proving myself in this unfamiliar world.

I step into my Mustang and start the engine, the familiar rumble soothing my nerves. As I pull away from the garage and drive over to the building across the street, I can't resist sneaking a glance in the rearview mirror. V and Burnt are still there in the open bay door, watching me, their broad shoulders

side by side. My cheeks flush with a mix of exhilaration and uncertainty as the memory of their faces from last night flashes through my mind.

For fuck's sake. Finally, I'm starting a new chapter in my life. One that I'd planned for ages, and nowhere in any of my plans were there two gorgeous bikers that gave me the best sex I've ever had. There's no room for that.

This is my livelihood. My chance to prove myself and be taken seriously. V and Burnt may fuck me better than anyone, but it won't happen again. No, from now on, they are nothing more than co-workers. A strictly professional relationship. No sexy memories. No flirting. No glances.

Fucking hell. What have I gotten myself into?



V

FOR TWO WEEKS, I have had to try to ignore Mack's existence out of respect for her wishes to not jeopardize her job. Wishes I understand. It can't be easy being a woman in a male dominated field. I'd seen some of the best mechanics around get driven out by the old boy's club and their antiquated ideas of where a woman's place is in their world. What you have between your legs should not be an indication of your job performance. The quality of your work should be good enough.

Yet, even in today's world, a man can sleep with his secretary and be a fucking hero, but if a woman does it, she's sleeping her way to the top. Even an inkling of a relationship with someone else in the shop, especially with my association with the club, could hurt her career. That's the last thing I want, no matter how fucking hard it is to ignore what we'd shared together.

Ignoring her is like trying to ignore a bleeding bullet wound. I know she's there. I know when she moves, when she walks by, thanks to her intoxicating fucking scent, and when she leaves. Torture in a fucking pair of coveralls and a paint mask. Her mere presence just a few feet away from my station has to be punishment for something I've done in my life. Wanting what I can have, yet the torture of seeing her every work day.

The only saving grace I've had is that my repair work had picked up, and she was busy with her own work. The first week, she'd mostly set up her station, thanks to Ronnie's shitty

organization skills, and prepped a few small projects she'd pulled in from local social media groups. By the second week, she had two clients lined up, and one car already in primer. Even some of our old clients have been sniffing around about her schedule. We need her to make this business work.

The downside? Watching Mack work is excruciating. I know the curves of her toned body from our night together, but seeing them work as she paints a '67 Corvette is different. Her laser focus on the task at hand is otherworldly. The second she pops in her ear buds and gets to work, it's like watching a dancer taking center stage on Broadway. Broad strokes of the paint gun, guided only by her lean body and steady hand.

I don't know how many times I've caught myself turning a wrench, only to find out I'm not even on a bolt. She's constantly in my head, tormenting me with the memories of that night. The night she pretends had never happened. Even the memories feel like a vice around my body, squeezing every last drop of control out of me one drip at a time.

Burnt isn't making it any easier. He makes excuses to come to the shop every single day. Yesterday, I'd caught him in the office staring at her ass while she worked on the underbody coat of the Corvette. Had Judge walked in a few seconds later, he'd have noticed as well. That's the last thing we need to happen.

Mack is wrecking us both from the inside out, and subjecting myself to this torment is all I can do for the sake of the club. Thankfully, after our now daily discussion about backing off, Burnt hasn't made an appearance so far today. That was partly because I'd asked Hashtag to give him something to do to keep him busy.

“Come on you, fucker,” I growl at the stripped bolt. I crank the wrench harder, putting all of my weight into it, but it doesn’t budge. I try again. “God damn piece of monkey shit,” I yell, unable to help but lose my cool.

The wrench flies from my hand, clattering against the tool box behind me. It connects with a large clunk against the red metal, only to land right back at my feet. I rake my greasy hands through my hair before I can stop myself. “Fuck!” I roar again.

“Need some help?”

I freeze in place, turning slowly to find Mack behind me. Her jumpsuit is splattered with paint, and the paint mask she’d been wearing is pulled up on the top of her head like a bandana, covering her raven silk hair completely.

“I’m fine.” My tone comes out more clipped than I intend, but it is what it is. She’s invading my space, and that’s last thing either of us need.

“You sure about that?” She smirks. “You look like you’re one second away from setting this heap on fire and washing your hands of it.” Her hands fall to her ample hips, the fire engine red polish on her nails peeking out from under the cuffs of her jumpsuit. The flash of those same nails digging into my flesh as she took her pleasure from me just a few nights ago punches me in the gut.

Stop thinking about that, asshole. She set the boundaries. Respect them.

“I’m fine,” I repeat. I glare at the current cause of my frustrations and frown. “Stripped bolt.”

Mack side steps me and sidles up next to me under the car. She reaches up into the illuminated space from my shop light

and tries to locate it.

“There’s your problem,” she states. “There’s no way your hand is going to fit up in that tight space. Let me try. I might be able to get a better angle.” Mack flinches as the words leave her lips.

“What do you know about better angles?” I grin back, knowing it’ll make her squirm. She’s tormented me for so long that a little payback seems to be in order. Innocent, non-fucking payback.

She casts a flat stare back at me. “I happen to specialize in knowing all the angles.” Her deadpan smile throws me off. “I paint cars for a living, remember?”

“Like I could forget anything about you.”

“Shut up,” she retorts, a small smile forming on her face. “You know the rules, V.”

I start to tell her just how much I hate the fucking rules, but Mack shoves past me, and bends over to retrieve the wrench I’d tossed, putting her ass on full display. Even the baggy jumpsuit, hides nothing. Bringing my hand to my mouth, I bite into it to stifle the groan, just as Mack pops back up. She peers over her shoulder with a sly smile. “You know I can feel you staring, right?”

“Didn’t say anything about not looking at you in your rules,” I reply. “Maybe you should have been more specific.”

“I’m pretty sure I was clear as crystal in that regard.”

“Were you though?” I take a step closer to her, my heart picking up speed. “I believe you said we couldn’t fuck, Mack. There was nothing in there about looking.” The heavy scent of jasmine enshrouds me. Even the chemical smell of the paint

splattered on her jumpsuit can't mask it. Much like here, it lingers here to torment me, I'm sure of it.

"Well, don't," she frowns. "Burnt has been bad enough about hovering. I don't need you doing it, too." Her chest heaves slightly, and it takes everything I have to not look.

"I'm working on keeping him busy," I admit.

"I'd appreciate it if you'd follow your own advice," she argues. "I won't risk my position. Judge took a chance on me. I'm not going to betray that trust."

"Leave Judge to me."

"No need." Mack rolls her eyes before turning her attention back to the car above us. "Which one of these guys is giving you trouble?"

I step closer to her, rejoicing on the inside as her breath hitches. "This one." Mack's body reacts to mine, giving me hope that she's fighting just as hard to keep things professional as I am.

She doesn't peer up. Her eyes stay fully locked on mine. "I see."

"You going to look at that bolt, Mack?"

"Yes," she answers softly.

I reach for her hand. It feels tiny compared to mine. "It's up there." Wrapping my fingers around her trembling hand, I guide her hand to the bolt. "Here." I hesitate to let her go, but after a few extra seconds, I force myself away.

Mack swallows and moves the wrench up to the bolt, giving it a crank. She tries it again.

“It really is stuck. One more time.” Mack grits her teeth and puts her entire body into it.

“Shit!” She cries as the wrench pops free and she loses her balance. Her body crashes into mine, knocking me back in the process. I reach up to grab part of the frame, but it’s too late. Together, we fall to the concrete floor with a thud, Mack landing firmly against my chest. Her knee narrowly misses my groin by inches.

Slowly, her eyes lift to meet mine.

“You okay?” I ask, my voice near a whisper.

“Fine,” she breathes. “At least you didn’t land on top of me.”

“If you wanted to be on top of me again, Mack, all you had to do was ask. I’m not the one who set rules to whatever kink life you lead.”

“My kink is none of your concern,” she snaps.

“It could be.”

Heavy footsteps approach, stopping just at the end of the Corvette. We both peer up from the ground to find Burnt’s angry face staring down at us.

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me right now.”

Mack scrambles off of me before Burnt can get another word out. She avoids my gaze as she stands up. “Sorry, Burnt. Just slipped.”

“Wasn’t asking you,” Burnt snarls. “I know who’s responsible.”

I stand up, brushing off my jeans. “It’s not what it looks like, man.”

Burnt just rolls his eyes at me. “Don’t even bother with the explanations. I know what I saw.”



BURNT

MY HEART IS POUNDING in my chest like a thundering motorcycle engine as my eyes move from Mack to V and back to Mack again. Fury courses through me, and my mind.

is a turbulent storm of jealousy and anger. The image of I just witnessed burns in my mind like a brand.

Mack and V, on the ground together, tangled up in a way that couldn't be anything other than V trying to get Mack all for himself. Motherfucker. The realization hits me like a sledgehammer. That asshole was trying to claim her for his own.

My fists clench at my sides and my jaw is so tight it hurts as I glare at V, wishing I could burn him to ash with just the power of my stare.

“Well,” Mack says, an uncomfortable smile on her lips. “I didn't get that bolt but I think I loosened it.”

“Thanks,” V mutters, never taking his eyes off mine.

“Anyway, have a good night, gentleman.” And with that, she slips out the door and towards her apartment across the street.

“I get you're pissed, man,” V sighs. “You've got it all wrong, though. She was just helping me with a stubborn bolt, and she fell and knocked me over. Nothing happened. Nothing was going to happen.”

I can't bring myself to listen anymore. “I saw what I saw,” I snarl.

My fists ache at my sides, and the only thing that would ease that would be to drive them into V's face over and over again, until I couldn't recognize the back-stabbing fucker anymore.

"Nothing happened," he says again.

I want to believe him. I wish I hadn't just walked in on that scene.

For weeks now, Mack has occupied my thoughts during every waking second. Hell, she'd occupied most of my sleeping seconds too. Every dream I have has her taking center stage. Sometimes she's wearing that black lace mask from the first night. Other times she's wearing her coveralls, with nothing underneath.

"Burnt," V says, opening his mouth to say something else, but I can't stay here. Not now. Not in that moment. My emotions are a tempest, and I have to get away before I do something I'll regret. Something that could cost me my patch.

Without a word, I whirl around and storm away from him, the roar of my frustration echoing in off the walls. My boots pound against the concrete floor as I move farther from the scene, my footsteps carrying me deeper into the secluded corner of the clubhouse. My back finally meets the cool, unyielding wall, and I lean against it, trying to catch my breath.

My anger still burns hot within me, a relentless fire that refuses to be extinguished. The image of Mack and V on the ground together flashes before my eyes, and the jealousy that had consumed me initially refuses to subside.

But as I stand there in the solitude of the corner, doubt begins to creep into my mind like a persistent whisper. Maybe

I had jumped to conclusions too quickly. Maybe my emotions had blinded me to the truth. After two weeks of trying to respect Mack's wishes, maybe I'd just flat out lost my damn mind. The more I replay the scene in my head, the more I start to question my initial reaction.

Mack's pleading eyes. V's voice trying to explain that it was all a misunderstanding—could he be telling the truth? V has always been a ladies man, but Mack has made it abundantly clear that she valued her professionalism, and it wouldn't make sense for her to change that on the job.

And V, for his part, had never lied to me before, and there had been something about the look in his eyes, a hint of innocence, perhaps. Maybe he had been as surprised as I was when they ended up on the ground together.

A heavy sigh escapes my lips as I try to calm the tempest of emotions raging inside me. I realize I need to consider the possibility that I had misinterpreted the situation. My anger had sent me into a rage before I'd had a chance to even listen.

The coolness of the wall against my back serves as a grounding force, helping me regain my composure. I know I need to sort out these conflicting emotions. V and I need to make some ground rules, and when we do, I need to have a level head.

I take a deep breath, trying to quell the storm of emotions inside me. It's not like Mack and I are together. We've never been anything more than what we were that one single night, and the crush I have on her has remained unspoken, just as she'd instructed.

Fuck, I love it when she instructs me.

But the thought of Mack and V together, even if it was just an innocent accident, stings like a betrayal. I can't help but feel like I've lost something precious, even though it was never really mine to begin with.

This whole situation is fucking with my head. Not only has Mack made it clear that there won't be anything more between us, but V had been a part of all that too. I don't want Mack for myself. I want her for us, and I don't even really know what that means. A throuple? Is that what this is?

One thing is for certain: my feelings for Mack are growing stronger each day, and I can't just let them go. But I also can't let jealousy and anger consume me either.

As I stand in the secluded corner of the clubhouse, my mind wrestling with doubt and anger, I hear approaching footsteps. I tense up, not sure if I'm ready to confront anyone just yet. But when I turn to see V approaching, his expression a mix of concern and guilt, I know I can't avoid him.

He stops a few feet away from me, and for a moment, we just stand there in silence, the weight of recent events hanging heavy in the air. Then, he finally speaks, his voice carrying a sincerity I've never heard from him before.

"Look, man," V begins, his tone low and earnest. "I know what you saw back there looked...bad. But it wasn't what you think."

I narrow my eyes at him, my anger still simmering beneath the surface. "You expect me to believe that?"

V sighs, his shoulders slumping with a sense of defeat. "I get it. It's hard to believe, but I swear to you, nothing happened between Mack and me. It was all a misunderstanding, a freak accident."

I take a deep breath, trying to quell the storm of emotions inside me. “Explain.”

V proceeds to recount what happened, how Mack had stumbled and knocked him down in the process. He paints a picture of innocence, and despite my lingering doubts, his story makes sense.

The tension in the air begins to dissipate as I listen to him speak, and I know for sure that I had allowed my jealousy to cloud my judgment. Mack is nothing if not professional, and it didn’t make sense for her to jeopardize her job for a fleeting moment of passion.

Finally, I nod. “All right, V. I hear you. I don’t like what I saw, but I hear you.”

Relief washes over her face and he sighs heavily. ” I don’t want this to come between us, man. We’re brothers. We’re supposed to stick together, no matter what.”

I meet his gaze, and I know he’s right. We may not be brothers by blood, but we’re Black Hoods. We’re a family. We can’t let jealousy and misunderstandings ruin that.

“You’re right,” I reply, my voice firm.

V nods, his face growing more serious. “Here’s what I suggest: neither of us pursue anything with Mack. We let this go, focus on our jobs, and forget about that night.”

I mull over what he says. Forgetting about that night with him and Mack will probably never happen, but I’ve been shoving shit down deep inside for years. What’s one more thing to add to the mix.

I extend my hand to V, and he clasps it in a firm handshake, sealing our agreement. Our pact. No Mack for either of us. Ever.

“We’re stronger without her, brother,” V says, and I can’t help but agree. Our friendship has weathered storms before, and it will weather this one too.



MACK

THE SUN SHONE through the windows of my apartment, casting a warm glow across my skin and filling me with hope. Today is my day off, and I desperately need it. The tension between Burnt and V has been building for weeks, threatening to tear the garage apart from the inside out, and I can't take it anymore. Everywhere I go, I can feel V's penetrating gaze following me around the shop. Every time I turn around, his eyes are there, boring into me like lasers. My skin prickles under his stare, and I have to fight to keep my composure.

As much as I've wanted to give in to the urges that pulsed beneath my skin whenever Burnt or V are around, I know I can't risk everything I've worked so hard for. My reputation in this industry is everything; it's what has allowed me to rise to the top despite being a woman in a male-dominated field. Letting any hint of scandal sully that reputation would be too great a risk.

Sometimes, though, I wish I didn't have such a strong conscience. It would be so much easier if I could just let go and indulge in the wild passions that Burnt and V inspired within me.

But then my mind drifts back to Ryan, my ex who had hurt me so deeply that it took years to fully recover. Through all the pain and turmoil he caused, however, I learned an important lesson: You can only rely on yourself in this world. No one else will care for you as deeply as you can care for yourself.

And so I made a vow to never let anyone have power over me again. Not even two dangerously attractive men who send

shivers down my spine whenever they are near.

That's why the Villa had been so appealing at first. The chance to forget my troubles and just live in the moment, without fear of judgment or criticism. I didn't anticipate that my last visit would be so different. Now, I am painfully aware of how powerless I am to influence the events unfolding around me. Lifting my gaze up toward the washroom mirror, I take a long look at my reflection. My unchanged eyes are surrounded by an ever-changing face — skin marked with colorful tattoos telling stories of my journey; long black hair that marks the freedom I've found since cutting ties to my old life. Even still, it's not enough to mask the pain in my heart—a remnant of days spent with Grandma Betty, who taught me lessons in strength and moxie even after she died a few years ago, leaving me on my own in this world. A single tear trickles down my cheek.

I squeeze my eyes shut and think of my grandmother. She had raised me alone, without much money or help. If she could do that, I could find a way through this mess.

Taking a deep breath, I reach out and twist the faucet knob. A spray of water hisses from the shower head and soon settles into a steady stream cascading down my body. I gasp as the cold water prickles my skin, sending goosebumps across my arms and legs. I stay under the spray even though I want to turn off the tap right away. Then, trying to salvage some warmth from the shower, I stretch up towards the shelf for a bottle of shampoo. In my haste, it slips out of my grasp, smashing against the faucet before tumbling onto the tub floor with a loud clang. The loud noise is followed by an even louder gush of water that began to flood out of the tap and fill up my bathtub with icy cold water. My eyes grow wide as realization sinks in. My clogged drain was preventing any

more water from leaving the tub. “Shit! Shit! Shit!” I curse, desperately twisting the knob back and forth, yet still unable to cut off the flow. I had planned to pick up some clog remover at the store later. Too late now.

Bolting from the shower geyser, I grab my towel from the sink, wrapping it around my shivering body.

My mind whirls a thousand miles a second. What the hell do I do? The knob didn’t work. At this rate, I’ll be flooding the entire apartment if I can’t get it stopped.

Fuck, the water supply valve. Where the hell is it?

I search the bathroom, and find nothing. Panicking, I check under the kitchen sink and on top of the toilet tank. Nothing. Outside! I bolt for the door, not even caring that I am only wrapped in a scrap of a towel, but I still can’t find it. My hair drips cold water down my back as I traipse through my house looking one more time.

Grabbing my phone from the bedside table, I punch in Judge’s number and pray he answers. Three rings later, and his gruff voice comes through the receiver. Another long trip across the floorboards leads me to my front door where I pause, dripping wet and trying to catch my breath before leaning against it with my head bowed low.

“It’s Mack,” I say into the receiver, my words jumbling together. “The fucking shower faucet broke, and the entire bathroom is about to flood.”

“Woah, Mack. Slow down. I barely caught a word of that.”

“The shower faucet broke. Water is fucking everywhere, and I can’t find the shut off valve.”

“Shit,” Judge mutters. “Sit tight. I’ll have someone over there soon.”

Not wasting another second, I hang up and grab a nearby trash can from under the sink, then rush to the bathroom and start scooping water up by hand . At first when I flush water down the toilet, it goes a little too fast and almost makes it disappear altogether beneath spinning waterspouts of swirling brown liquid waste . After adjusting how quickly or slowly I dump each gallon of water into its bowl opposite mine , it empties completely until there is no more flow to be found anywhere else . Bailing isn't going to work. The toilet just can't keep up

The window! Striding across the room, I fling open the bathroom window and peer down. Despite being on the second floor, the space underneath me is not leased. No risk of drenching someone. Bucket after bucket, I heave water through the window until I hear a knock at the door.

Running to the living room, I nearly bust my ass from the water drenching my feet when I reach the door. Flinging it open, I gasp. There on the other side of it is Burnt, a toolbox in his hand. His wide eyes immediately drop to the towel around my body.

“Don't just stand there,” I cry. “Come on.” I reach out, snagging Burnt's hand into mine and drag him towards the bathroom. The water in the tub is only an inch or so away from spilling over.

“Shit, you weren't kidding,” he remarks. “I need to shut off the main.”

“No shit, Sherlock,” I throw back as I squeeze past him to get another trash can full of water to bail. “I have no idea where it is or I'd have done it myself.”

“Where's the utility closet?”

“The what?”

“Where’s the water heater? The main should be close to that.”

“Why the hell would I know where that is?”

“Right,” he nods. “Be right back.”

Burnt tries to step around me, but before I can even blink, he steps and his foot slips on the trail of water I had left on the floor. His large hands grasp my shoulders, and we both collide hard before hitting the ground. He lands first, and I manage to land on top of him, my legs straddling his lap. My chest heaves as adrenaline puts my body into overdrive.

