

DEVIL'S CRAVING

WRITTEN BY
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DEVIL'S CRAVING

DEVIL'S DISCIPLES

BOOK 4

A.F. MONTOYA

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CONTENT WARNING

This book contains scenes that include drug use and references to self-harm and sexual assault. If these scenes are triggers for you, please read with caution.

CHAPTER 1

SAM

Sucking in a deep breath, I rapped my knuckles on the door. I should've known better than to accept when Angelo asked me to switch jobs. He was an ass who didn't think women should work as electricians. It didn't matter that I was vastly better at my job than him. He was still an asshole about it. Then again, the rest of the guys I worked with weren't any better. I probably should've seen right through his sickly sweet pleading. He probably didn't even have a grandma to visit in the hospital. Sometimes I was way too nice.

When I agreed to take the thirty-minute drive to this out of the way town for this job, I looked forward to some peace and quiet. The town was tiny, not a lot of action, so I figured it'd be a simple job. I never expected to pull up in front of an actual motorcycle club. The building itself looked like an old warehouse of sorts that'd been repurposed. They had painted it black and there was a large skull with horns and smoke coming out of its mouth painted on one side with the name Devil's Disciples stamped above it. Not only did Angelo send me to a motorcycle club, he sent me to one of the most terrifying clubs in the country. If I survived this, I was going to kill him.

No one answered the first time I knocked, but I could hear laughter and shouts inside. I knocked a little harder, a small part of me hoping they wouldn't answer so I could get the hell out of dodge. I'd never been that lucky though because I heard someone call out from the other side.

“Get the fuckin' door!”

The door pulled open as someone spoke, staring over his shoulder. “Yeah, yeah. I got it. Man, you’d think with how often you’re getting tail, you’d be in a better—”

The man ducked suddenly as what looked like a beer bottle shattered against the wall where his head had been a moment ago. I stumbled back, nearly tripping down the stairs of the stoop, my eyes wide. The man who’d opened the door straightened, raising an eyebrow slowly.

“Your aim sucks, man.”

“Clink, I swear to fuckin’ god, I’ll kill you!”

The man called Clink just smirked before turning his attention to me. He tipped his head, his brow furrowing.

“Woah. Hey, beautiful. Did I win the lotto or something?”

It took a minute to pull myself together after such a violent display. I cleared my throat, putting on as much of an air of professionalism as I could muster. “Hello. My name is Sam, with Smart Energy Electric. I’m here to meet with...” I looked down at the clipboard with my paperwork in my hand. I knew it already, but my voice was starting to shake from the nerves and I didn’t want to give myself away. These guys were terrifying. “... someone named Nevada about a wiring problem?”

Clink’s eyebrows shot up. “You’re the electrician?”

I pursed my lips against the urge to scowl. Of course, he’d question it. Most customers did. They automatically assumed because I was a woman, I didn’t know what the hell I was doing.

“Yes. I believe we had an appointment for—”

He snorted, interrupting me. “Fuck, this oughtta be good. Come on in.”

I’d been here less than five minutes, and my patience was already running thin. Angelo was seriously going to suffer once I got my hands on him. I followed Clink inside, taking in the space as we headed for the back. The first floor was one big open space and screamed man-cave heaven. Big leather

couches and a massive TV on the right, pool tables and poker tables on the left and more than one bar on either side of the room. It was crowded with men in leather vests, some with the logo I saw outside on their backs, others plain and undecorated. All eyes swung our way as we walked past and the uneasy feeling that started outside compounded. I kept my chin up. I knew better than to let anyone see me as weak, especially in my line of work.

“Yo, Clink. Who’s the babe?”

Clink didn’t answer outside of shooting the hollering man a wicked grin. He seemed to get a lot of pleasure out of me being here and I had a sneaking suspicion I knew why. No doubt this was a building full of misogynists and I would be heading home with another client saying I couldn’t pull off the job. He marched up to one of the few rooms on the main floor, throwing the door open without knocking.

“VP, you’ve got a visitor.”

There were three men inside the small office, all of them crowded around a desk with scowls on their faces. I hesitated at the threshold of the door, ice filling my veins. The one closest to me was a grizzly older man with a long beard, his hair tied back into a ponytail. The one standing near the wall on the left was all in black, tall and intimidating, a suspicious look on his face as his gaze swept over me. But it was the one sitting behind the desk that made the hair on the back of my neck stand on end. He looked like a typical biker with his tattoos and dark beard, but it was the murderous look in his eye that made me want to turn tail and run.

“Clink, you’re on my last nerve,” he snarled.

Clink stuck his hands in his pockets, lifting his shoulders carelessly. “Would you have wanted me to leave her outside?”

The man’s gaze shifted to me and I stiffened, my knuckles turning white on my clipboard. His eyes narrowed like he noticed the discomfort, but he didn’t look away.

“What do you want?”

“I-I’m from Smart Energy Electric. I have an appointment with someone named Nevada,” I rushed out.

He glanced at the older man, who had a deep frown on his face as he studied me. Grateful not to be the focus of the intimidating biker, I followed his gaze and locked eyes with the older man.

“You’re the electrician?”

He looked confused and normally that would annoy me, but I was nervous and I left all my snark at the door as I came into the building. I nodded quickly.

“I’m Sam.”

I didn’t think it was possible for his frown to get deeper, but it was so deep it pulled at the lines of his face. He clearly wasn’t expecting me, and I wasn’t so desperate for a job that I wanted to piss these guys off by going up against him.

“If you’d prefer someone else, I’d—”

The one behind the desk made an irritated noise. “We ain’t got time for that shit. You any good?”

Stubborn pride shoved down some of the nerves, and I lifted my chin as I met his angry gaze. “I’m good.”

He waved me away. “Then get it done. We’re runnin’ blind without Neo’s computer and I’m sick of ‘im usin’ my office.”

I had no idea what any of that meant, but terrifying boys’ club or not, I could do this job. Hopefully without any of them staring at me because I was starting to sweat. The one in the back hadn’t stopped looking at me since I showed up, and his stare felt menacing.

“Clink, show ‘er the way. And come in my office without knocking again and I’ll end you.” He snarled the last part, but Clink only grinned. He spun and gestured grandly out of the office.

“M’lady.”

Unlike the others, Clink didn’t intimidate me in the slightest, and I rolled my eyes as I stepped past him. Once the

door to the office shut behind me, I let out a breath. That was the most intense conversation I'd ever had in my entire life and I said maybe two sentences. If there wasn't a room full of men watching me, I'd probably want to shake out the nerves from my hands. Instead, I turned my focus to Clink and raised an eyebrow.

“Ready when you are.”

He smirked and loped past me, heading towards the stairs.

“Lucky bastard!” someone called out.

“No fuckin' way she's with him. He's got no game!”

“Care to share?”

The catcalls were annoying and a little embarrassing. They all assumed I was going upstairs for some sort of booty call or something, not because I had a job to do. I felt my cheeks burn, and I ground my teeth to keep my mouth shut.

I had never been that person. I had to have a voice to make it anywhere in my career field, but after meeting the three in the office, I felt like it was in my best interest to keep my personality smothered for the time being. A building full of dangerous bikers didn't seem like the place to mouth off.

Clink led me down a long hallway to a room at the end, shoving the door open again with no warning.

“Prospect! It's your lucky day!”

The man inside looked over his shoulder warily, studying me before turning back to Clink. He wasn't alone. Another man was lounging on the bed with his hands tucked behind his head and a baseball cap pulled over his eyes. He didn't even look up when Clink came in.

“What is it?”

“Got you an electrician to fix the bullshit with your computer. You'll finally be able to start workin' off your debt.”

A muscle twitched in the man's jaw before he sighed and nodded. When he looked back at me, there was none of the

judgment like the rest of the men I'd dealt with so far. He stood and offered me his hand.

"I'm Neo—"

"The fuck you are," the man on the bed grumbled. He still hadn't bothered to open his eyes, but he sounded annoyed. The one shaking my hand hesitated before grimacing and trying again.

"I'm Lewis. I appreciate your help. I can do computer shit, but I'm not great with the wiring and the outlet keeps surging."

Clink whacked Lewis on the back of the head with a mock scowl. "Don't use foul language around a lady. You know better."