“Fuck, are you okay?” Burnt asks, concern dotting his face. “I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

“I’m fine,” I hiss. “Maybe you should watch where you’re stepping next time.”

“How about you don’t leave a lake on the floor.”

“Like I could help that,” I snap. “I’m just trying to keep my bathroom from becoming a damn water feature. The last thing I need is for Judge to jump my ass for damaging club property.”

Burnt’s eyes drop lower, his heated stare punching me in the gut. The heat is only dampened by the water now spilling over the edge of the tub, soaking my feet.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“You might want to cover up,” he groans. “Though I don’t mind the view a single fucking bit.”

“What?” Peering down, I find that the towel I had wrapped around me is gone. My body is on full display for him. “Give

it back!” My face flushes while I try to tug the towel from underneath him to wrap up again. I scramble from his lap, using the sink behind us as leverage until I’m upright. Burnt follows suit, a satisfied smile on his face when he hands me my towel. I cover up, but not even one hundred percent cotton can mask my embarrassment.

“You should have said something sooner.”

“Probably,” he shrugs. “Can’t fault me for staring at a beautiful woman.”

“Now is not the time for this,” I hurtle back at him. “The tub is overflowing.”

He peers over his shoulder, swearing at the scene behind him. “Be right back.” He disappears out of the bathroom.

I resume bailing water, and within a few minutes, the geyser from the tap slows to a trickle and then to a full stop. Burnt appears a few seconds later.

“Where the hell was it?”

“The hall closet. There’s an access panel to the second floor main. It’s also where your water heater is just for future reference if you decide to off your faucet again.”

“I didn’t off my faucet.” My shoulders slump. I wouldn’t have thought to look there if there’d been a lighted arrow pointing to it. I’m so used to doing things on my own that even calling Judge seems like a betrayal to my vows. I’ve always solved my own problems. I can rebuild an engine with my eyes closed, but being thwarted by a faucet is a low blow. “My shampoo bottle fell.”

Burnt steps farther into the bathroom and surveys the damage. Water covers the entire bathroom floor around my feet. “Good news, it’s an easy fix. I can probably rig

something up to get you by until I can get all the parts I need to re-plumb the shower. Question though. Has the water always been this cold?"

"No," I admit. "I think there's something going on with the water heater."

"I'll take a look at that while I'm here."

"I don't need you to do that. If you can show me, I can figure out how to fix it on my own."

"No need. I'm here."

"I wish you weren't," I mutter under my breath before I can stop myself.

Burnt falls silent. His warm body heat radiates against my arm as we both stand in silence in the tiny bathroom.

"Sorry. I didn't mean that, but about what happened," I blurt out.

"Don't worry about it," he snips, dismissing my question like it's nothing. "I respect your little rules. Not like it matters anyway."

His comment jars me out of my own head. I cock my head to the side as I peer over at him. "I'm glad you understand why we can't tell anyone about what happened."

"Like I said, Mack. It's nothing. You made the rules. V and I have to abide by them," he pauses before sighing. "You can have your rules. It's fine. You don't have to worry about V and I hovering around you. We'll leave you alone."

Burnt's words hit like lead bullets to my stomach. He was just at V's throat just a few days ago after walking in on me helping him with a car. If looks could kill, V would be dead, and I would be collateral damage. I'd fully expected them to

come to blows and that I'd be kissing my job goodbye after that. What happened? Did Judge know about our night? Worry churns inside my chest.

Clearing my throat, I nod and pull myself together. "Good. I appreciate that."

Burnt rolls his eyes. "We agreed. You aren't worth the hassle. So consider it forgotten, yeah?"

You aren't worth the hassle. What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

He doesn't give me a chance to ask though. Instead, he points his thumb back over his shoulder. "I'll go take a look at the water heater, then head into town to get what I need to patch you up."

He pivots on his heels, his warmth exiting the room with him, leaving me alone in my soaked bathroom with a worrisome pit in my stomach.

What changed?



V

THE DIM GLOW of the garage's overhead lights casts long shadows on the worn concrete floor. It's late, well past the time most of the club members have called it a night. But I'm still here, the wrench in my hand, putting the finishing touches on a bike that's been consuming my every waking moment.

The only other person in the garage with me is Mack. She's been giving me the cold shoulder all day, and I can't for the life of me figure out why. I've done what she'd asked. I've kept it professional, even though doing it kills me a little more each day.

I tighten the last bolt on the bike, wiping my hands on a greasy rag, and finally allow myself to glance in Mack's direction. She's over by the workbench, her back turned to me as she tinkers with something, her body language radiating frustration.

I take a deep breath, steeling myself for a conversation I know I can't avoid any longer. I need to know what's wrong.

"Hey, Mack," I say, my voice hesitant.

She doesn't turn around, but I can see her shoulders tense up. "What?"

I walk over to her, stopping a few feet away, careful not to invade her personal space. "You good?"

She doesn't respond, her silence heavy in the air.

"Seriously. What's wrong?"

Mack finally turns to face me, her expression a mix of frustration and hurt. “What do you care, seeing as I’m not worth the hassle?”

I can’t help but raise an eyebrow at her question, no closer to understanding the sudden cold shoulder I’ve been getting. “Babe, I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about, but for someone who wants to keep it professional, you’re doing a shit job of keeping it that way.”

She narrows her eyes at me, clearly not in the mood for my humor. “Fuck you,” she fires back, her voice sharp with anger. “I’m about as professional as you are, walking around here rubbing your abs in my face all goddamn day.” Her hand darts out, motioning to my bare chest. “Where’s your shirt, V? Did you forget laundry day?”

Grinning widely at her fiery response, her frustration only fueling my amusement. “Well, sweetheart, I thought I’d give everyone a little something to look at,” I tease, running a hand through my hair and flexing my abs playfully. “Besides, who needs a shirt when you’ve got these?”

Mack rolls her eyes, clearly unimpressed with my attempt at humor. “You’re an asshole,” she mutters under her breath.

I take a step closer, my body mere inches from hers. “Maybe, but I’m the asshole you haven’t been able to take your eyes off all day.”

“Bull shit,” she huffs, unable to meet my eyes.

“Admit it, babe. You like what you see.”

“Have you always been this full of yourself?” she asks, a smirk forming on her face.

I can’t answer that question, because all I can see is the curve of her full lips and the way her face transforms when she

smiles. My heart picks up the pace, and I can feel the desire building between us, an electric charge in the air.

“Do that again,” I whisper, moving even closer to her, our bodies almost touching.

Her smirk falls away, and her breath hitches as my eyes hold her in place. “Do what?”

Reaching out, I place a hand against her cheek, tracing the seam of her lips with my thumb. “Smile. You’re fucking gorgeous when you smile. Did you know that?”

Her face softens, and she presses her cheek against my hand, her eyelashes fluttering. “Stop,” she whispers, but there’s no conviction in her voice. Just desire, smoldering like an ember between us.

I lean in closer, my lips just inches from hers, the air charged with anticipation. “Do you have any idea how hard it is to keep my distance when you look at me like that?” I confess, my breath brushing against her lips, my heart pounding in my chest.

Mack’s gaze flickers to my lips, and in that moment, it’s as if the world falls away, leaving only the two of us suspended in the tension of desire. Without hesitation, she closes the remaining gap between us, her lips meeting mine in a searing kiss.

It’s a kiss filled with longing and pent-up emotions, a kiss that speaks volumes about everything we’ve left unspoken. Our bodies press closer together, and it’s as if we’ve finally given in to the undeniable chemistry that’s been simmering between us.

In that stolen moment, all doubts and misunderstandings are a distant memory. Nothing else matters beside this

moment, right here. Her and I. The way her lips feel on mine. The hum of need escaping past her lips as her tongue slides against mine like satin.

The pact I had made with Burnt flashes through my mind, a solemn promise to put our friendship first and stay away from Mack. I'm betraying his trust right now, and I'm going back on my word.

But as Mack's lips move fervently against mine, I shove down my conflicted emotions and allow myself to get lost in this moment here with her. The way her body feels under my touch. The way her lips slide against mine. The way she moans, allowing me total control over her for just this one instant.

Curling my fingers into the waist of her coveralls, I push her back towards the nearest car, and she lets me, but as I'm about to press her against it, she rips her lips from mine and cries, "The paint! It's still fresh!"

Her words wash over me like a bucket of cold water, dousing the flame between us.

"Backseat," she orders, opening the door of the car. As much as I loved her letting me lead, when she takes the lead, my cock leaps inside my jeans. I don't know who's fucking car this is, but we're about to make it's backseat our bitch.



BURNT

“THANKS, MAN,” I mutter to the clerk at the hardware store as I pick up the box housing the odd-sized plumbing parts that finally arrived. Inside were two rough-hewn brass fittings, four inches of copper piping, and a spool of waxed thread. As much as they cost, you’d have thought they were diamond encrusted instead of simple brass, but if this would help get her shower back up and running so she didn’t have to essentially take spit baths out of the kitchen sink or showering at the garage, it’s worth the hour drive and the manpower I’d put into it.

Sending him a small wave with my free hand, I step out of the dimly lit store into the bright afternoon sunlight. If only Mack had known how hard it would be to find replacement parts for her shower in an old building like this one. The previous owner added it onto the smaller garage forty years ago so he could retire and tinker with his favorite toys—but then illness struck, leaving him no choice but to sell the property as is. Making it our problem child now.

Stowing the parts into the saddlebags of my motorcycle, I mount my ride. It’s bright green paint sparkling under the sun. Green is not my favorite color, but when a friend of mine gifted me the bike back when I was fresh out of high school, I didn’t balk at his generosity. Though, now with Mack’s skills, it might be time to give the old girl a makeover. Straddling my bike, I put on my helmet before I hit the ignition and drive off towards Mack’s apartment.

The old brick exterior comes into view an hour later. An old brick building with a garage and a second story apartment that was built in the early 1900s. The exterior has chipped and flaked paint, cracks in the mortar, and the metal awnings on either side are rusting. The uneven bricks on the façade give away the age of the place. It's a beautiful piece of history, don't get me wrong, but when it comes to repairing places like this, it's not as simple as it seems without having to gut the entire place. This place had withstood the test of time, and it shows it. The club had discussed when we bought the garage about what to do with the building, but with Mack living upstairs for the time-being, we'd tabled it.

The street is quiet as I coast my bike to a stop, and backing it up at an angle in front of the building. Taking off my helmet, I spot Mack's car parked in the first floor garage of the building. The space had been gutted by an old owner, exposing the aging brick walls, but a manual garage door still worked even after all these years. I had wanted to call ahead, but I didn't have her number. With it being Saturday, I'd taken a chance that she'd be home. Looks like my gamble paid off.

I shift off my bike, picking up the parts that I had bought for her, and climb up the stairs towards Mack's door. With all that weight in my hands, I juggle them as I tried to knock three times. No noise came from inside.

"Mack, you there?" I call out. Still no response.

One of the brass fittings slips from my grasp and hits the wooden floor with a thud, followed by another one dropping soon after. Groaning, I sit all the parts down by her door and knock again.

My heart beats faster in my chest. I pound on the door with my fist and then try the knob to see if it's unlocked, but there's

no give. ‘Mack,’ I call out. ‘Mack, are you in there? It’s Burnt.’ I don’t want to assume something more sinister because Mack is a strong woman who can take care of herself, but something in the pit of my stomach tells me that something isn’t right.

I pull out my phone and fire off a text to V.

Do you know where Mack is? Came by to fix her shower, but she’s not here.

The message sits unread for several minutes.

I step away from the parts on the floor and make my way back downstairs to the ground floor of the building to check in the garage, but there’s nothing but silence. I run my hands through my short hair in irritation.

Where the hell is she?

As I take a look around the area, hoping to see her walking down the sidewalk, my gaze eventually lands on the garage and a single light shining in the direction of her stall. A wave of relief washes over me as I break out into a run across the street towards the employee entrance at the rear end of the garage. There it is. V’s bike, near the back door.

Questions pound through my imagination. What is he doing here?

I slip inside the open door. My footfalls the only noise that I hear until I make it into the garage bays. At first, I see nothing. A sigh of relief surprises me as it escapes my lips. I listen and peer around for a few minutes, and just as I am about to give up, and try calling V, I see movement.

There in the back of the car V had been working on earlier I find him. His naked torso is visible through the rear

passenger window. I crane my neck, trying to see who he's with, but they're hidden.

I guess he took moving on from Mack a bit more seriously than I did. With a shake of my head, I start to leave when I hear his partner's voice. A cold chill shivering down my spine at the familiar feminine notes. A voice that I had heard before in the same tones.

V shifts, and the woman with him appears before him. He reaches forward and drags his hands through her raven hair, jerking it back. The car rocks harder as he pounds his body into hers.

Please don't be her. We'd agreed to stay away from her. That it would be better for both of us to let her go.

V shifts again, as he hisses. "*Fuck*".

The woman's body shifts upwards, her neck arching under the pressure of V's fisted hand in her hair. The silhouette of her face comes into clear view. Her silhouette. Mack.

My vision blurs as I watch them in the back of that car, and I stumble forward. I can hardly believe it; V, who told me that this shit with her was never going to happen again. Who threw out a bro code pact to move on, yet not even a day later, he's already fucking her.

The rage builds up inside me as I watch them. V and Mack were intertwined in the back seat of the car, their clothes strewn across the floor of the garage around it.

I hear Mack's cries of pleasure. The creak of the car as they move is like a knife to my gut.

My blood boils, and I feel my fists clench at my side. I wanted nothing more than to remove V from the car and make him pay for what he's doing, but then, he's not the only one to

blame. Clearly, Mack's rules only applied to me. The painful realization that she, in fact, only wanted him is more painful than I could have ever imagined. Was our pact his way of getting me out of the way? Was this their plan all along?

I take a few steps closer, my heavy boots hitting the ground with a thud. V's head snaps up in surprise, and he quickly scrambles away from Mack.

"Shit," I hear Mack hiss from inside the car. Her dark eyes are wide, her hair askew.

V exits the car. Hands raised in submission. "Burnt," he blurts out as he bends, reaching down to grab his boxers, before slipping them on.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" I spit at him, my fists still clenching at my sides. My rage takes over and before I can stop myself, I'm charging at him. I swing wide, but he ducks. He takes his first swing, his powerful arm arcing towards my jaw. I pivot and move out of the way just in time, but he's already ready with another punch, this time aiming for my stomach. It hits with a thud, I skitter backwards, groaning in pain.

"Is this what you wanted the entire time?" I hiss. "You wanted me out of the way."

V opens his mouth, but snaps it shut. Confirming what I know to be true. It was never about her job, or her professionalism. It was about me. Getting me out of the way so they could continue on without me. The guilt in his face at being caught told me everything that I needed to know.

For a moment, I'm winded and unable to move, but then I surge forward in a desperate attempt to overpower him. I grab a hold of his shirt and land a punch to his face. He grunts in

pain and stumbles back, momentarily stunned. I bolt forward, wrapping my hands around his waist, and thrust him into one of the toolboxes behind us. V cries out as I slam him against it again.

“Stop it,” Mack screams from behind us.

V recovers from my punch and takes another swing, this time hitting me in the ribs. I take the blow and stagger back, fighting through the pain. I lunge forward for another attack, but V jumps back and I stumble, giving him his opening. He shoves his hands down his chest, wrapping them around my face, and putting pressure on my eye sockets. Enough to get my attention, but not hard enough to cause damage. I squirm, groaning at the intrusion, before he is able to shove me back. My feet slide on the slick cement floor as I skid to a stop near their fucking love nest. Mack orders us both to stop, but I barely hear her. I’m too consumed with rage and desperation.

We circle each other, both of us breathing hard and eyes blazing. He raises a fist at my face, but I catch his arm and spin him around. I push him away from me. Blood trickles down from his busted lip. He sucks it in before spitting it on the ground next to him.

“The first chance you got to fuck her, you took it, didn’t you? Fuck, I bet you planned to meet up today. You just didn’t expect me to swing by.”

V’s reddened face grows dark. His brows furrow deeply. “We didn’t fucking plan this.” He grinds out between ragged, deep breaths.

“Likely fucking story.”

“Enough!” Mack screams as she slips from the car, gathering her own belongings and attempting to re-dress.

“Stop this.” Mack’s eyes flicker between V and Burnt until she finally responds, “This isn’t what it looks like.” She clutches her shirt to her bare chest. “It was a mistake.”

V’s head snaps towards her. “A mistake?”

“Or was I the mistake?”

Both of them snap their attention to me. For the first time, I think they’re both seeing me. Seeing the man who has up until this point been the fucking golden retriever. The man who has sat idly by respecting her rules only to be betrayed the first chance they’d gotten. I stare at him, feeling the sting of betrayal. I trusted him, damn it. He was supposed to have my back, but now it was clear that he was lying to my face. My mind is racing with questions, but I couldn’t find the words to voice them.

Betrayed by my best fucking friend.



MACK

ONE MOMENT, I'm sharing an intimate moment with V in the backseat of a car, and the next, Burnt walks in on us, anger flashing in his eyes.

I watch as Burnt's furious gaze locks onto V, and before I can react, he launches himself at him, fists flying. It's a brawl born out of jealousy and misunderstanding, a clash of emotions that threatens to tear everything apart.

I scramble out of the car, my heart pounding with shock and embarrassment, as they wrestle and exchange heated words. They're fighting over me, treating me like a possession to be won. And I can't stand it.

My frustration reaches a boiling point, and I can't take it any longer. I have no intention of being the prize in some twisted rivalry.

"Enough!" I scream, my voice cutting through the chaos like a blade. They both freeze mid-sentence, turning to gape at me, as if they've forgotten I'm even there.

The silence that follows is heavy with tension, and I take a step forward, my eyes flashing with determination. "I won't be fought over like this," I declare, my voice unwavering. "I'm not a piece of meat for you two to stake a claim on. I deserve better than this."

My words seem to snap them out of their heated argument, and they exchange a guilty glance. Burnt steps back, his fists lowering, while V looks down at the ground, his shoulders heaving as he drags in shallow breaths.

I inhale deeply, regaining my composure. “I’m a human being,” I say, my voice softer but no less resolute. “Not a possession. And I won’t be part of this competition.”

As I speak, I can feel V and Burnt’s eyes on me, their anger still smoldering beneath the surface. They listen, their expressions a mix of frustration and regret, but it’s clear they’re both still seething.

“I’ve tried to keep things professional with both of you,” I continue. “And trust me, it hasn’t been easy. Not at all. But you know what? Shit happens. Again, I’m human.” Casting my attention to Burnt, I soften my tone, but only a little. “This just happened. It could have happened with you and me in my apartment yesterday, but any chance of that got drowned out.”

Burnt’s lips quirk up into a barely noticeable smirk, while V looks on, only seeming to grow angrier.

“The truth is, the three of us, we fucking had something incredible. We could probably be incredible together in the long run, but not like this. Not if you’re both so possessive you’re willing to fight each other over it. It could never work.”

I take a moment to let my words sink in, and I can feel the weight of the situation pressing on all of us. V and Burnt exchange another glance, this one filled with a hint of realization. It’s a painful truth we can’t ignore any longer, and I hope that my words will serve as a wake-up call for both of them. We have something special, but it’s not worth destroying each other over.

“What happened in the bathroom?” V asks, still clearly not happy.

“It doesn’t matter,” I snap. “And truthfully, it’s none of your business. Just because we’ve fucked doesn’t mean you

get any say in who I fuck now. I could walk out on the street and fuck whomever I please, and it would have absolutely not one single thing to do with either of you.”

Judging by the way they both tense up, neither one of them like that.

“Neither one of you have a right to say what I do with my body, or my heart.”

V stands a little taller and places his hands on his hips. “I’ve never tried to dictate anything.” He points one finger in Burnt’s direction and continues. “It’s been this fucker all along. He’s the one acting like a jealous fool.”

V may think he has a good point, but sadly, all he’s done is proven mine. “You don’t get it,” I say, reaching for my coveralls and shoving my legs into them. “None of us can be together. Even if it was just Burnt, and it’s not, we’re three, not two. I could never be with you and not him.”

“Then why were you just fucking him after telling me to go fuck myself just yesterday?” Burnt grumbles.

Exasperation and frustration gnaw at me as I look between V and Burnt, realizing that neither of them fully grasps the complexity of our situation. It’s as if they’re locked in their own worlds, unable to see the bigger picture, and it’s wearing on my patience as I try to navigate this tumultuous path we’ve found ourselves on.