Since he was actually being polite compared to the rest, I rolled my eyes at Clink. "Like you have any idea how to treat a lady."

CHAPTER 2

CLINK

There it was. I was waiting for her to stop hiding her fire. I got the intimidation, meeting Prez, VP, and Reaper at the same time was a little like trial by fire, but I'd seen sparks of her spicy personality and I was looking for a way to bring it back out once we left Prez's office.

I shot her a smug grin. "Honey, just ask, and I'll show you just how well I know about how to treat a woman."

The look of annoyance that overtook her features was hilarious, and I grinned at her. If she was looking for gentlemen around here, she came to the wrong spot. She either had to get used to the way we talked or walk away. I didn't want her to leave yet, so I kept pushing her buttons to make sure she could handle it.

When I lifted my eyebrows expectantly, she rolled her eyes again. "Not gonna happen. Besides, your right hand would get jealous."

That made Brewer snort from his spot on the bed. When we'd dropped Neo back down to prospect for screwing over the crew, we knew we wouldn't be able to pull him off the job. He was the only hacker we had, and he was damn good at it. Instead, he got assigned a full-time babysitter. He couldn't take a shit by himself anymore and while it pissed him off to no end, it was better than the alternative. Croy wanted to kill him and I fully backed that decision. Asshole may have been coerced, but he still fucked with my crew and I don't let anyone screw with us.

Before I could comment again, she gave Neo her full focus. “So, where’s the problem?”

He gestured to the wall behind him. He’d been attempting to figure out what was wrong with it on his own since he couldn’t do his damn job without being connected and Croy’s office was taken, but he wasn’t getting anywhere.

Sam dropped into a squat, frowning at the wires that were hanging out of the wall. “Who did this?”

Neo scrubbed the back of his neck, clearing his throat. “Uh, I did. I thought I could figure it out if I saw what was going on.”

Irritation flashed over her face before she settled crossed legged on the floor in front of the wires, pulling out a few tools from her bag.

It stunned the shit out of me when I opened the door and saw her standing there. I thought for a minute that one of the guys ordered a stripper or something. Not that she was dressed provocatively. She had on jeans and a collared shirt with a company logo printed on the pocket. But she was so gorgeous I couldn’t see her working with her hands unless she had her hands on someone, more specifically me. Her hair was light brown, almost blonde. She tied it up in a ponytail, but it was still long enough to run down her back. Her creamy skin was flawless, not a hint of makeup on her face. You wouldn’t catch one of the sweetbutts without a face full of makeup, but Sam wasn’t a fucking sweetbutt. She had hazel eyes that were so damn expressive, showing her annoyance, her seriousness, her fear. When they turned to focus on the wires, I felt my gaze drop.

She was toned, like she worked out a bit. The exercise did nothing to take away from that ass, though. Her petite figure only drew attention to her wide hips and ass. I was staring, but she hadn’t noticed yet, too busy studying whatever shit Neo had done.

“How old is this building?”

He frowned, and even I was clueless on that answer. Brewer was no better, shrugging carelessly. Sam sighed.

“Okay, can one of you go ask?”

“What for?” I queried.

I honestly didn’t care. I just wanted to rile her up a little more. She shot me a flat look, and I smiled triumphantly.

“Because it looks like the wires are old and frayed. I can fix the ones here, but the likelihood that you’ll have problems in the future is pretty high unless you replace it.”

“Sounds like you gotta talk to Prez about that.”

It was quick, but I saw the flash of fear that crossed her face before she masked it, turning her attention to the wires in front of her. It wasn’t an uncommon reaction. Prez was a scary motherfucker, but he didn’t hurt women. Pretty sure the first lady would maim him.

Speaking of... “Where’s the first lady?”

Brewer opened his eyes lazily. “Workin’. Why?”

“I wanted to ask her something.”

He raised an eyebrow at me, but I wasn’t about to get into it with him. Brewer and I were cool. He had the patience of a saint and was usually the last person to get annoyed when I was fucking around too much, but there were some things I didn’t share with my brothers. I wanted to see if I could get the first lady to take me with her to work, see what I could get my hands on while she was there.

He studied me for a second before shrugging. “Might wanna wait outside for her. Once she talks to Prez, it’s gonna be a fuckin’ shit show.”

When I frowned, he let out a heavy sigh. “Prez wants to put the girls on lockdown.”

My mouth fell open. “Fuck. Again?”

He nodded. “With Hammer fuckin’ around, he doesn’t want them goin’ out.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Neo's face pale, and he ducked his head. Asshole better hide. He was one reason Hammer was back and gaining traction. Neo and Wrecker decided to steal from us and sell to the fucker, giving him exactly what he needed to crawl out from his little hidey hole. A few weeks ago, he attacked Reaper's little sister while she was spending time with the San Diego charter. Once we got ahold of him, he'd be facing both Croy and Reaper, which meant he was officially fucked.

"That's gonna be a fight. Riley loves to work."

That was putting it lightly. Riley, the club first lady and Croy's woman, got her nursing degree and hit the ground running. The doc who regularly fixed us up was so happy about someone being around to take on some of the workload, he gave her a job at his hospital and basically let her do whatever the hell she wanted. They spent so much time together that Croy had to threaten his life to get time with his old lady.

Letting out a heavy sigh, I leaned against the wall. Now, if I wanted to talk to Riley, I had to be strategic about it. She and Croy fought almost constantly. It usually ended in really annoyingly loud sex between the two of them, but if Croy put her on lockdown, she'd be a hellion to deal with and the chance I'd have to go with her to work would disappear.

It didn't take long for Sam to do what she came here to do. I didn't know shit about electric work, but she patched the shit up and put it back together before letting Neo plug his computer back in. She put her tools away and pushed to her feet, a deep frown on her face when she spoke.

"I need to meet with whoever's in charge of the building. The patch might handle that specific outlet for the time being, but the wires are really old. It'll happen again, without a doubt."

I could tell she didn't actually want to go meet with Croy. I tried not to smirk at the look on her face, but she must've noticed anyway, because she scowled at me.

"Shut up. Let's go."

Putting my hands up in surrender, I chuckled as I followed her out the door. The more I irritated her, the less terrified she looked, so I'd keep doing it until she didn't need me to anymore.

I debated throwing the door open again. It'd basically guarantee that Croy's foul mood would be focused on me instead of her, but it'd also piss him off more and that wouldn't help. Instead, I knocked politely. Good thing too, since it wasn't Nevada and Reaper in there with him anymore. Apparently, I missed my shot at meeting the first lady.

"No!"

"Baby, I'm not fuckin' askin'. Either take the damn security or your ass is staying here!"

They were screaming so loud at each other that they didn't even hear me knock. Sam turned to me, her eyes wide.

"Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, she's good. The first lady is a force to be reckoned with. I'd probably reconsider interrupting them, though, unless you wanna have that kind of attention on you instead," I smirked.

She looked alarmed. It was only a half truth. Croy would be annoyed, but Riley wouldn't let him take his mood out on a stranger. I just didn't want to be involved. I tipped my head towards the bar.

"Want a drink?"

She shook her head quickly. "I don't drink. And it's like noon."

I shrugged, gesturing towards the couches to wait out the fight. "Five o'clock somewhere. Why don't you drink?"

Her expression shuttered instantly, and she spun on her heel, walking away. My eyebrows shot up. That was an intense reaction. I followed her, moving in front of her when she wouldn't look my way, and gave her an expectant look. She glared at me.

“I just don’t. How long exactly is this going to take? I have other jobs today.”

My curiosity only grew, but the office door flew open and a seething Riley stormed out, stomping up the stairs. Sam watched with a concerned look on her face and when she turned to me, I jerked my chin towards the office.

“Looks like he’s free now.”

She swallowed hard, and her grip on her little clipboard tightened. I would’ve offered to go with her, but it was interesting to watch her summon her courage, her chin going up despite the fact that her face was pale. She marched over to the office door, knocking lightly, and disappeared inside when Croy barked that she could enter. Here’s hoping she survived the meeting because I wanted to see her again.

CHAPTER 3

SAM

“What?”

The man’s snarl from the other side of the door made me jump, and I seriously reconsidered going to speak to him. I mostly talked to the older guy, Nevada, over email. Maybe I could just ask where he was and leave the terrifying man alone.