Once I have my coveralls in place, I place my hands on my hips and meet their gaze one by one. “It won’t work. Forget it happened. Forget me. Forget the Villa. Forget this night. Just forget it all.” And with that, I storm towards the open bay door.

“Where are you going?” Burnt calls.

“Vanilla Villa,” I call back over my shoulder. “Somewhere I’m not treated like a toy, and where I can be with whoever I want without all hell breaking loose.”



V

MACK STORMS out of the garage, leaving the two of us alone in silence. The door squeals shut behind her and her headlights flood through the dusty windows. I hear a car screech away; her tires spinning on the loose gravel drive in front of the apartment. “She’s gone,” he says.

“Obviously,” I reply. “You’ve been boxing with StoneFace,” I ask, wiping the blood from my face with the sleeve of my shirt. “Your right hook has improved.”

Burnt shoots me a glare. “Seriously, man. After everything that just happened, you want to talk about how my bare knuckle boxing has improved?” I look at him, unsure of what to say. His frustration is palpable, but it’s misplaced. Mack and I planned nothing. Sleeping with her was a spur-of-the-moment thing. I had no intention of doing anything. Mack showed up, and shit happened. She was so angry about our pact. Shit, it had done things to me. For the first time, she was experiencing what she’d been doing to the two of us. But I can’t tell Burnt that, not when he’s already so angry. I wanted her to feel an ounce of the frustration she’d been inflicting on us. I just didn’t expect him to be collateral damage.

“Look, Burnt,” I start before he hushes me.

“You don’t get to talk first. Not after all this bullshit,” he warns me. Backing down, I give him the floor. “Four days, V. Four fucking days. That’s all it took for you to break the bro code you insisted we need to have for Mack.” Burnt paces as he airs out all his grievances.

“I know,” I mutter before he hushes me a second time.

“Not another word until I get this shit out.” I nod in agreement, and wave for him to continue.

“As your prospect, it’s my job to follow your lead. To follow your fucking rules, but this, V? This is fucked up. You asked me to back off. I did. You asked me to stay away from her. I did that, too. What I want, no, need to know is this is something the two of you planned.” “No, it’s not like that,” I double down. “It just happened.” “You expect me to believe that? This shit between you and Mack, it’s not just about breaking the bro code. It goes deeper than that. You know it, and I know it,” Burnt says, his voice filled with emotion. “You can’t just expect me to sit back and watch you two dance around each other like this. Either you tell me what’s going on, or I’m out. I’ll walk away from the two of you, and the club.” I take a deep breath, trying to calm the nerves racing through my body. Burnt’s threat is serious, and it’s not something I’m willing to risk. I need him, and the club needs him. But more than that, I need to figure out what’s going on with me and Mack.

“Look, Burnt. I get it. This has been hard for you, and I appreciate that you’ve been following my lead. But this isn’t something I can just explain away in a few words.”

Burnt looks at me, his eyes filled with anger and frustration. I can tell he doesn’t believe me. “Try.” “She came here seeking me out after you told her about the pact.” “You expect me to believe that?” he spits back, his voice barely above a whisper.

“I swear to you, it’s the truth. She came here, hot and bothered that we were moving on, and shit just happened. One second she was reading me the riot act, the next we were in the

back of the car. Dude, if she had said on my knees, I'd have done it," V admits. "That's how much she was in control."

He scoffs at my words. "So you're blaming this all on her?"

"No, I'm not. I'm man enough to admit that I could have said no, but I didn't."

"You're the one who wanted to put this all the rest, and move on, but yet here we are, you taking that pact and blowing it all to hell."

"I'm sorry, man. I really am. I know I messed up."

"You're damn right, you did. Do you know I had her naked in my arms last night in her apartment? Do you know what I did? I walked the fuck away. I did that because you told me to move on," he points angrily at me. "I walked away because of you."

Shock must register in my face because he notices how his words hit their mark. I feel my heart race as I listen to him speak those words. My mind is reeling with thoughts of what could have happened if he had taken advantage of the situation. I knew deep down that he is a good man, but I couldn't help but feel a twinge of jealousy at the thought of him holding her naked body, and guilt for knowing that they had put me in the same situation, and failed him.

"So, what happens now?" I ask, trying to keep the bitterness out of my voice.

"I don't know," he replies, his voice low and uncertain. "I don't have a fucking clue."

"I think you should talk to her," I whisper. "Tell her how you feel and see what happens."

“I think we both need to talk to her.” He nods slowly, his eyes filled with uncertainty and fear. “We both can’t chase after the same woman. If this has any chance of working, it’s the three of us, or nothing.”

“Is sharing something we can do?” I ask him honestly. “I’m a selfish bastard, but for her, I’d consider it. You know she will not want to do this vanilla, right?”

“Just to be clear, I’m not touching your dick,” Burnt declares with a grin on his face.

“Ditto,” I agree. “There are things I would do for Mack, but that is not one of them.”

A pregnant pause settles between us. Burnt peers over to me, a quizzical look on his face. “You don’t think she really meant that she was going back to Vanilla Villa, do you?” “She was pretty pissed off, man. If she wanted to get back at us, that’s the one place she knows would set us both off.” Burnt turns, without another word, and heads towards the door. He pauses just before the exit and yells back over his shoulder.

“Are you just going to stand there, or are you going to come with me to get our girl?” I hesitate for a moment, unsure of what to do. My mind is racing, trying to process everything that had just been said. But ultimately, I knew that Burnt was right. We needed to go after her. I hear his bike roar from across the street. Fucker wasn’t kidding. “Shit, wait up!”



MACK

I SIT ALONE at the bar at Vanilla Villa, a seething anger still coursing through my veins. My frustration with V and Burnt simmers just beneath the surface, a volatile mixture of disappointment and disbelief. I can't believe they actually fought each other over me, as if I'm some sort of prize to be won.

The neon lights above the bar cast an eerie, shifting glow over the dimly lit room, and the pulsating beat of the music threatens to drown out my thoughts. I take a sip of my drink, the sharp burn of alcohol momentarily distracting me from my seething emotions.

The atmosphere in Vanilla Villa is electric, a heady mix of sensuality and desire. Couples dance on the dance floor, lost in each other's arms, while others engage in whispered conversations in the corners of the room. It's a place where inhibitions are shed like second skins, but right now, I'm too wrapped up in my own anger to fully embrace the decadence of it all.

I close my eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath, and I can feel the tension in my shoulders slowly begin to ease. I came here to escape the turmoil that V and Burnt have brought into my life, to find some semblance of enjoyment in the sensual pleasures Vanilla Villa offers. It's time to put their jealousy and possessiveness behind me, at least for tonight, and reclaim the freedom that I cherish.

As I sit at the bar, nursing my drink and trying to quell the storm of anger inside me, a man approaches with a confident

smile. “Can I buy you a drink?” he offers, his voice smooth and inviting.

I hesitate for a moment, considering his offer. Perhaps a distraction is what I need right now. “Sure, why not?” I reply, my tone more curt than I intend.

He orders a drink for me and introduces himself as Jake. He’s tall and well-dressed, with a charm that’s hard to resist. But my anger still simmers beneath the surface, and I struggle to engage in conversation.

Jake tries to flirt with me, asking about my interests and sharing stories from his own life, but my responses are short and lacking in enthusiasm. I try to engage him. Typically when I’m here, I have no problem meeting new people, but today I can tell that I’m being terrible company, and it’s evident in the way his smile slowly fades.

After a few minutes of my monosyllabic answers and distant demeanor, Jake finally sighs and shakes his head. “I can see you’ve got a lot on your mind,” he says with a hint of disappointment. “I’ll leave you to it.”

I watch as he walks away, my anger slowly giving way to a sense of regret. I came here to escape my troubles, but it seems I’ve brought them with me. As Jake disappears into the crowd, I realize that I need to find a way to let go of the frustration that’s been consuming me, or it will continue to drive a wedge between me and any chance of enjoying the night.

My gaze drifts across the dimly lit room, scanning the crowd for a distraction from my lingering frustration. Two men catch my eye, their gazes intense, but I quickly dismiss the idea of another throuple situation. That’s not what I need right now.

Turning my attention elsewhere, I spot a handsome older man with distinguished silver hair sitting alone at a table. He exudes an air of calm and sophistication that intrigues me. This might be the change of pace I'm looking for.

Catching the bartender's attention, I wave him over. "I'll have one of whatever he's having," I say, nodding in the direction of the silver-haired man.

As the bartender prepares the drink, I feel a sense of anticipation. Approaching a stranger, especially one of his age, is a departure from my usual choices, but maybe that's exactly what I need tonight – a different perspective, a new distraction.

Ensuring my black lace mask is in place, I approach the silver-haired man's table with a newfound sense of determination. "Mind if I join you?" I ask, my voice a sultry purr as I give him a playful smile.

He looks up, his eyes meeting mine, and I can see a hint of surprise in his expression. "Not at all," he replies, his voice smooth and cultured.

With a graceful glide, I take the seat opposite him, my eyes never leaving his. Leaning in slightly, I allow my flirtatious side to take over. "I couldn't help but notice you from across the room," I say, my words laced with intrigue. "You have an air of mystery about you."

His lips curl into a faint smile, and I can tell he's enjoying the attention. "You're quite the charmer," he replies, his eyes twinkling with amusement.

I hand him the drink that the bartender prepared, our fingers brushing briefly. "Consider it a small token of my appreciation for your company," I say, my tone inviting as I raise my own glass to take a sip.

Leaning in closer, I fix my gaze on the silver-haired man, a mischievous glint in my eyes. “So, have you been here before?” I ask, my voice low and inviting.

He takes a sip of his drink, his eyes never leaving mine. “I come here when I’m in town,” he replies, his tone casual.

My lips curl into a seductive smile as I inch even closer, my voice a sultry whisper. “You know, they have some rather... intriguing playrooms in the back,” I tease, my fingers tracing a suggestive pattern on the table.

His eyebrows raise in curiosity, a spark of interest in his eyes. “I haven’t had the pleasure,” he admits, his voice laced with intrigue.

I lean in closer, my breath brushing against his ear as I suggest, “Well, how about we change that? Care to explore them with me?”

His gaze meets mine, a mixture of surprise and anticipation. It’s a proposition that hangs in the air, thick with the promise of an adventurous night ahead.

A knowing smile plays on his lips as he nods, accepting my invitation. “I can’t think of anything I’d like more,” he replies, rising from his chair.

With a graceful sway of my hips, I take his hand and lead him through the dimly lit corridor, ignoring the nagging feeling in the back of my mind that I shouldn’t be here. This is the first time I’ve ever felt this at the Villa, and I know it’s because of V and Burnt, and that only makes me want to do it more. I need to get over those two Neanderthals and remember who I am.

Together, we pass room after room, all of them occupied by couples and small groups engrossed in passionate sex,

some more kinky than the other. The atmosphere is charged with desire and anticipation, and I can feel the man's curiosity growing with each step.

Finally, we arrive at the door of a room I think of as my own private haven. Inside, a plush red carpet stretches out before us, leading to a magnificent throne placed at the center of the room. Dimly lit by soft, sensual lighting, the room exudes an aura of decadence and temptation as the music thuds and thrums in our veins.

I turn to the man and give him the sexiest grin I can muster. "You ready to play?"

His grin grows from curious to wicked as takes a step toward me.

"Sit," I order, pointing to the chair.

The man frowns, clearly not expecting me to take the lead. Poor guy. He doesn't know who he's fucking with.

Reaching down, I cup his cock under his pants and give it a squeeze. "I said sit."

The man's frown falls away, and there's not one trace of his prior grin. Instead, he swallows thickly and nods, moving to the chair and taking a seat.

V and Burnt still flutter through my mind but I shake it off, reaching for the buttons on my blouse and undoing them one by one.

As I stand before the older gentleman, my fingers teasingly working on the last button of my shirt, I can sense his anticipation building. His eyes are fixed on me, a hunger in his gaze that matches my own desire.

But suddenly, his attention wavers, and he frowns. I turn to follow his gaze, my fingers freezing on the button. My heart quickens as I see V and Burnt in the doorway of the room, on their knees, their heads bowed in submission to me.

A rush of mixed emotions washes over me—surprise, confusion, and a strange sense of power. They've followed me here, and the dynamics of our interactions have shifted once again. It's a sight that leaves me both intrigued and uncertain about what lies ahead.

With a polite yet regretful smile, I turn back to the older gentleman sitting in the throne. "I'm sorry, but it seems our plans will have to wait," I say, my voice filled with a mixture of apology and intrigue. "Perhaps another time."

He nods, a hint of disappointment in his eyes, and rises from the throne. I watch him leave the room, skirting around the massive men in the doorway.

Turning my attention to V and Burnt, who remain on their knees with their heads bowed, I approach them slowly. The air is charged with a newfound tension, and I can feel the weight of their submission.

I reach out and gently lift their chins, one after the other, forcing them to meet my gaze. "What am I going to do with the two of you?"



BURNT

MACK PACES BACK and forth in front of us. She tightly crosses her arms across her chest, which is still mostly covered by her unbuttoned shirt. Her curves are on full display though, her cleavage spilling over the cups of her bra in billowy creamy pillows.. A slick sheen of sweat sticks her body, highlighting them even more. It takes everything I have to keep my eyes on her face and not the beautiful body that I had just worshiped. But it's when I see her eyes, staring off into the distance as she paces, that concern me more than my own needs to feel her wrapped around my cock again.

“Is she okay?” I whisper to V, who shrugs back an answer.

“Say something,” V begs from the floor next to me.

“This was a mistake,” she mutters under her breath when she passes us again.

“Quit fucking saying that.” My voice comes out more abrasive than I had intended. “Nothing we do together is a fucking mistake.”

She peers over at us, eyes still far away. “Why did you follow me here?” Her sultry voice is low and soft, like a silken caress of night against your skin.

“You know why,” V says.

She shoots a glare in both of our directions. Uneasiness behind her dark eyes. The same emotion she'd see in the both of us if she'd just look hard enough at us instead of averting her gaze. “You shouldn't have come here.”

“Why is that? Because us being here makes you uncomfortable to admit that you want this just as badly as we do?” V growls back at her.

She doesn't acknowledge his question at all. She begins her pacing again. “Too much more of that, Mack, and you'll be wearing a hole in the floor.” My attempt to lighten the mood garners no response. “Why do you think we came here, Mack?”

“To get laid,” she answers coolly.

“Not wrong,” V grins. “That would definitely be a perk, but we came here for you.”

“You shouldn't have,” she says, repeating the answer she had given us already. Her eyes are wild, the anger boiling in them as hot as her breath. I can see the wrinkles in her brow, the tiny beads of sweat on her hairline.

“Why not? You left the garage in a fucking tizzy. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out you were on your way here to make a huge mistake.” We came to stop her from making a mistake, but the more she pushes back, a part of me wonders if we should have let her be. The last thing I want to do is push her away.

“I left to get the hell away from you two. Do you honestly think I was just going to stand there and get off on the two of you fighting over me? That is not the woman that I am.”

“No, instead of letting us get that shit out of our system and calm down, you ran. To drown out all those big feelings of yours that you've been trying to stamp down for the last week by coming here and fucking around with a stranger.”

“So what if that's what I was going to do? This is my life. My body. Not yours or his,” she spits, pointing at us both.

“You don’t have the right to control me.”

“You’re right. We don’t, but we can’t sit idly by and watch you implode. I won’t do that. We’re good together, isn’t that obvious? You’re just too stubborn to see it,” V snarls again. “I’m fucking done trying to force down how I feel about you. It’s high time you had a good long look in the mirror and realized it, too.”

“Unbelievable,” Mack remarks. “You think because we slept together that you have this magical hold over me, don’t you?”

“You seemed to enjoy it,” V shrugs.

“Dude, really?”

“You think you can swoop in and control me?” she spat, her eyes narrowing. “Take away my ability to decide for myself?”

“No,” I bark back. “When you left that garage, you took something with you; it wasn’t just a car. It was us. We realized...we are not the ones in control. You are. So here we are to prove it to you.”

I gaze at her under the soft light of the room, begging her with my eyes to look back at me. She doesn’t flinch.

“What do we need to do to show you that this relationship matters to us? We are here on our knees, fighting for you and for this bond between the three of us. Trying to prove that we are better together.”

V and I exchange uneasy glances, both sensing that this conversation is going to be anything but pleasant.

“All I want is to be with you,” I admit. “If doing this together is what it takes, I’m in.”

“Same here,” V adds. “We’ll do whatever it takes to make this work. If we need rules, let’s create them. The decision is all yours. It’ll be hard, but we want to make it happen.”

Mack finally looks at us, some of the frustration gone from her gaze. “What if this doesn’t work? Losing my job would be the least of it. Have you thought about that?”

“I have,” I answer. “If we explain everything openly to Judge, he should understand. Despite his age, he’s not a traditionalist; after all, the first time he saw Grace was in a strip club.”

“Wait, what?” Mack stops her pacing with a jarring halt. “A strip club.”

“That’s a story for another time, but yes.”

She shakes her head as if she’s trying to shake the image from her head. “We can’t tell Judge,” Mack demands. “Not yet. I’m not about to paint a target on my back when we don’t even know if this relationship will get off the ground. For now, if we move forward, it stays between us. Do you agree?”

“Yes,” we both answer in near unison.

She pauses her pace, glancing at us both under hooded eyes. “If we’re doing this, there are certain ground rules we need to establish to ensure that we’re all on the same page.”

V and I nod, silently waiting for Mack to continue.

“Foremost, there will be no secrets in this relationship,” Mack states firmly. “If either of you is uncomfortable with anything we’re doing, I expect you to speak up immediately. Likewise, if either of you wants to try something new, we’ll discuss it together and mutually decide. I want you both to understand that this relationship is about trust and respect.”

She looks at us both, her eyes blazing with determination. “I won’t stand here while you two man-handle each other over me like I’m some sort of prize. I am my own person, capable of making my own decisions about who I want to spend time with, or if I even want any company at all. Nobody tells me what to do. No one has control over me, and no one will pull any strings. Are we clear?”

I glance over to V before answering Mack. “Sounds reasonable.” My gaze lingers on her as I wait for her response. The room seems to be still in anticipation of the answer she will give us.

V too looks at Mack with expectancy, though his face holds a much more intense level of focus. He almost seems desperate for her to accept their arrangement, but avoids speaking so as not to put any additional pressure on Mack or disrupt the moment with unnecessary words. “I know this is unfamiliar territory for all three of us, but if what just happened is any sign, I think we can do this.”

V rises from his kneeling position, approaching Mack with caution. “Give us a chance, baby. Let’s try this and see where it goes. What is there to lose?”

“Everything,” she sighs.

“You won’t know if we don’t try. This could be the start of something special. What all three of us have been looking for. What do you say?” V slowly draws closer, his body tense with anticipation. His gaze is fixed on Mack, and he opens his arms for an embrace. She stands motionless, a torn expression on her face.

“This is unconventional,” V said softly, “but I think it could be something even better. You have had little luck in life

so far—none of us have. Give us a chance, baby. Let's try this and see where it goes. What have you got to lose?" V persists.

"Burnt?" She looks down at me, her eyes searching mine intently.

I push off the floor, putting myself back on level ground. "I'm all in."

"Then I am, too," Mack smiles.



V

I SIT at the clubhouse bar with Burnt, trying my best to cut loose and enjoy the evening. Friday nights are always lively around here, and I rarely miss one. The guys around us are in high spirits, cracking jokes, and swapping stories. But despite the raucous atmosphere, all I can think about is Mack, alone at home, and how badly I want to be with her.

Burnt and I exchange glances, a silent understanding passing between us. We both know what's on each other's minds, the longing for Mack's presence, her touch, and her warmth. It's a distraction that's impossible to shake, even in the midst of the rowdy biker crowd.

An incoming text buzzes on my phone and I look down to see an alert from the group chat between me, Burnt and Mack.

This fucking blows. Do you miss us yet?

I smirk over at Burnt and we both look back down at our screens and watch the little dots bounce as Mack types out her reply.

Always. Did you know I also blow? ;)

Cheeky woman.

Burnt grins from ear to ear and is about to type a reply when Mom, one of the older bikers, notices Burnt's grin and leans in, his face crinkling up with amusement. "Jesus, prospect. You have to have the creepiest fucking grin I have

ever seen. What's got you so happy, anyway? Don't tell me it's a woman."