Not wanting to piss him off any more by making him wait, I poked my head into the office. It was empty aside from the one behind the desk. He was scowling at the wall, a glass of what looked like whiskey in his hand. He took a drink before glancing at me with an annoyed look.

“You gonna just hide over there or what?”

I grimaced, edging into the room. I didn’t close the door all the way behind me. I wanted to make sure someone could hear me if I screamed because this guy tried to kill me. Not that many of them would come to my rescue. What little I knew about motorcycle clubs, they were a loyal bunch and would probably help him instead of me.

“Did you fix it?”

I nodded quickly. “Yes, for now, but—”

“The fuck do you mean for now?”

I hesitated, seriously reconsidering this entire conversation. I should’ve just emailed with my findings. Then at least there’d be miles of distance between us.

“Well, I patched the problem, but while I was in there, I noticed that a lot of the wiring was old and I think this problem might reoccur unless you replace the wiring in the building.”

I watched in morbid fascination as he fought to keep control of his emotions. His lip twitched like he was holding back a scowl, his jaw tightened and his grip on the glass looked so intense I was surprised it didn't shatter in his hand. I took a step back unconsciously, worried I went too far and pissed him off irreparably.

“How much?”

The growl was low and dark. I wanted to run like hell from this man.

“I-I—”

The door flew open behind me, the woman I saw earlier barreling inside, her face still flushed and angry. She opened her mouth to say something, but came up short when she noticed me standing there. Her brow furrowed, and she tipped her head.

“Uh, hey. Who are you?”

“She's the electrician. I'm busy right now, baby. My decision hasn't changed.”

She shot him a dirty look before glancing back at me. Unlike him, she seemed to have better control of her emotions because she drew in a deep breath before smiling and offering me her hand.

“I'm Riley, Croy's old lady. Gotta say, I'm surprised they let a woman do the job.”

Shaking her hand, I lifted a shoulder. “They didn't know until I already showed up. I got the job done so...”

She nodded. “Probably better than any guy could do, too. You fixed Neo's room?”

Croy growled, and her head whipped around to glare at him. He lifted an eyebrow at her and gave her a look, and she

frowned for a second before making a face. “Shit. I forgot. Lewis. You fixed Lewis’s room.”

The same thing happened upstairs. I didn’t know what it meant that they kept getting his name wrong, but I wasn’t about to ask questions. All I wanted was to get out of here.

“Yes, I was just explaining that the patch will work for now, but you may want to consider replacing the wiring because I noticed it’s a little old.” My voice shrank. Riley seemed a lot less intimidating than Croy, but it wasn’t Riley who I was doing the job for. At least, I didn’t think so. I didn’t actually know what an old lady was, but it didn’t sound like someone in charge. It couldn’t have anything to do with age though because she looked about the same age as me and I was only twenty-four.

Riley looked thoughtful, and she glanced at Croy before nodding. “Well, that makes sense. The building isn’t new. I know the outlet in our bathroom doesn’t work and the one in our bedroom only works half the time. Is it expensive?”

I lifted a shoulder. “It can be, especially with a space this large. I’d have to call my supervisor to do a full inspection. He makes the final call on stuff like that.”

“No.”

We both turned at Croy’s dark reply. It wasn’t a surprising answer. I kind of expected it, given how irritated he already was, but Riley didn’t seem to agree.

“What? You don’t want the wires fixed? You’re the one who’s been complaining about it.”

“I don’t want her boss here. Either she does it, or it can wait until we handle this shit with Hammer.”

My eyes widened. That was a first. I’d never had someone who would rather work with me than my supervisor. I hesitated, struggling to work up the courage to speak.

“C-Can I ask why?”

His dark gaze shifted from Riley to me and I felt like maybe I stepped into ‘none of your business’ territory. He

studied me, suspicion taking over his features.

“You from around here?”

I shook my head quickly. “No. I lived in Tucson for most of my life, moved out to Sierra Vista for work last year... Why?”

He didn't reply, but he looked satisfied with my answer, nodding once. “Tell your boss I'm only workin' with you. You guys want the cash, you do the job on my terms. Any other questions?”

I shot a confused look at Riley, but she didn't look like she understood any better than I did. She frowned at Croy before glancing at me and shrugging.

“A-Alright. I'll mention it to him and call to set up a time for the assessment. Did you want me to keep working with Nevada or—”

“No. I sent him home. He's got his own shit to deal with. Talk to Clink. He's got too much time on his hands. He can handle it. He handles the coffers anyway.”

I wanted to breathe a sigh of relief. Clink I could handle. He was obnoxious, but he seemed harmless enough and didn't terrify the shit out of me. If I had to work with someone, I'd rather it be him than Croy.

“Come on, I know where he is. I'll show you,” Riley beckoned, leading me out of the office. When I let out a sigh, she grinned at me, like she knew exactly how hard it was to meet with that man.

“You did good. Dealing with Croy in a foul mood should earn you a medal.”

A smile tugged at my lips and I felt myself relax. She'd come into that office guns blazing, but she was nothing like Croy, her posture relaxed and easy going. She led the way out the back door to where a bunch of guys were talking and drinking. Clink was lounging on a hammock nearby, a beer in his hand and a lazy smile on his face at our approach. I'd been distracted when I first arrived, both from the rampant misogyny right as he opened the door and from the terrifying

meeting with Croy, so I really didn't take the time to look at him closely.

Clink was devilishly good looking, with bright blue eyes, hidden by sunglasses now, and darker blonde hair, faded on the sides and longer on top. It was tousled, like he ran his fingers through it a lot, some of it falling onto his forehead. What looked like a full sleeve tattoo was on display, disappearing beneath his t-shirt and the leather vest he was wearing. He had a ring on his pinky and a leather band wrapped around his wrist. His jeans were loose, stylishly torn in a few places, and he had on boots to top off the look. When he escorted me before, he jingled when he walked, the chain attached to his wallet shifting with his movement. It made me wonder if that's why they called him Clink. Overall, he looked like he belonged in a biker modeling magazine. Did they have those?

"You survived. Good for you." He lifted his drink in a toast before taking another sip. He shifted his attention to Riley, smirking at her. "Did she ruin your make-up fight? I would've warned you to wait a little if--"

"Shut up, Clink!" she snapped. She looked annoyed, but her face flushed.

Clink must've noticed my frown, because he explained, "Riley and Croy pick fights with each other so they can fuck and make up. It's a well-known fact around here to wait to meet with Croy until they've--"

Without warning, Riley grabbed the edge of the hammock and flipped it, dumping Clink onto the ground. The crowd in the yard all started laughing and jeering. Clink must've seen it coming because he managed to not spill his beer. He sat on the ground with a huge shit-eating grin, lifting his beer triumphantly to the group.

I snickered. "That's what you get. Don't judge people for their kinks."

Riley's face was still bright red, but she shot me a grateful grin. When she swung back to glare at Clink, he beamed at her.

“You love me, admit it.”

She rolled her eyes. “You’ve got a death wish, I swear. Someone someday is going to hurt you for the shit that comes out of your mouth, and I’m not going to be around to save you.”

He just winked at her. Shaking her head, she gave me an exasperated look.

“If he causes you any trouble, just let me know. I’ll sic Croy on him. Good luck with that.” She waved her hand vaguely in Clink’s direction before wandering back towards the clubhouse.

“Have fun fucking!” he called out. When she flipped him off in reply, he cackled to himself.

I crossed my arms. “You’re a troublemaker, aren’t you?”

He shot me another grin. “And they love me for it. So what’s up?”

“Uh, Croy said I needed to work with you from now on about the wire replacements. He said Nevada is busy and you’re in charge of the coffers. Whatever that means.”

He snorted, pushing to his feet. “Means I’m the club Treasurer, sweetheart. If we’re fixing up the clubhouse, we’re using the club coffers to do it. How much we lookin’ at?”

I shook my head. “I don’t know that yet. I need to talk to my supervisor. He’s usually the one who does assessments, but Croy said he’d only work with me. I don’t really know why. He didn’t exactly stop to explain. Do you have an email? I’ve been mostly emailing Nevada back and forth to set up times and discuss rates and stuff.”

“I won’t remember to check that shit. Gimme your phone. I’ll give you my number and you can call me when you work shit out with your boss.”