"Maybe he finally lost his virginity," Karma offers, tipping the neck of his bottle towards Burnt.

Laughter erupts around us, and I can't help but chuckle along with them, though the truth is far more complicated than they could ever imagine. Mack occupies a special place in our thoughts and desires, and it's a secret neither one of us is ready to share with the rest of the club.

"Nah," Mom teases. "Ole Burnt here will be a virgin until the day he dies. He's too fucking cagey."

Burnt narrows his eyes as everyone laughs even harder. If they only knew.

"You're full of jokes tonight, old man," Hashtag says, injecting himself into the conversation. "Hell, when was the last time you got laid?"

The laughter falls from Mom's face and he extends his middle finger, muttering, "Fuck you."

Hash shakes his head. "Sorry. You're not my type. But maybe I can help you out."

Burnt and I exchange a grin. *Oh, this ought to be good.*

"What if I were to create you a profile on Tinder? Looking4Love. Put a pic of you on there with your motorcycle. You'll have the old ladies flocking to ride on the back of it."

"I don't need no more old ladies," Mom mutters. "Been single since the day Marie died, and I plan to stay that way until I join her on the other side."

Another text comes through from Mack.

Air hisses through Burnt's teeth, and as I open it, my breath catches in my throat. It's a sexy selfie that she's sent, and she looks absolutely captivating. In the photo, she's dressed in black lace lingerie that leaves just enough to the imagination. Her hair cascades down in loose waves, and her lips are painted a deep, seductive red.

Her eyes, filled with a playful glint, meet the camera's lens with an intensity that sends shivers down my spine. The soft lighting accentuates the curves of her body, casting sensual shadows that make my heart race. It's a snapshot of desire and temptation, and it's impossible to tear my gaze away from her. Mack's ability to ignite our desires even from afar is a testament to her magnetic allure.

"Jesus," Burnt mutters, his gaze meeting mine, clearly wanting to get the hell out of here.

"Oh, you can post that pic of him with the tiara on his head from Shelby's birthday party," GP offers, oblivious to the heat building in the two of us. The others are still razing Mom, but we're across town, already imaging what we could do to Mack in that lingerie.

"Or the one where he's passed out under the picnic table during last years barbecue," someone else chimes in.

Even as I hear their words, my eyes are focused on the screen as I send out a text of my own.

You look like you need some company in that pretty little outfit.

Burnt's lips quirk to one side, by he doesn't look away from his phone.

"You fuckers open me an online profile, I'll implant your heads directly into your assholes," Mom growls.

As the group continues harassing each other, neither one of us pay attention as our phones buzz simultaneously with another text from Mack. The anticipation builds as I open the message, and I can feel Burnt's excitement beside me.

The new selfie reveals Mack, no longer wearing the same enticing black lace lingerie, but this time, she's naked. Her body is arched slightly, showcasing her curves, elegant and covered with intricate tattoos. Her eyes, framed by long, dark lashes, hold a tantalizing promise, and her lips are parted in a sultry invitation.

The soft, sensual lighting accentuates every contour of her form, but that's not what holds my attention. No, that would be the placement of her hand.

It's between her legs, her fingers already slick as she touches herself, teasing us with her sensuality . It's impossible to resist. My pulse quickens, and I exchange a knowing glance with Burnt, both of us feeling Mack's magnetic allure. Drawn to her like a ship in the night.

"Fuck this," I mutter, slamming my beer bottle down on the counter and jumping to my feet.

"Thank fuck," Burnt mutters from behind me, and I can hear his footsteps hot on my heels.

"What is going on?" Karma asks, clearly confused by our sudden departure, but I don't have time to explain. Not that I would tell him anyway.

All I know is that I need to get on my motorcycle and get to Mack's apartment. Her pussy is already wet, and when our baby sends us a pic like that, we know she needs what only the two of us can offer.



MACK

MORNING COMES FAR TOO QUICKLY. The rising sun beaming through the threadbare curtains that had come with the apartment like a spotlight on my face. I groan at the intrusion. Wiping the sleep from my eyes, I stretch out my arms, finding no one next to me. “V? Burnt?” I mumble as I open my eyes. No one’s here. The bed is cold to the touch, making me realize when they left. Why did they leave, though? That is the more pressing question. I thought after last night that we were all on the same page. Clearly not as they were gone before the sunrise. Sighing, I roll to my back, staring at the ceiling, the previous night’s events replaying in my head like a broken record. Did I make a grave mistake by agreeing to a throuple?

Regret courses through me. Was I not clear enough? Should I have explained the rules more clearly? This relationship dynamic isn’t as simple as my last one. It is one thing to be intimate with two men, but to maintain a relationship with them is a whole other ball game.

How am I supposed to balance their different needs and wants? What would happen if one of them got jealous? With my last relationship, I only had to worry about my ex. Not two men with two distinctly unique personalities. Not two men who are associated with one of the biggest motorcycle clubs in the country.

I sigh deeply and glance at the space that was once occupied by them both again. Is this what I can expect to find

every day? To go to bed with the two of them and wake up alone?

I have limited knowledge about motorcycle clubs outside of what I'd seen on television, or picking up from some of my clients. Would the club be a secondary problem for us? Who knows how Judge will take the news once we're in a good place to tell him, but what about the rest of them? If this works, would they accept us as we are? Would they accept our relationship?

I'm so stuck in my racing thoughts that I barely register the quiet noise coming from the other side of the house. Slipping from bed, I pad down the hallway. It fills with the acrid smell of smoke. I edge closer to the kitchen, my heart thumping at what I might find. Shielded by the doorframe, a wave of relief ran through me as I saw Burnt and V bent over the small stovetop. A sigh of relief washes through me. They didn't leave, though I'm unsure what they're attempting to do at my stove. Steam billows off a pan filled with an extra dark golden omelet, though it doesn't smell like food. V stands shirtless, his back tense, muscles flexing as he stirs a metal spoon in the pan. His boxers are slung low on his narrow, muscular hips. Burnt's redressed in the clothes he showed up at the club in last night. His club vest hangs over the back of one of the island stools.

I settle into the doorframe and watch them work. They're so engrossed with what they're doing, they don't notice my presence behind them. "Are eggs supposed to smell like that?" V whispers to Burnt.

"How would I fucking know?" Burnt fires back, exasperation clear in his voice. "More butter?"

V shakes his head and replies, “Butter will not fix that, asshole. Where’s the exhaust fan?”

V stares at the over the range microwave before finding the fan button on the front of it. It whirls to life as he presses it. “Could you be any louder?” he hisses at the rack it’s making. “How’s it going?”

“Do you think Mack likes her eggs overcooked and pulverized?”

V peers down into the pan and shakes his head. “Do you think they deliver out here? I don’t think that’s edible.”

“Nope. Already looked.”

“What the hell do we do then?”

“Toss it and try again. There’s seven more eggs in the carton.” Burnt grabs the pan by the handle, and heads towards the trash can behind him. That’s when he notices me. “Hi,” he shutters. “Good morning,” I smile back at him.

“We’re making you breakfast.” He peers down at the pan and shrugs. “Well, I’m trying to make breakfast.”

“Want some help?” I take a step towards him and the stove, and he puts a hand out to stop me.

“Nope, we got this.” Judging by the charred remains steaming in the trash can, I’m not sure he does, but who am I to stop him from trying again?

Burnt takes up his post at the stove, quickly salvaging what was left of the eggs while V sets out plates for everyone on the small, rustic kitchen island. One of them is a paper plate. I arch a brow at the odd man out in the place settings. “Where’s the blue one?”

V's body tightens like a drawn bowstring at the question. His eyes dart towards the floor, and his shoulders hunch inwards. "About that..."

"He dropped it," Burnt answers over his shoulder before V can respond. "It's in the trash can with my eggs."

The words hung in the air between them, and V's face fell. "Thanks for throwing me under the bus, prospect," V mutters under his breath.

But Burnt's eyes only met mine and danced with amusement as he raised his eyebrows in a questioning gesture.

"Did you drop it?" I ask V gently while I smile back at him. After a pause, V nods his head, resigned to confessing his mistake: "I did."

Burnt swears as hot grease from the frying pan spat across the kitchen counter. "Karma for ratting me out, ass hat," V grins.

"Are you sure you don't want any help?" "Sit," V demands, pulling out a chair for me. I slide into and watch the two of them dance around each other in my tiny kitchen. Burnt slides a plate in front of me a few minutes later with a fork. The smell is a slightly better than his first attempt. Peering down, the steam from the eggs waft up into my vision. Burnt watches intently as I pick up the fork, stab a piece of egg, and pop it into my mouth. The taste of charred bitterness coats my tongue. The more I chew, the more bits of eggshell I crunch.

"How are they?" Burnt's eyes light up with hope.

"They're crunchy." I shrug with a smile.

Burnt's face falls in disappointment. He reaches for the plate, but I snatch it back from him.

“You made me breakfast. No one has ever done that before,” I admit.

“It’s barely edible.”

“And? It’s the gesture that counts. Seriously. I appreciate you trying. Really, I do.” I take my fork and stab a few more bits of charred, crunchy eggs. As I draw the bite to my mouth, V’s hand reaches out and pushes it away.

“How about we go out for breakfast? I can’t watch you try to stomach those eggs, for our sakes.”

Burnt’s shoulders rise as the tension leaves them. “Thank god, I was afraid that I was about to give you food poisoning our first morning as well, us.”

“You go get dressed,” V demands. “We’ll get this mess cleaned up.”

With a nod, I push away from the table. The second I’m out of the kitchen, the two of them quietly argue about the breakfast. The sound of their disagreement fades away the farther I get. I don’t bother closing the bedroom door behind me after I enter. It’s not like they haven’t seen my naked body before, and to be honest, modesty isn’t something I worry about. I worked hard on the curves that I have.

Padding towards my closet, I pull out one of my ripped band t-shirts, and a pair of jean shorts. Slipping the shorts over my hips, I button them up before pulling my discarded bra from the floor, and putting it on. Adding the band t-shirt over the top, I peer over in my floor-length mirror hanging from the back of my door. A laugh escaping at the sight of my hair. My normal stick straight black hair pokes out from all different angles. Reaching for my brush on the dresser next to me, I

sweep it back in a long, pony tail. With one last satisfied glance, I walk back to the kitchen.

“Damn, baby,” V hisses when he sees me. Burnt freezes with the charred pan still in his hand. It drops to the ground with a loud clunk and roll. V steps forward, pulling me into a deep kiss. His fingers dragging up through the end of my ponytail. He releases me a few moments later.

“What was that about?” I inquire.

“Can’t a man admire his woman?”

Burnt clears his throat. “Our woman,” he reminds V. “But, what he said.”

“Guys, it’s just a pair of shorts and an old t-shirt.”

“Doesn’t matter, Mack. You could wear a paper sack, and I wouldn’t be able to take my eyes off of you.” A warm heat flares over my cheeks.

“I like to see you blush,” he admits in a whisper and a grin. “Ready to go?”

Burnt picks up the pan from the floor and tosses it into the sink. “I’ll take care of that later. Mack deserves a proper meal, and I’m starving.”

V leads the way out of the front door of my apartment. I grab my keys and cell phone from the shelf by the front door as I pass. Burnt brings up the rear, and snatches my keys from my hand to lock the door.

Once downstairs, the two of them start for their bikes. When I don’t follow, Burnt notices immediately.

“What’s wrong?” I point to the two bikes with a finger. “It’s fine,” he reassures me. “You can ride with one of us there, and the other on the way back.”

“Giving you equal time isn’t the problem,” I admit. “I don’t ride on motorcycles.”

V spins around on his heels. “What did you say?”

“I don’t ride motorcycles. I may paint them, but I will never ride on the back of them. They’re death traps, no offense.”

V and Burnt gaze at each other. “That’s going to be a bit of a problem, Mack, if you want to go out for breakfast. I don’t have a car.”

“Neither do I,” Burnt adds in.

“I do,” I smile, peering over at Betty behind me. “I’ll drive.”



BURNT

THE DINER'S entrance seems to swallow us whole as we step inside, our collective hunger from the previous night gnawing at our stomachs. The moment we cross the threshold, the atmosphere in the place shifts palpably. I can feel the curious, judgmental gazes of everyone around us, their whispers and sideways glances following our every move. It's as if they've sensed something different, something new, about our little trio.

As we make our way to a booth, a sense of uncertainty hangs in the air, and I share a quick, unsure glance with Mack and V. We're suddenly faced with a rather awkward predicament—how should we arrange ourselves now that we've officially become a throuple? The pressure of the stares from the other diners amplifies the discomfort of the decision.

In the end, we opt for the safest, most conventional choice, even though it feels strangely uneasy. V and I slide into one side of the booth, leaving Mack to occupy the seat opposite us. It's a configuration that keeps us all within eyesight, yet the distance between us feels greater than it ever has before. The once-cozy familiarity of our relationships now seems altered under the scrutiny of outsiders.

As we settle in, I can't help but overhear snippets of hushed conversations from nearby tables. Some people seem intrigued, even accepting, while others shoot us judgmental looks. It's a stark reminder that while we've embraced this new chapter in our relationship with open hearts, the outside world isn't always as accepting or understanding.

V exchanges a subtle, reassuring smile with me, and I try my hardest to tamp down my annoyance. We may feel a bit out of place right now, but we're in this together, no matter where we choose to sit or how the world perceives us. Our connection is strong, and nothing can change that.

Our group settles into the cozy booth, and it's impossible not to notice the striking waitress who approaches with menus in hand. She exudes an undeniable charm, her radiant smile and magnetic presence commanding attention. However, it becomes abundantly clear that her focus is singularly directed at me. The gleam in her eye and the playful sway in her step leave no room for doubt.

“Good morning, handsome,” she purrs, her voice dripping with flirtatious charm as she addresses me. “Ready to order, or would you like a little more time to decide?”

My discomfort is palpable, and I can feel the warmth of a blush creeping into my cheeks. A quick exchange of knowing glances between V and Mack confirms that they've noticed the waitress's affections, and I can't help but worry about how Mack might react to the situation.

Mack, always one to break the ice, flashes the waitress a teasing grin. “I think we're all ready,” she says with a playful glint in her eye.

As we place our orders, the waitress's attentiveness shifts between us, but her focus always seems to return to me. I muster the courage to speak, even as her flirtatious demeanor lingers in the air. “I'll have the lumberjack breakfast, please.”

She winks at me, her dazzling smile never fading. “Good choice,” she purrs, scribbling down my order on her notepad. “And to drink?”

We unanimously request coffee, orange juice, and water, and she jots down our drink choices with a final, lingering smile before sashaying away to the kitchen.

As she disappears out of sight, I release a breath I hadn't realized I'd been holding. The flirtatious encounter with our charming waitress has lightened the mood, but I can't help but worry about how Mack might have taken it.

I can't help but feel a nagging sense of unease about the waitress's flirtatious attention. It's not like women never flirt with me, but what the three of us have is still so new, and I'm not sure I did the right thing. It leaves me feeling unsure of how to navigate the situation without upsetting Mack.

"Well, that was fucking awkward," I mutter, not sure what else to say.

Mack's eyes meet mine, and she chuckles softly, her laughter laced with amusement. "Oh, Burnt, don't worry about it. You're hot. She's hot. Hell, maybe someday we'll to have invite her over to play." She grins mischievously, as I gape over at her from across the table.

Mack's words take me completely by surprise, and I find myself momentarily speechless. Her mischievous grin and casual mention of inviting the waitress to join us in the bedroom sends a jolt of intrigue through me. The idea, while unexpected, holds a certain allure.

I blink in astonishment, my gaze locked onto Mack's eyes as I try to process her words. "You're serious?" I finally manage to ask, my voice tinged with a mixture of surprise and curiosity.

Mack's grin widens as she leans in closer, her eyes dancing with a newfound excitement. "Well, why not?" she replies

with a playful shrug. “We’re all consenting adults here, and we’re all exploring new territories together. Who’s to say what kind of adventures we might have in the future? We’re making it up as we go.”

V, who has been listening to our exchange, chimes in with a devilish grin of his own. “Oh, I think I might like these rules.”

Mack giggles as I sit there, stunned by the sudden shift in our conversation, I can’t help but feel a strange mixture of shock, curiosity, and a growing sense of adventure. The possibilities that lie ahead, as we continue to navigate this uncharted territory together, seem both exhilarating and limitless.

The weight of my past insecurities and doubts begins to lift, replaced by a sense of acceptance and hope. For the first time in my life, I feel like I truly belong, like I’m part of something extraordinary. The prospect of the adventures we might share together fills me with a newfound optimism, and I can’t help but believe that life is about to take a remarkable turn for the better.



V

I TAKE a deep breath and try to focus on the task at hand. This Corvette will not fix itself. I grab a rag and continue wiping down the engine, trying to ignore the sweat trickling down my back. As I work, I can hear the muffled sounds of music coming from the radio in the office, a slow and sultry beat. Normally, it would be calming, but today it just irritates me. Between the heat, this fucking Corvette and its untraceable oil leak, and the lack of air conditioning, I am about at my wit's end.

Burnt saunters into the garage, his short hair sticking to his forehead as he glares at me.

“You know, you’re not supposed to work without a shirt on,” Burnt says. “Doesn’t that violate some OSHA policy?”

“Yeah, well, Judge isn’t picky about dress codes,” I reply, grinning at Burnt. “It’s this or I’m working naked.”

“Mack wouldn’t mind that,” he smiles, jerking his head over to Mack’s empty station. With the heat and humidity near the record today, Mack couldn’t work if the air conditioning couldn’t keep up. She’d opted to hang around the office. “Where is she?”

“Office with Judge.”

“Fuck.”

“Hey, you okay?” he asks, after I swear under my breath when another drop of oil lands on the top of my head.

“Yeah, just frustrated with this damn car,” I grumble. “It’s like it’s fighting me every step of the way. Between this taunting bastard and the heat, I feel like I’m fucking lose my mind.”

“I’d be pissed off too if I was working in an oven,” he pauses, swinging his gaze over to the office with a smile. I look over, and find Mack’s in her shorts again. Her long legs peeking out from under the desk as she works on a computer. Those shorts of hers should be a sin. Every time she wears them, I have to compel myself to not fall to my knees and worship her.

“Be right back,” Burnt grins as he saunters off towards the office.

I watch as Mack beams at him from her spot behind the counter. With a shake of my head, I get back to work. A few moments later, those sexy legs of Mack peeks from under the front end of the car I’m under.

“Hey,” she purrs, her voice smooth as silk. “Looks like you could use a break.”

I try to ignore the way my heart rate spikes at the sound of her voice. “I’m fine,” I mutter, turning back to the engine. “Just need to finish this up.”

“It can wait,” she presses harder. “Burnt wants us to play hooky. I’m game.”

“I can’t, Mack,” I argue.

She steps forward, dipping her head under the car next to me. “Come on, V,” she whispers, her lips inches from my ear. “It’s miserable. If you keep working in this heat, it’ll make you sick. Besides, I know a few ways to cool you down.”

I nearly drop the wrench in my hand. Fuck the hold this woman has on me. I mere suggestion of my dick getting wet and I'm like a panting teenager with cock at the ready. "That so?"

"Burnt wants to take us somewhere."

"I see," I mutter.

Mack steps closer, her hand brushing against the crotch of my work pants. "For someone who doesn't want to take this public yet, you're not playing fair, baby."

"I know," she beams. "Come with us. The car will still be here when we get back, and I'll help you when it cools off."

I consider her proposal. She's not wrong that this Corvette isn't a time sensitive commitment. Blake, the owner, was gone with his family on a trip for the next couple of weeks. The only thing holding me back is my need to check it off my list.

"Fuck it," I smile. "I'm in."

"Thought you would be. You get yourself ready to go, and we'll be waiting over at the apartment."

"Sounds good," I agree. "Give me about five or ten. I'll rinse off in the employee shower. Wouldn't want to get grease all over Betty's backseat."

Mack shakes her head. "I'd appreciate that. See you in a bit," she smiles as she slips from under the car and heads back towards the office. I watch as she gathers her things and heads down the hallway towards the door. I make quick work of cleaning up my station. Grabbing my t-shirt from atop the toolbox, I head for the office and that cold shower that's calling my name. I no sooner make it into the office before I run headlong into Judge.

He's looking at me with that laconic expression of his that always makes me feel like I'm being judged. Not that I'm not used to it by now, but I can never get over the feeling that I'm always under his microscope. "Are you cutting out early, too?" he asks.

"Yeah. Are you good with that?"

Judge contemplates before nodding his head. "Yeah, it's fine. No point in cooking ourselves. The HVAC guy won't be here until late tonight. Even with the strings Hash pulled, they're all fucking booked up with this heat."

"That's how it always happens. If there's a heat wave, the A/C breaks. I'm gonna grab a quick shower, then head out."

"Burnt going with you?"

"Yeah, he wants to show Mack around town, and I got the invite, too." I lie. The bitterness of it burning the back of my throat. It's one thing to lie. It's another to lie to Judge. Outside of StoneFace, I'm betting if you looked up terrifying in the dictionary, it would have his and StoneFace's picture.

"You two have been spending a lot of time away from the clubhouse lately. Any reason?"

Shit. Has it really been that long? Since Mack, we'd been spending most of our nights at her house or at my apartment that I rarely use. It was really just a glorified pit stop to do my laundry and get my mail. The clubhouse is where I normally stayed most days.

"Nah," I lie a second time. "My place is just closer to the garage and as busy as we've been, I've just been staying there."

Judge shoots me an unsure look. Had he picked up on my lie? "Church is tomorrow. I expect you to be there."

“I wouldn’t miss it, Prez.”

“See that you don’t,” he gruffly answers before he slips from his place on the wall and heads back towards the front end of the office. A sigh of relief releases from my lungs. I’d never been under scrutiny by Judge before, and after that, I don’t think I want to be again. He’s a terrifying old bastard. My phone vibrates in my pocket.

Peering down, I see a text from Mack.

You coming?

I fire a text back.

Got stopped by Judge. Jumping in the shower.

Jogging to the shower room, I strip, jumping under the water only long enough to get the layers of sweat and grease off of me. I dry off, feeling the cool air against my damp skin. I couldn’t help but feel refreshed. I quickly dry off and re-dress using a spare set of clothes that I keep in my locker. Grabbing my cut, keys, and phone, I’m out the door a few minutes later. Water still drips from my damp hair, the coolness a welcome sensation as the humid air clings to me like a wet blanket. A horn honks from across the street where Burnt and Mack sit waiting in her car. I jog across the sticky black top, and slide in the back seat.

“Where to?” I ask.

“You’ll see,” Burnt smiles.

“You know, when you smile like that, it creeps me out, asshole.”

“This smile?” The bastard does it again. The corners of his mouth curve into a Cheshire Cat like smile. “Don’t worry, V. I

promise you'll like where we're going."

I peer up to the rearview mirror where Mack is grinning. I lean back into the seat, my mind racing with many possibilities. Mack has always been one to keep secrets, but this time it feels different. The way she's acting, the way she's grinning...it's almost as if she's hiding something enormous from me.

"I take it, you know."

She simply shrugs. Her hand falls to the gearshift. "All she knows is the address. I want to show you both something." Mack pulls away from the garage, and heads north to the highway. We drive, listening to music that Burnt is DJ-ing from the passenger seat. An odd mix of hip hop, 2000s pop, and heavy metal. The longer we drive, the farther we get from civilization. The city fades away until nothing, but trees and open plains stretch as far as the eye can see.

Mack exits the highway on an empty off ramp. Not even a gas station or Waffle House is here, and that says something. "Dude, where the hell are we?"

Burnt waves me off. He's too engrossed in picking his next song. The GPS on Mack's phone issues an order to turn on an old dirt road. Dust kicking up all around us like a dust devil. The road, if that's what you can even call it, is bumpy. I nearly hit my head twice on the roof of Mack's car before an entrance with an old wooden sign that lays broken comes into view ahead.

"Not to sound like a broken record, but where the hell are we? I feel you're driving me to my death."

Burnt grins that fucking smile again. His eyes were not even lifting to meet my gaze. "Maybe I am."



BURNT

“WHERE ARE WE?” V asks from the back seat as Mack pulls her car up to an open spot.

“Camp Harmony,” I answer back. I peer out the front window. It had certainly seen better days, but it still felt like home. “Come on,” I beckon them both before sliding through the passenger side door. The sound of Mack and V closing their door echoes off the tall trees surrounding us.

“It’s beautiful,” Mack remarks.

“It looks like the place he’d take us to hide my body,” V mutters.

“You know, I thought the same thing about you when you dragged me along to Vanilla Villa.”

Mack spins on her heels, a quizzical look on her face. “Wait, what?”

“Oh yeah,” V smiles. “This one thought I was leading him to his death. Bitched about it the entire time until we got inside. That’s when he changed his tune.”

“You know what? Fine. I thought you were going to kill me, but seriously, Mack. You saw the place. He knew what it was. I didn’t.”

“Seems to me it’s a good thing you followed him,” she smiles. A blue jay swoops down. Its shrill call startling all three of us. “How did you find out about this place, Burnt?”

I sigh. “I attended a foster kid camp here.”

V’s head snaps to me. “Foster care?”

“Yeah,” I shrug. “It’s a long story.” I pause, unsure if I should continue or not. “Come on. There used to be a damn good swimming hole here. Coolest water in Texas.”

“You brought us all this way to go swimming?” V blurts out. Mack smacks him in the arm, and he clutches his arm like I have shot him.

“Thank you,” Mack says for the both of them.

“This way.” I peel away from the car, heading toward the swimming hole in the back side of the cabins. The camp’s cabins, once vibrant and full of youthful laughter, now wear the heavy cloak of neglect. Their wooden walls have faded to a weathered gray, and the paint that once adorned them in cheerful colors now flakes away in surrender to the elements. Broken windows stare vacantly, their shattered glass creating a mosaic of fractured reflections that only hint at the stories once told within.

The central gathering area, once bustling with energetic campers, now sits abandoned and overgrown. A cracked flagpole, stripped of its banner, stands as a lone sentinel overlooking the deserted space. The worn-out benches, gnarled and splintered, barely hold their forms amid encroaching grass and weeds. A cracked fire pit lies dormant, its stones and ashes a testament to the countless campfires that once crackled beneath starlit skies.

The camp’s mess hall, a place that once resonated with clinking cutlery and jovial conversations, is a shadow of its past self. Its roof sags under the weight of accumulated debris, and the warped wooden floorboards creak as if mourning the absence of bustling activity. Tables and chairs, their surfaces marred by the scars of time, remain as stoic witnesses to memories long gone.

The only thing that seems to be still the way I remember is the swimming hole just ahead of us. The blue green water sparkles under the scorching summer sun atop of us. Some of the shade trees that had only been saplings the last summer I had come here are full grown. Their leafy canopies provide more than adequate shade from the heat. A light breeze tickles through their leaves.

Mack stretches her arms out wide, basking in the wind. A wide smile appeared on her face. Happiness swelling inside of me that I could bring them both here. To a place that had been the one beacon of light in my shitty childhood.

I rip my t-shirt over my head, tossing it onto the ground next to me. My hands falling to my fly when V notices what I am doing.

“What the fuck are you doing?”

“I don’t know about you, but I’m going swimming. I didn’t come all this way to sweat my balls off in the woods.” I unzip shorts, stripping down to my boxers. I smile, then run towards the lake, eager to jump into the refreshing water on this scorching hot day. My body hits the water hard, the smack of the landing punching me in the gut just like it had as a child. My head dips down below the surface before I kick my feet and resurface.

“Are you two coming in or what?”

Mack looks to V. With a shrug, she strips down to her underwear and charges at the water. She dives into and swims to meet me. I admire the way the light danced across Mack’s skin, illuminating it like a pearl in the dim light. The swirls of her tattoos shining along with it. Leaving only V standing on the shore. Mack calls to him from the water, yet he doesn’t budge.

“Come on, asshole. Are you just going to stand there and watch us?”

V grimaces. “If I get in that water, and something bites my ass, I’ll end you.” He strips off his shirt, and jeans before trudging towards the water like he’s pissed at it for being cool. With a few long strokes, he joins our party. Mack splashes him. He frowns. She does it again, and this time, V splashes her back. It’s all that it takes for a water fight to break out.

And that is how we spend our afternoon. We swim for what felt like hours, enjoying the freedom of being in nature. We play games, chasing each other around the lake, splashing water at one another and laughing all the while. Even V let loose.

As the sun sets, we emerge from the water, feeling rejuvenated and refreshed. The three of us lay on the sandy shore. Allowing the cooler summer sun to dry us off.

“Tell me about your time here,” Mack asks.

“I came here the first time when I was in third grade. My grandma had just died, and I had been with my first foster family for a couple of months. My time with them wasn’t easy. My foster dad was a long-haul trucker who was never around, and my foster mom had four other kids to care for. They thought it would be good for me to be around other kids.”

“Were they right?” Mack asks.

“Yes, and no. I was so mixed up mentally that I didn’t take part until the last week.”

“What happened in that last week to change your experience?”

“Marty,” I sigh. “He was the tiniest kid in my cabin. Nerdy little shit, too. He had these big round glasses that made his

eyes seem like they were four times bigger. We were all at the pond when I heard him yelling for help. One of the bigger kids was holding him under the water. Our counselor was busy breaking up a fight, so I went. It was my first fight. The kid was twice my size, but I clocked him hard enough that he let go of Marty. He came up out of the water, gasping for air. I helped him to shore. That's where I found out Marty's parents had drowned. That he was in the car with them. According to him, the only reason he made it out is because his mom shoved him through the broken window."

"Oh my god," Mack gasps. She reaches out, taking my hand into hers with a squeeze. "That's horrible."

"It was. Marty spent the next week sticking to me like glue. Even after camp was over, we wrote letters until we got back to camp the next summer."

"Do you still talk to him?" V asks.

"Marty died the summer before our last year of camp. Cancer."

"Jesus, man. I'm sorry to hear that." V reaches out and grasps my shoulder.

"I didn't come back that last year. Honestly, I haven't been back since he died," I admit. My heart is heavy.

"So, why did you bring us here?"

"It was time. Time to put all that shit in my past to rest. This place was my salvation until Marty died. It was where I came to just be a kid. I didn't have to worry about what happened after I turned eighteen and was no longer the state's problem. My parents weren't model citizens, which is why I was with my grandma. The building blocks were there that I would follow in their footsteps."

V and Mack both continue to listen as I unpack my past. The safe-guarded secret that I had told no one about at the club. Until now. Until Mack and V.

“How did you find the club?” Mack asks.

“Mom found me,” I admit. “Working as a bouncer for a local bar.”

“And you?” she directs to V.

“Mom,” he shrugs. “I was a member of another chapter in California. Shit went south, and he brought me back with him.”

“What about you?” I ask Mack.

“There’s not much to tell, really. Parents are still living back in Ohio. My mom teaches and my dad works in a factory. No siblings.”

“Come on,” I tease. “There has to be more to you than that.”

“Why are you so guarded about your career?” V interjects.

Mack’s eyes fall. Her lips curving into a deep frown. “My ex-husband, Ryan.”

“What did he do?”

“Ryan opened up a garage right before we met. I was hunting for my first gig doing custom paint jobs, and he had a space. I started working for him. Things were great for a couple of years. The business grew. We got married. It was picture perfect until it wasn’t.”

Neither V nor I speak.

“I found out he was using the garage as a front for his drug business. He thought I was too dumb to figure it out.” Mack’s

voice trembles with emotion as she continues. “When I confronted him, he beat me to within an inch of my life. He left me on the shop floor bleeding and broken until I crawled into the office. I called the cops, and he got arrested. The garage got shut down. It was all over the news. It was humiliating,” Mack says, her eyes shining with tears. “I didn’t know what to do. The cops thought I was involved with his business. It took months for them to clear my name because Ryan had forged documents and put most of the business in my name. After that, I just left Ohio. I started fresh in California and I’ve been rebuilding my business reputation ever since.”

We fall into silence, the weight of our pasts hanging heavily in the air. But in that silence, I find comfort. It’s the comfort that comes from knowing you’re not alone.

V, however, stares off angrily in the distance. “He hit you?”

“Leave it.” Mack demands. “It’s in the past.”

“He still alive?”

“Ryan’s in jail. He still has a couple of years left in his sentence the last time I checked.”

V looks at me, anger clear in face.

Mack notices, her shoulders slumping in embarrassment. “I shouldn’t have told you that.”

“We needed to know.”

“Damn right, we did. What do you say, brother? Do we pay him a visit?” V asks, his tone low and dangerous. “Stoneface infiltrated a prison. We could, too.”

I shake my head, placing a calming hand on his shoulder. “No.”

“But he hit her,” V growls, clenching his fists. “He deserves to know what that feels like.”

“She doesn’t need us to fight her battles.”

Mack gives me a grateful smile and squeezes my hand. “Thank you,” she whispers.

I nod, giving her hand a gentle squeeze in return. “We’ve all been through some shit. We’ve got each other now.”

V grumbles, but nods his agreement. “Alright. We’ll leave it alone for now.” Mack may not realize it, but telling us just signed his death warrant. V will take his pound of flesh. With or without her blessing.

As we sit in silence, the tension in the air is palpable. I can feel V’s anger radiating off of him, even as he tries to remain still. Mack leans into me, as if seeking comfort in my presence. I wrap an arm around her, holding her close.

After several minutes of tense silence, V finally speaks. “I’m sorry, Mack. I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable. I just...I don’t like guys who hit women.”

“I understand,” Mack says softly. “But it’s in the past now. I don’t even think about him anymore.”

V nods, but I can tell he’s not satisfied. He’s a loyal Black Hood, and he takes our code seriously. I can see the thoughts swirling in his eyes, and I know what he’s thinking. Ryan is going to die. He’ll make it happen.

“Let’s change the subject,” I blurt. “We’re all here for a reason, right?”

Mack looks up at me with a grateful smile, nodding her agreement. “Right. So what’s next?”



MACK

I STAND BEFORE THE MIRROR, the soft glow of the vanity lights casting a warm and flattering aura around me. Tonight is special. We're going out, the three of us, and my heart brims with contentment. It's a feeling I've come to cherish, one that has become a cherished part of my life these past couple of weeks.

My reflection smiles back at me, the image of a woman who's finally found her place in the world. The morning we shared before getting ready for this night was nothing short of magical. Sated and satisfied, we reveled in each other's company, exploring newfound depths of connection and passion.

I trace a finger along the curve of my lips, remembering the shared laughter, the tender moments, and the fierce desire that bound us together. As I apply a hint of lipstick, I can't help but feel a sense of anticipation building. Tonight promises new adventures, and I can't stop my thoughts from wandering to the unique dynamic that has become my life—a world where I have two incredible men, Burnt and V, who hold pieces of my heart in their own special ways.

Burnt, the man who's become my closest confidant, my partner in crime, and my rock in this journey we're all on. We share a bond that's built on trust, a deep understanding of each other's pasts, and an uncanny similarity in our appetite for each other. Our connection has grown stronger with every passing day, as if we were two halves of the same whole. There's an undeniable comfort in knowing that we've walked

similar paths, faced similar struggles, and found solace in each other's arms. With Burnt, it feels like we've known each other for a lifetime, and our shared experiences have forged an unbreakable bond.

V, on the other hand, brings a different kind of energy to our trio. There's a magnetic intensity about him, an air of mystery that keeps me on my toes. While our connection is undeniable and the passion between us burns bright, I can't help but sense that he's holding a part of himself back. It's as if he's guarding his emotions, a puzzle that I've yet to fully solve.

With V, it's like stepping into uncharted territory, a world of thrilling uncertainty and unexplored depths. While I've come to know him on a profound level, there's a sense that there's more to him than meets the eye, secrets and emotions waiting to be uncovered.

As I finish my makeup and prepare to join them for the night, I marvel at the intricate dance of emotions that we've embarked upon. Two partners, two unique connections, and a heart that's found room to love them both. It's a journey filled with complexities and uncertainties, but one thing remains crystal clear—I wouldn't have it any other way.

My heart is light as a feather when I turn to leave the bathroom, the anticipation of the night ahead still fresh in my mind. But as I take a step forward, an unexpected wave of nausea washes over me, and before I can react, my stomach lurches.

I stumble towards the toilet, my hands gripping the porcelain as I vomit uncontrollably. The sensation is overwhelming, and I feel a mixture of embarrassment and discomfort. This wasn't how I had envisioned the evening

starting. Where this sudden bout of sickness came from? I'd felt perfectly fine just moments ago.

After what feels like an eternity, the nausea subsides, leaving me weak and shaken. I flush the toilet, rinse my mouth, and splash some water on my face, trying to regain my composure. As I take a deep breath and prepare to leave the bathroom, my mind races with questions.

Could it be something I ate earlier? Or perhaps the nerves of the night ahead had triggered this unexpected reaction. But then a more unsettling thought creeps into my mind—could it be possible that I'm pregnant? The idea feels both surreal and frightening. I had taken precautions, but nothing is foolproof, and the mere possibility sends shivers down my spine.

I try to push the thought aside, convincing myself that it's just a one-time occurrence, a fluke of nature. But as I move to the couch and lie down, a nagging worry continues to linger in the back of my mind, casting a shadow over the excitement I'd felt just a few moments ago.

I couldn't be pregnant. Could I?



V

SINCE OUR TRIP to the camp, something has been nagging me. I didn't really know much about Burnt as a man or my prospect. I could tell you about how well he shoots, the beer he likes, and well, his taste in women, but until that trip, I had known nothing about him. I'd know nothing about the life that shaped him into who he is now. The thought of how much of that I'd missed had been picking away at me. I couldn't shake off the feeling of guilt that I had not taken the time to know Burnt beyond his gun.

He'd been with us for years, and I hadn't taken the time to get to know him as a friend and as his patch sponsor. I'd failed him in that regard, but after today, I hope to rectify part of it.

Finding Judge in his clubhouse office, I step inside and close the door behind me.

"Something wrong?" he questions without even looking up at me. "Garage, okay?"

"I want to call in the vote for Burnt."

Judge looks up. "You want to call in the vote? And what makes you think I'll allow that?"

I meet his gaze head on, my eyes challenging. "Because it's fucking time."

Judge's expression grows more serious as he scrutinizes my words. But I stand firm, refusing to yield. Not today, not after all we've endured together with Burnt at our side. "It's time," I declare.

Judge nods slowly, his eyes gleaming with a hint of respect. “You’re right,” he admits. “We’ve been through a lot with Burnt. Honestly, he should have been patched in with Priest, but you didn’t call for the vote. So why now?”

I hesitate, and Judge picks up on it. A part of me wants to tell him Burnt’s story, but it’s not my place. If he hadn’t shared it with them, it’s not my call. “With everything going on, I’ve been distracted, and that falls on me as his sponsor.”

Judge leans back in his chair, his eyes boring into mine. “You know I can’t just call for a vote without reason.”

“I know,” I say, holding his gaze. “But I believe that Burnt has proven himself. He’s loyal, he’s dedicated, and he’s saved our asses more times than I can count. He’s earned his place.”

Judge regards me for a moment longer before nodding in agreement. “Fine. We’ll call for the vote. But I want to hear from Burnt himself. I want to hear him say he’s ready to join the club.”

“I’ll talk to him,” I say, already mentally preparing myself for the conversation. I know Burnt has been eager for this moment, but he’s also nervous. He doesn’t want to let me down, or the club. But I have faith in him. He’s stronger than he knows.

“Good,” Judge says, rising from his chair. “I’ll call everyone to the table. And just so you know, I’m not doing this to make you happy. I’m doing it because it’s what the club needs. But if Burnt messes up, it’s on both of you.”

I nod, understanding the gravity of the situation. But I won’t let Burnt fail. I’ll make sure he knows what’s at stake and push him to be the best member he can be. Because that’s

what brothers do. We have each other's backs, even in the toughest of times.

An hour later, we're all gathered around the meeting room table. Every face in the room is stone cold serious. Normally, we don't call meetings like this unless we have a major problem.

"The floor is yours," Judge declares with a nod.

"I want to call a vote for Burnt."

A few of the guys exchange glances with one another while the rest sit still.

I take a deep breath and explain why it would be best for us all to vote in favor of Burnt. As his sponsor, it's my job to guide him, determine when he's ready, and advocate for him. It took us going out to that camp to realize I'd done a shit job of being his sponsor. Hell, all of us had. Trouble never seemed to be far away, and the focus had been anywhere, but on our prospects. Priest had already earned his colors, and he had less time than Burnt. It's high time I rectify it.

"With all the shit life has handed us the last couple of years, Burnt has risen up for this club, and I think it's time he's one of us. He's put his life on the line for us. He needs to be rewarded. He deserves to wear our colors, and our patch." My voice is steady as I speak, and my eyes lock onto the others in the room.

"Any objections?" Judge's voice booms over the quiet room.

Slowly, they nod, and I can see the agreement forming. It's a unanimous decision.

Judge bangs his gavel. "All in favor of Burnt becoming a member of the club, say, aye."

The room booms with a chorus of “aye” as everyone raises their hands.

“Go get him.”

I rise from my seat at the table towards the door. As a prospect, patch meetings were off-limits to him, but I had asked him to help with something at the clubhouse in case the vote went his way. He, of course, argued with me about not being at the garage with Mack, but I ultimately won with Mack out sick. She’d been sick for the last couple of days. While Burnt wanted to knock down her door and mother hen her back to health, I’d given her what she really wanted. Space to recover without either of us hovering.

Opening the meeting room door, I peer out to find him sitting with his back towards me at the bar. Grace, Judge’s old lady, stands opposite of him.

“Didn’t think I’d ever see you tending the bar,” I smirk at her. Grace’s hair is in her typical tight bun at the top of her head. Gray hairs peeking up around her hairline.

Burnt peers over as I join them.

“We’re almost done,” I tell her. After meetings, most of the guys liked to hang around and have a couple of beers. Tonight would be a whole hell of a lot bigger than just a few beers.

“Judge wants to see you,” I tell Burnt.

Burnt looks at me, his face a mix of surprise and anticipation. “What for?” he asks.

I can’t help but grin. “You’ll see.”

Grace hands Burnt his beer before grabbing a bottle opener and walking away. “Good luck,” she says with a small smile.

I wave at her before turning back to Burnt. “Come on, let’s go see Judge.”

Burnt follows me out of the room, his steps slow and measured. I can feel the tension radiating off him, and it takes everything in me to keep from laughing.

“Am I in trouble?”

“Not my place to talk about it,” I deadpan.

Burnt shuffles into the room, and I close the door behind us once I’m inside.

“Prospect, take off your cut.”

Burnt strips his leather vest from his shoulders. GP moves from his spot at Judge’s right side as VP, and stalks towards him. “On the table.”

Burnt, glances over to me, uncertainty in his eyes. I nod. “On the table, prospect,” I repeat.

He spreads out his cut onto the hardwood of the meeting table. The back of his cut is bare save for the lower Prospect rocker.

“Why do you feel you deserve to wear our colors?” Judge’s voice booms from the front of the room.

Burnt hesitates, looking at me for guidance. I step forward, placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “Tell them, Burnt.”

He takes a deep breath before straightening his back. “I believe that I’ve earned the right to wear the colors because of my dedication to this club. I’ve put my life on the line time and time again, and I’ve done everything that’s been asked of me without hesitation. I understand the weight and responsibility that comes with being a member, but I’m ready for it. I’m ready to stand with all of you as a brother.”

GP, pulling his pocketknife out, flips open the blade and hands it to Burnt. “Cut it off.”

Burnt’s hand trembles slightly as he takes the handle of the knife, bringing it to the stitches holding on his prospect rocker. One by one, he cuts it free until the patch comes loose. He steps back. His eyes never leave the scene in front of him.

Mom comes from behind him and lays down our colors along with the top and bottom rocker on his cut. Burnt looks up to him in pure shock.

I grin at Burnt, who is standing eerily still with a look of surprise and gratitude on his face. I can tell that he’s been waiting for this moment for a long time.

“Welcome to the Black Hoods, Burnt,” I say, clapping a hand on his shoulder. “You’ve earned it.”

Burnt nods, his eyes shining with pride. “Thanks, man. I won’t let you guys down.”

Judge clears his throat. “Alright, that’s enough sentimental bull shit for now. Now, we celebrate.”



BURNT

THE LOUD MUSIC of the party rages on behind me. It only took thirty minutes for our member's families to show up. The ladies bringing with them a re-supply of beer, booze, and food. The guys had swarmed with congratulatory handshakes, and my cut, with the patches freshly sewn into the worn leather.

The only thing missing is Mack. I'd texted her the minute we'd left the meeting with an invitation to the clubhouse. The same message still set on unread nearly an hour later. I text her again.

The club patched me in. Come to the party, please.

I want to share this with you.

Still nothing. Silence on her end.

Are you okay?

Slipping outside, I try to call her, but it only goes to voicemail. I turn around and lean my back against the wall, taking a deep breath to steady my thoughts. I try calling her again, but it's still straight to voicemail. Frustration bubbles up inside me. I need to talk to her and let her know how much this means to me. But how can I do that if she won't even answer my calls?

"What the hell are you doing out here?" V asks when he spots me outside. "The party for you is in there," he thumbs

back towards the door. I stare back down at my phone, ignoring his attempt to redirect me back inside.

“She didn’t answer, did she?”

I look up at V, surprised by his question. “What do you mean? Talked to who?” I ask, trying to keep my voice level.

V looks at me like I’m an idiot. “Mack, dumbass. You’ve been staring at your phone for the last ten minutes trying to call her.” I flush at his words, feeling foolish for thinking no one had noticed my behavior.

“No, I haven’t talked to her. She has answered none of my calls or texts.” I admit.

“Same for me. She called out sick again today. That’s the last I heard from her.”

“It’s been almost a week,” I remark. “Maybe we should go check on her.” I walk over to my bike, but V reaches out, and grasps me on the arm.

“You can’t leave your own patch party.”

“Watch me,” I hiss.

“Dude, think about it. If you walk out on this party, it’ll make you look ungrateful for this opportunity. Stay.”

I hesitate. V is right. If I leave, it’ll make me look like I don’t appreciate all that my brothers have done for me. But I can’t walk away from Mack either. Something is wrong. I know it is.

“What if I have someone else go check on her?” I suggest.

“Do you hear yourself right now? You sound like a frantic old woman. She’s sick, asshole. I’m sure if she needed

something, she would have reached out by now. She's probably asleep."

V's words tug at my heartstrings. He's probably right. She probably just needs some rest, but it doesn't lessen the sting of her absence.

I snarl in anger. "I want her here with us." The furious rage inside boils up and overflows my mouth in a torrent of sound. "Aren't you tired of sneaking around with her? I know I am. I want the club to know. I don't want to keep us in the shadows."

"Do you hear yourself right now?" V counters. "We all know how she feels going public with us. Maybe she's just not ready to see you all decked out in your new colors," he says, his voice low. "Give her some space. I'm sure she's not trying to ghost on you. She may not even know how much of a big deal tonight is for you."

I narrow my eyes at him, feeling my anger rise. "What are you implying, V?" I growl, taking a step towards him. He raises his hands in surrender, shaking his head. "I tried to tell her how important tonight is. I texted her. I left her voicemails. All fucking unanswered."

"Nothing, man. I'm just saying maybe she needs some time to process everything, you know? She calls the shots, remember? That's what we agreed to go forward with this. One party, and you're trying to break her fucking rules. "

"I'm tired of feeling ashamed for wanting to love her."

V pauses. We hadn't brought up the I word yet as a group, but my feelings had been there from the beginning. I'm falling hard for Mack.

“You can’t force someone to feel the same way,” he replies finally. “Whatever’s going on with Mack, she can handle it, and she’ll come to you when she’s ready.”

I take a deep breath, trying to calm down. V’s words make sense, but I can’t help feeling hurt that Mack isn’t here to share in this moment. The biggest moment for me and the club. I wanted to share that with her.

“You’re right,” I say finally. “I should give her some time.”

V nods, clapping a hand on my shoulder. “I know it’s tough, man. But you can’t force her to like this life the same way we do. She’s going to have to find her own way. If it s, she’ll be here.”

I take a deep breath and nod, letting his words sink in. He’s right. If it s, Mack will eventually come around. Until then, I can only respect her space.

“Let me give it a couple more hours. If we don’t hear from her, you’ll try to check on her?” I ask, my voice resigned.

“Yes, if that will get your fucking ass back into your party, I will go check on her.”

“I don’t know why, but I can’t shake this feeling that she’s not okay. I know all of this is still new. She’s never gone this long without contacting me.”

“She’s fine, Burnt. Trust me. She’d tell us if she wasn’t. When I left the garage earlier, her car was in the garage and her apartment light was on. She’s safe in her apartment.”

“How do you know that?”

“Listen, you want to go check on her? That’s fine. But do it after the party. Stay, enjoy these moments with your

brothers. They put in the work for you, show them you appreciate it.”

The words of wisdom hit me square in the chest. Maybe V is right. We all have our moments of weakness, but I can't let them define me. I take a deep breath and turn back towards the clubhouse, ready to enjoy my hard earned patch party.

The music and energy of my brothers and their families welcomes me, and for a moment, I forget my worries. I see a few of the brothers eyeing me and the newly sewn patches on my leather cut with admiration, and a swell of pride washes over me. I may not have Mack here with me, but I'm still surrounded by people who care for and accept me.

No matter what, I am a part of something much bigger now. And I am not alone, but the wound that she's not here will be a painful reminder that not all of my family is by my side tonight.

The party rages on until the wee hours of the morning. Most of the guys have trickled away to their rooms here or gone home with their old ladies, leaving just a few of us still here.

I head back outside, spying V sitting in one of the outdoor loungers by the fire pit out back. I plop into one of the open ones next to him. “About earlier.”

“Don't worry about it,” he waves me off. “Did she ever answer you?”

Pulling out my phone from my pocket, I unlock the screen and open my messages. Next to Mack's name is a red dot. Dozens of my texts answered in one word.

Sorry.

Anger flares inside of me again. “You’ve got to be shitting me,” I growl.

V’s gaze shifts to me. “What? Did she answer?”

I turn my phone to show him the message string. A perplexed look on her face.

“Dude, that’s... something.” V shakes his head. “I’m getting that feeling of yours.”

“Right?” I answer. “Something isn’t right. This isn’t Mack.”

“The three of us are good, aren’t we?”

“I thought we were,” I admit. “Until she got sick, we were having a great fucking time. Since then, it’s been weird as shit.”

V takes a moment to digest the message before standing up. “We should go check on her. If she’s been silent like this all night, then there’s definitely something going on.” He forces himself to his feet. “You good to drive?”

“You don’t have to come with me,” I say. “Thanks, man. I know she’s a big deal to you, too.”

“You’ve been drinking, man. I’m not about to put you on the road. I’ll grab a set of keys for a cage. I’ll drive.” V claps his hand on my shoulder and nods. “Be right back.”

He disappears into the building and emerges a few minutes later, swinging a pair of keys around his ring finger. V clicks the button. The lights on the van to our left flash.

“Your chariot awakes, asshat. Let’s go get our girl.”

We take off towards Mack’s apartment, the dread of the unknown growing like a fog in my heart. Whatever is

happening, we will do whatever it takes to make sure she is safe. No matter how scared we are of the truth.



MACK

I SIT THERE, staring down at the pregnancy test in my trembling hands, disbelief washing over me like a tidal wave. Two pink lines. Two unmistakable, undeniable pink lines. My heart pounds in my chest, and my mind races to make sense of it all. How is this even happening?

We had been careful, so careful. I have an IUD, for crying out loud—a reliable form of contraception. But the evidence before me tells a different story, one that I never expected.

I swallow hard, my throat dry, and a swirl of emotions engulfs me—fear, confusion, and even a hint of wonder. Wonder at the sheer unpredictability of life, at how it can throw a curveball when you least expect it.

My gaze remains fixed on those two pink lines, as if by sheer willpower, I can make them disappear. But they persist, a stark reminder that everything I had come to know and understand about my life is now called into question.

I take a deep, shaky breath, my hands trembling as I set the pregnancy test aside. The room feels suddenly smaller, and the weight of the unknown future presses down on me. What do I do now? How do I even begin to navigate this unexpected turn of events?

As I sit there in stunned silence, the reality of the situation begins to sink in, and I know I can't keep this to myself. I'll have to share the news with Burnt and V, the two men who have become such an integral part of my life. But how will

they react? We just started this whole thing, and it's finally getting easier. It's been amazing.

The pounding on the front door reverberates through the house, jolting me out of my stunned reverie. Burnt and V's voices filter through the door, laced with concern, and I can tell they're not going to just go away if I don't answer.

I scramble to my feet, my heart still racing from the shock of the pregnancy test results. My mind races, trying to figure out how to handle this unexpected situation. I can't keep them waiting at the door, but I'm not ready to face them yet, not with this life-altering news weighing on my shoulders.

With trembling hands, I stash the pregnancy test in a drawer and splash some water on my face, trying to regain my composure. My reflection in the bathroom mirror appears as frazzled as I feel. I need a moment to collect my thoughts, to find the right words to share this startling revelation with them.

Taking a deep breath, I finally approach the front door. Their voices grow louder, their worry palpable, and I can't keep them in the dark any longer. I turn the doorknob, and there they stand, Burnt and V, their faces etched with concern and confusion.

"Mack, what's going on? We've been calling you," Burnt says, his eyes scanning my face for answers. His frustration is palpable as he speaks, his voice tinged with hurt. "I got patched in tonight. It was important for me to have you there."

I can see the confusion in V's eyes as he watches the exchange. The weight of my secret grows heavier with every passing second. V's concern deepens as he notices the trembling in my hands and the clear distress in my expression.

His anger, if there was any, has shifted to a genuine worry. “Mack, seriously, what’s wrong? You’re scaring us.”

I take a shaky breath, my resolve to reveal the truth strengthening with his concern. “Fine, you want to know what’s wrong?” I say, my voice quivering with emotion. Without waiting for a response, I stride towards the bathroom, my footsteps echoing in the tense silence that has settled over us.

In the bathroom, I retrieve the pregnancy test from the drawer where I’d stashed it earlier. The two pink lines that had shocked me just moments ago are still there, a stark and undeniable confirmation of my situation.

I return to the living room, the pregnancy test clutched tightly in my hand. V and Burnt both stare at me, their expressions a mix of anticipation and dread. I hold out the test, my voice barely above a whisper. “This is what’s wrong.”

Burnt and V both lower their gaze to the pregnancy test, and it takes a moment for the reality to sink in. The room is filled with a heavy, charged silence as the weight of the situation settles over us.

Burnt is the first to break the silence, his voice quivering with excitement and uncertainty. “Is that what I think it is?” His eyes are wide, filled with a mixture of hope and trepidation.

I manage a nod, but that’s all I can do.

With a wide, infectious grin, Burnt drops to his knees beside me, his hand tenderly cradling my belly. He leans in close, his lips almost brushing against my stomach as he softly says, “Hello, little guy. I’m your daddy. We’re gonna have some grand adventures together, you and me.”

I watch the scene unfold, a warm surge of emotion washing over me as I witness Burnt's immediate bond to become a father. Our journey together has taken an unexpected turn, but in this moment, as he talks to our future child, I can't help but feel a glimmer of hope amid the uncertainty.

I watch Burnt with a mixture of emotions, overwhelmed by his enthusiasm, but when I steal a glance at V, his reaction is starkly different. He stares at the pregnancy test, his expression unreadable, and a heavy silence hangs in the air.

In the end, V shakes his head slowly, as if he's trying to process the enormity of the situation. He meets my gaze, his eyes filled with a complex mixture of emotions. And then, with a heavy heart, he mutters, "I can't do this."

Without another word, V turns and walks towards the door, leaving Burnt and me staring at each other, our hearts crushed beneath the sound of his heavy boots walking away.



V

PREGNANT. Mack is fucking pregnant.

I look at them both, searching for any trace of uncertainty in her eyes. Anything to suggest she wasn't sure, that she was just joking around. But there's nothing there, just a determined look on her face that tells me she's dead serious.

The moment stretches on, the silence between us becoming unbearable. I can't think straight, can't process what this means. My mind races, trying to grasp just how much this will change everything. The thought of being a father, of raising a child, is both exhilarating and terrifying.

I can't do this. Not after the last time. The second those words left Mack's lips, the world tilts off its axis, my head spinning along with it. My body screams for me to run.

I feel like I'm suffocating in this small room, my thoughts spinning out of control. I can't be a father again, I just can't. The thought of it makes my heart ache with regret and fear. I can't give this child what they need. I won't be able to provide for them emotionally, mentally, or financially. I'm still trying to figure out this fucked-up world myself.

I turn abruptly, nearly knocking over a chair as I do so. "I can't do this." Before I even realize it, my feet take me to the door, and then outside.

The thought of her being pregnant echoes in my mind as I march towards my bike. I have to get away from here.

Burnt is behind me, almost close enough to touch me.

“Dude, what the fuck? You need to stop and go back in there. Mack needs us more than ever now.”

I spin, anger and fear coursing through my body like a churning hurricane. “If you want to go play happy family, you fucking do it. I won’t.”

I slide on my bike, popping the kickstand immediately and hitting the ignition switch. Burnt steps in front of my bike. His hands grabbing the handlebars of my bike.

“Don’t do this, V.”

“Move,” I hiss. I give my bike a little gas. It lurches forward. Burnt stands his ground.

I can tell he will not budge. He’s just as stubborn as I am. I rev the engine louder, my eyes never leaving his. “I don’t want to hurt you, Burnt.”

“You’re not going anywhere until you talk to her,” he says, his voice low and firm.

I rev my bike a third time, the sound of the engine drowning out my thoughts. Burnt doesn’t budge, his grip on the handlebars tightening. “Move,” I say again, my voice barely above a whisper. But Burnt’s not letting go. “I will not ask again.”

“You can’t just run away from this, V,” he says, his own voice low. “You’re not that person.”

“You don’t know what kind of person I am.” I grit my teeth, feeling the anger boil inside me. How dare he presume to know who I am? He knows nothing about me. No one does.

“I’m not running away,” I say, my voice a growl. “I’m doing what’s best for everyone. For Mack, for the baby.”

“You don’t know what’s best for anyone,” Burnt says, his voice hardening. “You’re just scared. You fear being responsible for someone else, of not being able to run away when things get tough. But you can’t run away from this. You can’t run away from your own child.”

“Watch me,” I growl. I push forward again on the bike, and this time he moves. I pull out onto the highway. Not looking back once.

With no destination, I just ride. I feel a sense of freedom wash over me. The open road is my sanctuary, my escape from this mess. Any other time, I’d be out there riding with no destination in mind, enjoying the thrill of the wind whipping through my hair. But now, my mind is clouded. I don’t know what to do. I don’t want to be a father again, not after what happened last time. The memory of my son’s face still haunts me. Not after losing Braden.

From the moment he was born, I felt like my life had truly began. He gave me purpose. A reason to keep walking up every day. The chapter I patched into were nothing like mother chapter. The president was more concerned about his dick than our brotherhood. Drugs and trafficking were prominently scattered throughout the clubhouse. No one gave a shit about it. You could snort cocaine off a slut’s ass, and they’d cheer you on for it. If the officer wanted your old lady, they just took her, which is why I never took Brittany around the club. No one there or here knew about her for her own safety, and the safety of my son, Braden.

Brittany and I weren’t traditionally what you’d call a happy couple. She needed a safe place to stay, and I wanted a woman who didn’t get shared around like a buffet. Our arrangement worked perfectly until she found out she was

pregnant. We were young, too young to be parents, but she didn't want to end the pregnancy. I'd vowed to her to help raise our baby the best I could. The risks from the club are even greater with a child, but for them, I'd try.

We tried. Brittany having taken the brunt of the work. I came by as much as I could to not raise suspicions about my club. One of the few nights I could count on being able to get away was party nights. The guys would be too fucked to notice I was gone or assumed I'd found a woman and took her somewhere to fuck. It was one of those nights that changed me forever.

"V!" Brittany screams. After the party at the clubhouse last night, my mind is still foggy. Brittany's screams just get louder and louder until they break through. "He's not breathing!"

My eyes snap open to the tiny little boy in my arms. To the little boy who I picked up out of his cradle when I'd gotten home to soothe him back to sleep and give Brittany a break. Fuck, I must have passed out with him in my arms.

"Do something!" Brittany screams.

"Call 9-1-1!" I yell back. Brittany scrambles for her home on the nightstand. Her hands trembling as she punches in the numbers.

I stare at him. His small body is so still and lifeless. His lips Panic wells up inside me as I struggle to remember the CPR I'd learned back in high school.

I lay him on the ground and start compressions, counting the beats in my head. One, two, three, four...I work furiously, my hands pumping on his tiny chest.

Brittany hovers nearby, sobbing uncontrollably as I work. I can feel the weight of her fear, her desperation, bearing down on me.

“You’ve killed him,” she screams. “You’ve killed my baby!”

I push the thought away and focus on Braden. After what seems like hours, the paramedics arrive and take over. The moment they whisk Braden away from me, I feel like I’m going to collapse. All the fear, all the anger, all the anxiety I’ve been feeling for the past few days comes crashing down on me like a tidal wave.

I slump down against the wall and let out a howl of despair. The sound that comes from the deepest, darkest part of you. The sound of a man who’s lost everything.

I shake my head, trying to clear my mind of the memory. I’m not ready for this kind of responsibility, for this kind of commitment. I can barely take care of myself, let alone a child. But no matter how hard I try to push the thought away, it keeps coming back, nagging at me like a persistent ache.

Mack needs me.

I know I can’t keep running forever, but I need time to process, to figure out what I want. I don’t know if I’ll ever be ready, but I know I can’t just ignore it. This child needs a father, and I know, deep down, that I want to be there for them. I just need to figure out how to do it without losing myself.

As I ride, the wind whipping through my hair, I decide. I will not run away from this, but I need time to figure things out. I need to talk to Mack, to figure out what she wants, what she needs from me. I need to be there for her, for our child, but I also need to take care of myself.

For now, I'll keep riding, keep. But when the time comes, I'll be ready to face this head-on. I'll be the father my child deserves, the partner that Mack needs. I'll figure it out, one step at a time.

I turn around and ride back to the one place I should have never left.



BURNT

THE APARTMENT IS SHROUDED in a heavy silence, broken only by the distant sounds of the city outside. Hours have passed since V's abrupt departure, leaving Mack and me alone to grapple with the weight of the revelation that has reshaped our lives. As I sit on the couch, my thoughts churn like a tempestuous sea, but I know I can't remain lost in the tumult of my mind.

Mack, who's been sitting in the dimly lit living room, her expression a mix of worry and sadness, finally breaks the silence. "Burnt, do you think he's okay? I mean, he was really upset when he left."

I turn to look at her, my heart heavy with concern for both her and V. "He'll be alright. V just... he processes things differently, you know? He's a complex guy, and sometimes he needs space to sort through his feelings."

Mack sighs, running a hand through her long dark hair, her eyes filled with unease. "I know, but it just seemed so sudden. I thought he'd want to be a part of this, too."

I reach out and gently take her hand, offering her a reassuring smile. "He just needs time to wrap his head around it. But I promise you, he'll be back. He cares about you, about us. This... this is just a lot to take in."

She nods, her gaze dropping to her lap as she absorbs my words. The bond between Mack, V, and me is undeniably strong, but it's also a complicated web of emotions and desires. And while I'm certain that V's initial reaction was

driven by shock, I believe he'll eventually come around to the idea of being a father.

I continue, my voice soft and steady. "Give him some time. When he's ready, he'll come back, and we'll figure this out together. We're in this together, no matter what."

Mack offers a small, appreciative smile, her eyes glistening with emotion. "What would I do without you?"

I lean in closer, gently brushing a strand of hair away from her face. "Lucky for you. You don't have to worry about that. I'm not going anywhere."

As we sit together in the quiet apartment, our hearts heavy with the weight of the unknown, I can't help but hope that our trio will find a way to navigate the challenges ahead and emerge stronger than ever. In the darkness of that moment, our bond remains unbroken, a testament to the love and resilience that binds us together.

Suddenly, the door creaks open, and I turn my head to see V standing there, his expression solemn and his shoulders slumped. His eyes meet mine briefly before shifting to Mack beside me. The weight of his absence, even for a few hours, had been palpable, and the relief of his return washes over me.

Without a word, V steps further into the room, closing the door behind him. He takes a deep breath, his gaze never leaving Mack's, and then he speaks, his voice tinged with remorse. "I'm sorry," he says, his words heavy with sincerity. "I shouldn't have left like that."

Mack and I exchange a quick glance, our emotions still raw from the evening's turmoil. Mack is the first to respond, her voice tinged with both relief and concern. "I'm just glad you're back. Are you okay?"

V nods, his gaze dropping to the floor momentarily before he meets her eyes again. “I needed some time to process everything,” he admits. “But I shouldn’t have walked out on you guys like that.”

I can see the conflict in Mack’s expression as she searches V’s face for any sign of how he’s truly feeling. “I get it. It’s a lot to take in,” she says gently. “But we’re in this together, all three of us. We can figure it out, no matter what.”

V lets out a shaky breath, and his shoulders seem to relax slightly. “I know,” he replies, his voice quieter but more determined. “I had a son. His name was Braden, and he was the most perfect baby I’ve ever seen. He was my whole fucking world. And then he died in my arms.”

The revelation hangs heavy in the air as V finishes speaking. His confession about losing his baby has left us both stunned. The room feels colder, as if the weight of his painful memories has permeated the very atmosphere.

I exchange a glance with Mack, our eyes mirroring the mix of sympathy and understanding that courses between us. It’s clear that V has been carrying this burden for a long time, and the depth of his pain is immeasurable.

Mack is the first to find her voice, her tone soft and filled with empathy. “V,” she begins, her words careful and measured, “I can’t even imagine how difficult that must have been for you. I’m so sorry for your loss.”

V nods, his eyes filled with emotion as he takes a deep breath to steady himself. “Thank you,” he says, his voice quivering with vulnerability. “It’s been... it’s been a long time, but it never really goes away, you know?”

I can see the pain etched across his face, and my heart aches for him. I reach out and place a reassuring hand on his shoulder, offering silent support, bound by the ties of love and understanding.

V continues, his voice growing steadier as he opens up a bit more. “After losing my son, I made a promise to myself that I would never go through that kind of pain again. I swore off the idea of having another child. It’s why I reacted the way I did earlier.”

Mack nods, her compassion unwavering. “I get it. I do. And we don’t have to decide anything right now. Let’s just take things one step at a time and figure out how we want to move forward. And if I decide to keep this baby, I promise I won’t blame you for walking away.”

V’s eyes meet hers, and for a moment, there’s a flicker of hope in his gaze, as if he’s realizing that he doesn’t have to face his past pain alone. “Thank you,” he repeats, this time with a sense of gratitude that cuts through the darkness of his memories.

I look at them both, happy that things have worked out so quickly. And then I replay what Mack had just said.

“What do you mean if you decide to keep this baby?”



MACK

BURNT'S hovering started immediately while V had processed our news more slowly. After he explained his reaction, I knew giving him space to process would be best for us all. I just didn't know with that decision would come with Burnt mothering hen me for the both of them. Every morning, he shows up with breakfast. A new recipe he'd found online for pregnancy. Thankfully, prepared by someone else. Who I did not know, but most days it is edible.

I know that Burnt means well, but his overprotectiveness is driving me insane. Every time I try to get up and do something, he insists I sit back down and rest. It was like he thought pregnancy is some sort of debilitating disease, and that I am on the verge of collapsing at any moment.

While I appreciate the enthusiasm, his hovering is getting to be a bit too much. I need my independence. Now that he was a patched member of the club, he is free to roam. Apparently, he took that new perk a little seriously and parks his ass at the garage every single day since.

“Get away from me,” I threaten. “I'm fine.”

“These paint fumes can't be good for the ba...,” he starts before I press a gloved finger to his lips. “Finish that sentence, and I'll make your bike so bright pink, even Homer Simpson would blush.”

The last thing I need Judge to find out is that I'm pregnant a month into the job. After some intense web searching, and a few phone calls to other ladies in the industry. I'd come up

with a plan. A better respirator, more breaks, and knowing my limits. Other than that, until a doctor told me otherwise, I can still work.

“But,” he murmurs against my finger.

“I’m fine. I’m wearing a respirator,” I remind him. “You read the same reviews, I did. I’m safe.”

V watches from his garage bay, shaking his head at Burnt’s mother hen act.

“Go sit down,” I order him.

“I just want to make sure you’re okay,” he argues.

“I appreciate you looking out for me, Burnt. But I can handle myself just fine,” I say, giving his hand a reassuring squeeze. “You don’t need to hover over me all the time.”

Burnt looks at me for a moment, his expression softening. “I’m sorry, I just... I can’t help but worry,” he admits. “This is our baby, and I want to make sure you and our baby are safe.” He whispers the word low enough that the sound of the garage covers it up. V didn’t even react, so I know that we’re safe for now, but if he keeps this up, the entire world will know.”

“I know,” I say softly, reaching up to cup his cheek.

“But trust me, I’m doing everything I can to keep us both safe. And I won’t hesitate to ask for your help if I need it.”

I can see the relief in his eyes, and I know I made the right decision. I turn to V, who is now walking over to us. “Everything good, V?” I ask.

“Yeah, just finishing up some paperwork. Finally got Blake’s oil leak figured out. Most obscure fucking place I’ve ever seen,” he says, nodding towards his desk. “You guys need anything?”

“No, I’m good. Thanks, V,” I say, smiling at him. My eyes saying something entirely as I plead with him to find something for Burnt to do before I lose my shit on him.

“Want to take her for a spin, Burnt? She needs a test drive, and I need to get started on the Datsun that just arrived this morning.”

Burnt looks at me, his shoulders slumping in defeat. “How about I pick up lunch while I’m out?”

“Sounds good to me,” V answers. “Mack?”

“Sure,” I mutter. “Just get me whatever.” My stomach had not ceased to stop rolling, so matter what I ate, it would have a very high probability of coming back up again. “Could you get a lemonade? Heavy on the ice.”

“Anything,” Burnt smiles. A sense of renewed purpose for his energy. If I had to guess, gallons of lemonade would start showing up in my fridge next. Thank god, he didn’t have a key to my place.

V walks back to his station, pulling the keys from the top of his workstation, and tossing over to Burnt. “Take it slow first. Don’t put too much pressure on the engine and keep your eye on the oil pressure. She so much as ticks about average, shut it down and call me. We’ll tow her back.”

Burnt nods at the instructions. He peers over at me, glancing my way one more time before he stalks over to the waiting Corvette. He slides inside, and after V opens the bay door, he’s gone. A sigh of relief going with him when he’s out of sight.

“Thank you,” I mouth to V.

I get back to work. Today’s project is easy. Just quick coat of paint, and another layer of clear coat. Easy. I’d already laid

down the base coat earlier. All I had left was the clear coat. Putting on my mask again, I shift to grab my paint gun when a tap comes to my right shoulder. I gaze over and find Judge behind me. Over his shoulder, I see V stone still at his station.

“Got a second?”

“Sure,” I mumble from behind my respirator. I strip off my mask and lay it down on my workstation.

Judge stalks off towards the office with me hot on his heels. I strip off my gloves, stuffing them into my pockets, and unzip my coveralls down to my waist, where I tie them. I feel V’s eyes on me as I pass. Judge doesn’t stop in the main part of his office, but leads me to the manager’s office in the back.

He stops at the door, holding it open for me, and closing it once I’ve entered.

I look around the spacious room, taking in the high ceilings and the worn wallpaper on the walls. The manager’s desk dominates the space, a large metal monstrosity that almost dwarfs the statuesque man now sitting behind it.

“Take a seat,” he says, his deep voice resonating through the room. I sit in one of the leather chairs in front of the desk, my hands folded in my lap.

“I wanted to talk to you about Burnt,” he starts, his eyes piercing into mine.

“Burnt?” I mutter.

“Yes, Burnt. He’s constantly at the garage, hovering over you. Before you started working here, he only came here when V, or one guy, asked him as a prospect. Now, he’s here every day. Is he bothering you, Mack?”

“No, of course not,” I stutter.

Judge holds up a head. “If it is, I will take care of it.”

“This isn’t you can help me with,” I blurt out.

“Is that so?”

The dam breaks inside of me. The shit I’d built up for too long spilling over the top of the carefully constructed wall I built. “I’m pregnant, Judge.”

He sits up straight in his chair. “Is it Burnt’s?” he questions me.

“It might be, but I’m not one hundred percent sure,” I admit. Tears spilling down my face like a river. “There’s someone else, too.”

He leans back in his chair. Hands clasped. “V,” he declares.

I nod my head. “I know, it’s a mess.”

“Are the three of you...together?”

“Yes,” I admit.

Shock registers on his face. “That’s certainly not what I was expecting to hear.”

“Trust me, I get it.”

Judge reaches over, grabbing a tissue from a box on the edge of the desk, and extends it to me. “Sounds like we need to start at the beginning.”

And I do. I unleash everything I’d been feeling since I got here. How the three of us had met, how we struggled to stay away from each other, and now, unexpected pregnancy.

As I talk, I feel the weight of my emotions being lifted off my chest little by little. Judge listens with a neutral expression, nodding occasionally. When I’m finished, he takes a moment to process everything before speaking.

“Mack, I’m an old fucking man, so I won’t pretend to understand your situation or the complexities of your relationships,” he says, his voice calm and measured. “But I will say this: you need to think about what’s best for you and your baby.”

My heart sinks at the implication of his words. “Are you saying I should...get rid of it?” I ask, barely able to get the words out.

“No, no,” Judge shakes his head, holding up a hand. “That’s not what I’m saying at all. What I mean is that you need to consider your options. Will Burnt be a good father? Can V handle the responsibility of raising a child? And can the three of you make it work? Because it won’t be easy, Mack. Not by a long shot.”

The weight of his words bears down on me like a ton of bricks. I hadn’t even considered the practicalities of raising a child with two men, let alone the emotional turmoil that would come with it.

“I know,” I whisper. “I just...don’t know what to do.”

Judge leans forward, his gaze intense. “You’re a strong woman, Mack. You’ve made it this far on your own. And I have faith that you’ll make the right decision for you and your baby, whatever that may be.”

“What about my job? I am sleeping with two guys in the club. Won’t that be a problem?”

“For me and the club? No. For the guys, well, let’s just say I’m ready for the two of them to have someone who can whip them into shape. It’s been a long time coming, believe me,” he pauses with a smile. “That is, if that’s your decision. But no matter what your decision is, I want you to know that I’m here

for you. As is everyone at the club. We're a family here, and we'll support you no matter what."

I nod, grateful for his words. "Thank you, Judge. I appreciate it."

He nods in return before standing up from his desk. "Take some time to think things through, Mack. And if you need anything, ask."

I stand up as well, wiping away my tears. "Thank you. I will."

Judge comes from around the desk. His arms extended out, drawing me into a hug. "I mean it, Mack. Whatever you need, the club has you."

"Thank you," I cry into his chest.

He releases me, looking down at me. "I think you need to tell them your decision."

As I leave the office, I feel a sense of relief wash over me. Talking to Judge has helped me to sort through my thoughts and emotions. But there's still a long road ahead. The idea of raising a child with two men is daunting, but I know I'm not alone. I'll have the support of my family at the garage, and with their help, I'll make it work.

I look for V when I leave the office, and he's not at his station. The car Burnt had test driven is also gone. Lord, I hope it didn't break down. That's the last thing V needs for that dick of a car.

I guess our talk will have to wait.



V

I FIND BURNT outside the garage, leaning against the rough brick wall, the distant rumble of motorcycles and chatter from inside the building providing a muted backdrop to the conversation we need to have.

I turn to him, my expression serious. “Look, man, you need to back off some and give Mack her space.”

Burnt raises an eyebrow, clearly taken aback. “I’m just trying to help.”

I release a weary sigh, searching for the right words to convey my point. “Dude, I get it. We all want to support her, but the way you’ve been hovering over her—it’s pushing her to the brink. Just because she’s pregnant doesn’t mean she’s helpless. Mack’s a strong, independent woman. She can handle herself.”

Burnt shakes his head, frustration painting his features. “I know that, ok? But she’s so fucking stubborn. I just want to be there for her in case she needs me.”

“Yeah, well, she know that already. But the way you’ve been acting is over the fucking top. And it’s not just me who’s noticed. People are starting to talk. We’re drawing too much attention, and that’s not helping anyone, least of all Mack.”

Burnt groans, his head dropping back against the brick wall, his expression conflicted. “I just... I worry about her, V. I want to make sure she’s okay.”

Sometimes I forget how young Burnt truly is. Sure, he’s twenty-three, and that’s only five years younger than I am, but

in moments like this, those five years seem like an eternity. “Right now, she needs some space to figure things out. We can’t force this, and you can’t keep pushing her. It’s only going to make things more complicated.”

Burnt’s face twists with anger and he shoves away from the wall with a growl. “That’s easy for you to say, man. You have no idea what all of this means to me. You know what it’s like to have a child. To have a piece of you living and breathing apart from you, and you know what it’s like to lose that.” His hand comes up and he pokes himself in the chest with his thumb. “I’ve never had that. I’ve never had a connection to anyone like that. A blood tie. And if she decides she’s not going to keep this baby, I still won’t know what that’s like.”

I sigh, taking his place against the wall and stuffing my hands into the front pockets of my jeans. “How do you even know that baby is yours? It could be my DNA that won the race.”

“I don’t know,” Burnt replies. “But does it matter?”

Burnt’s question hangs in the air between us, and I consider it carefully. Does it really matter which one of us is this baby’s biological father? After all, we both share a deep connection with Mack, and that connection is what binds us together in this unique relationship. It’s that connection that created this baby in the first place.

I shake my head slowly, realizing the truth in Burnt’s words. “No, I guess it doesn’t. What matters is that we both love Mack. If she decides to keep the baby, we’ll both be there as fathers in every sense of the word.”

A warm smile grows across his face. “Exactly. It’s not about biology; it’s about love, and no man will ever love a

baby as much as we will love this one. Either one of us would burn the entire world to the ground to protect him or her.”

Mack steps out from the shadows of the garage, her appearance contradicting the strength she’s been trying to put off. Her eyes, glistening with unshed tears, dart around the dimly lit space until they finally land on Burnt and me. There’s a vulnerability in her gaze, a rawness she’s been trying to conceal.

“I’ve made my decision,” Mack says, her gaze unwavering as she looks at each of us in turn. “I’m going to keep the baby.”

A surge of emotions washes over me, a mixture of relief, joy, and a touch of apprehension. The reality of becoming a father is sinking in, and it’s both exhilarating and nerve-racking. But above all, there’s an overwhelming sense of happiness that Mack has chosen to bring this new life into the world, and we’ll be there for her every step of the way.

Burnt’s face breaks into a wide grin, and he steps forward, wrapping his arms around her, practically suffocating her in a hug. “Oh, thank God.”

I join the embrace, our trio huddled together in a moment of shared happiness. Mack’s choice has solidified our bond even further, bringing us together in a way I still don’t quite understand but wouldn’t change for anything.

What started off as one incredibly sexy night at the Vanilla Villa has turned into a family. An unconventional family maybe, but a family I can’t wait to take on this life with.



MACK

BURNT HOVERS OVER ME, his eyes full of concern. “Are you sure we aren’t hurting the baby?”

“It’s fine,” I reassure him for what has to be the thousandth time.

V freezes behind me, his stiff cock in my hand jerking with his body shift. “Could it hurt the baby?”

“God, not you, too. Pregnant women have been having sex since the dawn of time. The baby’s fine. I’m fine. We’re all fine. Can we get back to where we left off?”

I lean over, capturing Burnt’s lips with mine and kiss him deeply, desperate to resume where we left off.

It takes him a moment, but as soon as I sink my teeth into his lower lip, I know I have him back, lost in this moment with me and V.

As I sit astride his lap, Burnt’s palm glides down my body, the rough calluses on his fingertips dragging across my tender nipples making me tremble with desire. His length is hard and thick between my legs, the tip just where it needs to be. I moan softly, needing him inside of me.

“Please,” I gasp. “I promise it’s okay.”

V kneels beside us, his fingers running gently over my swollen belly. I can’t help but tense a little, just for a moment. What’s going through his head right now?

As my pregnancy has progressed, our sex life has never wavered, but now that I’m getting closer to the delivery, the

two seem obsessed with the idea of hurting the baby or putting me into preterm labor. No matter how many times I've tried to explain just how safe our little one is in there, it's an idea neither one can seem to get out of their heads.

V's gaze lifts from my belly, meeting my eyes with a smile, and even though my focus is mostly on Burnt's cock, I can't help but feel my love for him swell. V's been through so much, and knowing he's still here with us makes this experience even deeper. We made this baby together; we will raise it together.

The heat between me and Burnt is too much to resist, and V's touch on my belly only adds to the excitement.

Burnt presses himself into me just a little, kissing me deeply. He breaks away for a moment to whisper in my ear, "I love you so much."

"I love you, too," I whisper back, wrapping my arms around him. We've never said those words to each other, but it's something I know we've all felt since the beginning. "Both of you.

V doesn't have to say it back. It's clear in the way he looks at me in this moment.

I feel my heart racing with excitement, as V guides my hips down until Burnt's cock is seated deep inside of me. My gasp of pleasure is loud and low, but cut off when V's cock presses against the seam of my lips, hard and wanting, desperate for release.

"That's it, baby," V coaches from beside me. His fingers slide from my belly, finding a home between my legs. As I ride Burnt's cock, he watches my face, waiting for any sign of pain or discomfort. Sensations he'll never find because with

the three of us here, all I can feel is the love we share. The sensations of two men loving me and our baby overwhelm me with pleasure. Burnt and V move together. V's fingers. Burnt's cock. My lips taking V deep in my throat as I rock my hips. The three of us finding a rhythm together, our bodies moving in perfect harmony.

"I'm close," I gasp, my breaths coming out in shallow pants. My release swells, trembling and burning its way through me, the waves of pleasure radiating outwards, connecting the three of us together as one.

V's free hand grips my hair as he thrusts his cock deeper into my throat and Burnt stares up at us, his cheeks ruddy, his eyes filled with fire.

I don't know which of us takes the leap over the edge, but as I ride the wave of my release, Burnt and V are riding theirs right along with me. My head swims as I cry out, unable to concentrate on either one of them in this moment, but together, they massage my clit and lift my hips, dragging out my orgasm until I can barely breathe.

Sated, I fall to the side, flopping onto the bed. V lays down on the other side and together we lie there, our hearts hammering in our chests as we catch our breath. Just then, the baby kicks inside of me, once, twice, then three more times.

"Woah," V says, his hand sliding over the spot that had just visibly moved. "What was that?"

I grin up at him. "The baby kicked."

"Really?" Burnt asks, his hand finding another spot on my belly.

I lay my own hand there as well, and we wait.

Sure enough, another kick comes, quickly followed by another.

I laugh with delight, sharing a look of amazement with Burnt and V. For a moment, all our worries seem to slip away as we marvel at the miracle of life growing inside of me.

“Did we hurt it?” Burnt asks, worry lacing his tone.

V rolls his eyes. “No, dumbass. It’s normal. Your dick didn’t freak out our baby.”

“How the fuck should I know that?” he fires back.

“There’re these things called books, and the internet. Do your research.”

“Give him a break,” I tease, smacking V on the arm. “I barely understand all of this myself.”

Burnt chuckles, his gaze still on my belly, waiting for another kick.

We lay like that for hours, drifting in and out of sleep, all three of our hands pressed against my belly, already cuddling with our unborn gift.

Months ago, I was content to be alone. I was looking forward to it even. But now, I have these two amazing men in my life, and a child on the way who will have two loving fathers. I couldn’t feel luckier.



MACK

I TAKE a deep breath as I step into the dimly lit clubhouse bar, flanked by Burnt on one side and V on the other. This is it—the moment we step out together as an official trio. It's been a long time coming, and I'm both excited and nervous about how our club members will react.

As we make our way through the crowded room, the chatter and laughter of the bikers fill the air, punctuated by the clinking of glasses and the occasional burst of raucous laughter. I keep my eyes forward, trying not to let the anticipation show on my face. My rounded belly, which I've concealed beneath heavy coveralls at work, is now prominently on display in the form-fitting dress I've chosen for the evening. It's impossible for anyone to miss.

The three of us find an empty booth near the bar, and I slide in with Burnt on my left and V on my right. My heart races, but I maintain a calm exterior, determined not to let my nerves get the best of me. I steal a glance at Burnt, who's wearing a proud grin, and V, who appears both protective and vigilant. Their presence gives me a sense of security, like a shield against any potential judgment or scrutiny from our fellow club members.

As I look around the room, I notice some curious glances directed our way, and a few raised eyebrows. It's clear that our appearance as a triad has not gone unnoticed. I can feel the weight of their unspoken questions, but I choose to ignore them for now. Tonight is about us—about embracing our

unique relationship and showing the world that we're proud of who we are and what we share.

I take a deep sip of my drink, feeling a mix of emotions—excitement, trepidation, and a sense of liberation. This is a new chapter for all of us, and despite the uncertainty of how our club will react, I'm determined to savor every moment of this night. After all, we've come a long way, and we're not about to hide our love or our future together from anyone.

I'm nursing my drink and trying to blend into the background when Karma approaches our booth. He's always been friendly, and tonight is no exception. I offer him a warm smile as he greets us, my hand resting protectively on my baby bump.

"Hey, Mack," Karma says with a nod to me, and then he turns to Burnt and V. "Burnt, V. How's it going, fellas?"

Burnt replies with a nod, and V offers a simple, "Good."

Karma's eyes drift toward my rounded belly, and his curiosity is evident, but he doesn't ask. Instead, his lips tip up in a smile and he just shakes his head. Just then, his wife, Lindsay, appears at his side. She possesses an easy smile, her presence exuding warmth and camaraderie. She looks at me with genuine interest and asks the inevitable question, "When are you due?"

"Three months," I reply with a smile, feeling an instant sense of camaraderie with her. It's nice to know that not everyone here will treat our relationship and impending parenthood with judgment or curiosity.

Lindsay nods glances around the room and then leans in closer, her voice lowered conspiratorially. "Come with me. Us

ladies tend to hang out over in the far corner. We like to talk shit about the guys without them hearing.”

Karma scowls at her and she just grins, takes my hand and drags me out of the booth. “Come with me, girl. We’ve all been dying to meet you.”

Eyes follow us as we approach the others, and I’m surprised when several sets of eyes land on first me, and then my belly.

“Well, hello,” a pretty redhead says as I take an empty chair amongst. She reaches out then, offering me her hand. I give it a gentle shake and listen as she says, “I’m Blair, and this is Grace, Cora, and Delilah. It’s nice to finally meet you.”

My cheeks flush as I realize how odd it must seem that I’ve been here for months, working alongside their husbands and partners every single day, but have never actually met any of them. “Hello.”

“So, you’re the hotshot painter my man can’t stop talking about,” Cora grins. “He didn’t tell me you were pregnant though.”

My cheeks flush. “That would be because he didn’t know. We’ve kept it a secret until tonight.”

Lindsay leans in closer. “And we is who? You and Burnt? Or you and V?”

Well, here goes nothing. As much as I love what the three of us share, I am always painfully aware of how unconventional our relationship is. “Both,” I admit.

Every set of eyes around me grow wide with surprise, but it’s Cora who whistles with appreciation, throwing her hands up as she says, “God damn. Two hot bikers all to yourself? You’re my hero.”

The laughter that follows her declaration eases my mind, and I can't help but grin. "Trust me, they're a handful, but I wouldn't have it any other way."

"So, which one is the father?" Grace asks, her brow furrowed a little as she tries to understand.

I shrug. "Both of them. We don't really care which of them it is. We share this baby."

Blair's smile is wide and filled with happiness. "Oh, I love that so much. I have to admit, I could never handle two men. GP is more than enough to keep me on my toes, but this baby of yours is going to be so loved."

"Do you know what you're having?" Delilah asks.

I nod, but give them a wry smile. "It's a secret. The guys don't even know yet."

"Ah, this is so exciting," Lindsay cries, clapping her hands with excitement.

Just then, a bottle breaks on the other side of the bar. Turning in my chair, I watch as Mom storms towards the exit, the other men standing around, their laughter loud enough to hear from here.

"Looks like Hash just told Mom how many hits his dating profile is getting," Lindsay whispers.

Grace claps a hand over her mouth and giggles. "He didn't actually do it, did he?"

Lindsay nods, her eyes dancing with laughter. "Oh yeah, and apparently he's got a whole lot of options."

Feeling my brows knit together, I shake my head. "I don't understand. Why is that a bad thing?"

“Mom was being a smartass,” Blair explains. “So Hash told him he was going to create a profile for him. Mom was against it, but Hash did it anyway.”

“Maybe he’ll finally find someone that treats him right,” Delilah says softly. “From what I hear, his wife wasn’t very nice to him.”

Blair just shakes her head. “He doesn’t want another woman.”

I watch the group of burly men across the room and smile. “Sometimes we don’t know what we want. It has to just happen, and then we’re left wondering how we managed without it.”



BURNT

NINE MONTHS LATER

WE'D DECIDED EARLY in the pregnancy that we needed a place to put down roots. That place ended up being where all of this began. Mack's apartment. The club had pitched in, helping us renovate the place to get it ready for our new arrival. A few months of work, and we had a space big enough for the three of us. We'd taken down the wall between the primary bedroom and spare bedroom to add more space for a California King size bed.

The other bedroom was updated for the nursery. The only space we hadn't touched yet was the garage below, but Mack insisted that the only person deciding about that space would be here, so we left it alone... for now.

"I think my water broke," Mack whispers as she wakes me up from the couch of our shared apartment.

I sat up, startled, as I looked over at Mack. She was clutching at her stomach; her face twisted in a grimace of pain. "Are you sure?" I asked, my voice rising with concern.

Mack nodded, biting down hard on her bottom lip as another wave of pain hit her.

"Okay, okay," I said, jumping up from the couch and pulling her into my arms. "Let's get you to the car. V! It's go time."

He emerges from the primary bedroom, three bags already in hand. “Already ahead of you. You help her down the stairs. I got the bags and the door.”

Before I can turn around, Mack is already halfway down the stairs on her own. She’d have made it all the way down except for the contraction that had clearly hit her hard.

“Fucccck!” she bellows from below me.

“Hang on. I’m coming.” I take the stairs two at a time. V hot on my heels with the bags. “Fuck the keys.”

“I got them,” V coolly replies.

We make it outside. Mack waddles to the driver’s seat and opens the door before I stop her.

“You’re not driving.”

“It’s my car,” she argues. “No one drives my car.”

Another contraction hits, doubling her over in the middle as she tries to breathe through it. “Tell me again that you can drive.”

“Fine,” she hisses through clenched teeth. I help her to the passenger side of the car, but instead of going into the front seat, V directs us both into the backseat.

“I’m driving,” he declares before jogging around to the driver’s side. He slips into the driver’s seat, turning the key into the ignition. Mack looks at me, breathing in and out as the contraction keeps rolling through her body.

“Don’t wreck my car.”

“Not planning it on it,” V answers back before he peels out of the garage. Mack and I sliding into her other with the motion. “Shit, sorry. Hang on. Hospital, here we come.”

“Where did you learn how to drive?” Mack yells at him.

“Nascar,” he smiles. I chuckle, but Mack punches me in the arm before she screams in my face. V’s face goes serious in the rearview mirror.

“How long do you think that was from the last one?”

“A couple of minutes. Why?”

“Dammit, Mack,” V hisses. “How long have you been in labor?”

“I don’t know, a few hours maybe?” Mack grits out, her hand tightening around mine. “I’m sorry, okay? I thought it was just false labor for the longest time.”

V doesn’t answer, but the car speeds up as he barrels down the freeway towards the hospital. I rub soothing circles into Mack’s palm with my thumb, trying to keep her calm even as I can feel my heart pounding in my chest.

“Are you scared?” she whispers to me, her grip on my hand getting even tighter.

I don’t lie to her. “Terrified.”

She squeezes my hand once before she starts screaming again, the pain of the contraction clearly getting worse. V doesn’t look back at us, but I can see the way his knuckles are bone-white against the steering wheel.

I don’t know how long we take to get to the hospital, but it feels like forever. When we finally pull up to the entrance, V hops out, already yelling for help as he opens up the back door. Two nurses come rushing out, a gurney following closely behind. They help Mack onto it, wheeling her inside and out of sight.

I can only follow, my heart in my throat as I watch them take her away. A few minutes later, a nurse comes running from the direction they took Mack.

“She’s pushing. I need the dad with me right now.”

We both step forward. The nurse looks at us in confusion. “We’re both the dad,” I shrug.

The nurse shakes her head. “You know what? We can figure this all out later, but if you want to be there when your baby is born, you need to come with me now.” V and I look at each other before breaking out in a run behind the nurse. We stop outside the room. Mack is screaming on the other side of the door. The nurse hands us two paper gowns, head coverings, and shoves us inside.

“Father only,” the doctor positioned between Mack’s legs orders as we both enter, scrambling to gown up.

“Don’t ask,” the nurse replies.

V goes to the left and I to the right. Each taking her hand as she screams through a push. Her grip is like a vise around both of our hands.

The tension in the room is palpable as Mack grits her teeth, pushing with all her might. I can see the sweat pouring down her face as she bears down with each contraction. V and I are both there, trying to support her as much as possible.

“You’re doing amazing, baby,” I whisper to her, trying to keep her focused.

“I can’t do this,” she wails in response, tears streaming down her face.

“Yes, you can,” V encourages her, his grip on her hand never faltering.

The doctor looks up at us. “She’s crowning. Push, Mack, push!”

Mack screams again, pushing with everything she has left in her. Then, suddenly, a cry fills the room, cutting through the air like a knife. I feel a lump form in my throat as tears prick at my eyes.

“It’s a girl,” the doctor announces, holding her up for us to see. A coil of Mack’s raven black hair flattened on her tiny head. She cries within seconds.

Mack’s face is a mix of exhaustion and pure joy as she reaches out to take our daughter, tears streaming down her face. I wrap my arms around her as V leans down to place a gentle kiss on our son’s forehead.

“We did it,” Mack whispers, looking up at me.

“Yeah, we did,” I reply, pressing a kiss to her forehead. “Welcome to the world.”

V leans over, taking my free hand. “Welcome to the family.”

The weight of the moment hits me like a ton of bricks as I look around at the three people that are now my entire world. We may have started everything in Mack.

“Don’t get too comfortable,” the doctor mutters as the nurse steps around me to take our daughter from Mack’s chest. “Baby B will be here right soon enough.”

“Baby B?” V and I say in unison, turning to Mack who, despite being exhausted, beams up at us.

“Surprise?”

The floor feels like it’s about to fall out from underneath me. Suddenly, I feel a wave of panic wash over me. Two

babies? How are we going to handle two newborns at the same time? I look over at V, hoping for some kind of reassurance, but he looks just as shocked as I am.

“Two?” he whispers, his eyes flickering back and forth between Mack and the doctor.

“That’s what the ultrasound showed,” the doctor confirms, looking up from between Mack’s legs. “We have to move fast. She’s already crowning.”

“Why didn’t you tell us?” V asks.

“I didn’t want to ruin the surprise. This perfect surprise... aahhh!” she screams as the next contraction cuts her off.

I feel like I’m in a daze as I watch the doctor and nurses move around the room, preparing for our second child. Mack is breathing heavily, her face twisted in pain as she pushes through another contraction. V and I are on either side of her, holding her hands and offering words of encouragement.

“Come on, baby,” I say, leaning down to press a kiss to her sweaty forehead. “You can do this.”

The second birth is even more intense than the first. There’s twice as much screaming, twice as much sweat, twice as much of everything. But finally, finally, we hear another crying baby.

“We have another girl,” the doctor announces, holding her up for us to see. Where our older daughter had Mack’s dark hair, this little one had lighter brown hair.

The nurse returns with our older daughter, placing her on Mack’s chest with her twin sister.

I feel like I’m in a dream as I look at these two tiny, squalling beings that have taken over our lives in an instant.

Mack is crying tears of joy as she cradles them both to her chest.

V and I share a look, both of us shaking our heads in disbelief.

“We did it,” V whispers, his voice thick with emotion. “We have a family.”

I nod, tears threatening to spill over as I look down at our two daughters. “We did. And we’re going to love them with everything we have.”

Mack looks up at us, her eyes shining. “Thank you,” she whispers.

I lean down to kiss her, feeling more in love with her than ever before. “No, thank you,” I say. “For giving us these two beautiful girls.”

V leans in to kiss her cheek. “We’re a family now,” he says softly. “And nothing is ever going to change that.”

I can feel the weight of his words settle over us, a sense of peace washing over me as I look down at the two tiny humans that have changed our lives forever. Our family may be new, but it’s already full of love. And that, more than anything else, is all that matters.



MOM

THE CLUBHOUSE IS BUZZING with excitement, and the scent of sizzling barbecue wafts through the air as I nurse a cold beer. It's a special day, a day to welcome the newest additions to our extended family. The rumble of motorcycles outside signaled the arrival of Mack, V, and Burnt, and I couldn't wait to meet their new babies.

As they walk in, a wave of hushed admiration ripples through the crowd. Mack, V, and Burnt, each holding a precious bundle wrapped in soft blankets. Newborn twins, Maya and Maeve, and their tiny faces are peacefully nestled against their parents' shoulders.

I can't help but smile as I watch them approach, the sight of these tough-as-nails bikers cradling their delicate daughters a heartwarming testament to the depths of our brotherhood. The hardened exterior that defines our club melts away in the presence of these two innocent souls.

Mack's radiant smile and V's proud, protective stance speak volumes about the love and joy these babies have already brought into their lives. Burnt, usually the quiet one, beams with a mixture of awe and contentment, a father's love etched across his face.

I raise my beer in silent salute as they draw closer, knowing that this day marks the beginning of a new chapter in our club's history. Our family has grown by two, and as I take in the sight of Mack, V, Burnt, and their beautiful twins, I can't help but feel a sense of profound gratitude for the bonds that tie us all together.

I take a swig of my beer as Hashtag approaches, a mischievous grin on his face. He shoves his phone in my direction, showing me a picture of a beautiful woman.

“Who the fuck is that?” I ask, raising an eyebrow.

Hashtag grins and points at the woman in the photo. “That is your date for tonight.”

I nearly choke on my beer, surprised by his revelation. “What the hell are you talking about, asshole?”

Hashtag’s grin infuriates me as I glare back at him through narrowed eyes. “You met her on the dating site,” he informs me. “And she’s been dying to meet you in person.”

“Shit,” I mutter, more pissed than I’ve been in a long time. “I fucking told you I’m never dating again. What did you do?”

Hashtag just grins again. “I arranged one anyway. Come on. You can’t be a lonely old man forever.”

“Watch me,” I snarl.

The smug grin on his face nearly sends me over the edge. How dare he fucking go over my head and pull a stunt like this? My wife fucking died. I don’t want another one.

“Oh, look,” Hash says, his eyes cast at something over my shoulder. “There she is now.”

I glare at him, angry and determined not to look. Rage washes over me in violent waves. Who does this motherfucker think he is? Before I can stop myself, I pull my arm back and smash my beer bottle on the floor in front of him.

Silence fills the room, but I don’t give a single fuck.

Turning, I storm toward the door. It takes everything in my power not to look at her as I leave. And I fail.

The woman is maybe fifty years old. She is wearing a gray knee length skirt with a white blouse and a white blazer. Her hair reaches her shoulders, and not a single one is out of place. She's an attractive woman, but her wide eyes are staring around her in horror as she takes in the clubhouse. And to top it all off, if she didn't look stuck up enough, she has her perfectly manicured fingers clutching a set of actual pearls.

Rage and embarrassment washes over me as I push past the nameless woman and storm out the door. The last thing I hear as I go is Grace's voice saying, "Oh, bless her heart."

Read more about Mom's story in the final book of the Black Hoods MC Series, [Dark Solace](#).

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Avelyn Paige is a USA Today and Wall Street Journal bestselling author who writes stories about dirty alpha males and the brave women who love them. She resides in a small town in Indiana with her husband and three fuzzy kids, Jezebel, Cleo, and Asa.

Avelyn spends her days working as a cancer research scientist and her nights sipping moonshine while writing. You can often find her curled up with a good book surrounded by her pets or watching one of her favorite superhero movies for the billionth time. Deadpool is currently her favorite.

[Want to talk books? Join Avelyn's Facebook group to learn about new releases, future series, and to hang out with other readers.](#)



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Geri Glenn writes alpha males. She is a USA Today Bestselling Author, best known for writing motorcycle romance, including the Kings of Korruption MC series. She lives in the Thousand Islands with her two young girls, one big dog and one terrier that thinks he's a Doberman, a hamster, and two guinea pigs whose names she can never remember.

Before she began writing contemporary romance, Geri worked at several different occupations. She's been a pharmacy assistant, a 911 dispatcher, and a caregiver in a nursing home. She can say without a doubt though, that her favorite job is the one she does now—writing romance that leaves an impact.

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