I felt a little weird giving out my personal number, but I didn’t have a work phone and I didn’t know how else to get ahold of him if he didn’t have an email. I handed it to him with a frown.

“Who doesn’t have an email?”

He grinned as he pressed the call button so that he had my number too, handing me back mine. As he pulled his phone out of his pocket, wiggling it at me, he winked. “Didn’t say I didn’t. Now I’ve got your number, though.”

CHAPTER 4

SAM

It hit me all at once that he was playing me to get my phone number. My mouth fell open. The tactic was slimy, and I called him out for it.

“Clink! You’re a dick!”

That just made him laugh harder, and he yanked his phone away when I tried to snatch it from him, holding it high above my head. He had several inches on me and no matter how hard I tried, I wouldn’t have been able to reach it, so I didn’t bother embarrassing myself. I glared at him before spinning on my heel and storming around the building to where my truck was waiting.

He was hot on my heels and when he caught up to me, he tossed his arm around my shoulders, his eyes dancing. “Oh, come on, don’t be that way. I promise I won’t do anything weird with it.”

Shrugging him off, I dug my keys out of my pocket and unlocked my truck, throwing the door open. I was supposed to be professional, but I spun around anyway, putting my finger in his face.

“I swear to god, if you send me one dick pic, I’m gonna kick you in the nuts.”

His eyebrows shot up, that big stupid grin still spread across his face. He enjoyed this way too much, and it irritated me. I narrowed my eyes, and he chuckled.

“Alright, it’s a deal. No dick pics unless you ask for ‘em.”

I rolled my eyes. That was never gonna happen. For one thing, no matter how cute he was, he was a troublemaker, and I wasn't inviting that kind of energy into my life. For another, I currently had a strict no dating policy. My life was already a mess. I didn't need to be adding dating drama on top of it.

"I'll call when I have more information from my supervisor. Goodbye Clink."

"Nope. No goodbyes. See ya later, sweetheart." He leaned into the truck and smacked a kiss against my lips before I could blink. He winked at me, shutting my door for me.

I sat there stunned for a few minutes before I could make myself move. As I pulled away from the street, I watched him through the rearview mirror, his hands stuck in his pockets and a mischievous grin on his face. My lips tingled from his kiss and I touched them automatically as I drove away. It'd been a really long time since I'd been kissed and my no dating rule wavered slightly. I shook my head like a dog to banish the thought.

I was under no illusions that Clink would behave if I convinced my supervisor to let me do this job. And only a tiny part of me was curious on what he was going to do next. If I was smart, I'd keep my distance from him.

Shaking my head again, I focused on the drive back. I needed to hurry through my other jobs if I wanted to get back before my supervisor left for the day. His wife had just had a baby, and he was known to sneak off early if he could. I didn't blame him for it. He always made sure we had what we needed and checked in before he left, but I didn't want to keep Croy waiting on getting back to him. Clink, I didn't mind making him wait. He would deal with it. Croy might start shooting people. I didn't want to be on his list if I could help it.

The other two jobs I had were basic and easy to deal with. A construction site on a new house needed their wiring checked before they could put the walls up and an older couple had issues with a fuse box that I had to look into for them. Their house was old, and they needed a new one, but their

budget was pretty low, so I'd have to talk to my supervisor about it. Sometimes we had some in the shop that we could use as a discount that wasn't brand new, but would work for what they were looking for.

I finished an hour early and still only just managed to catch my supervisor on his way out. I threw my truck into park and hollered at him through the open window to grab his attention.

He was parked a few spots down and was just getting into his truck to head home, but he paused and waited for me to jog up to him, a concerned look on his face.

“Sam? You alright?”

Huffing out a breath, I nodded. “Yeah, I'm good. I hate cardio.”

He snorted and waited for me to catch my breath, leaning on his open door. “How'd it go today?”

“Went fine for the most part. There are a few things I wanted to talk to you about, though.”

He sighed and closed his door. “Damn. I was hoping to get out of here. Marla needs me to pick up more diapers if you can believe it. I swear that little thing goes through them faster than I go through the cookies his mama makes.”

I snickered. “I'll be quick, I promise. First thing, the Stetsons need a new fuse box, but they can't afford a replacement. Do we have anything here we could use?”

He pursed his lips, looking thoughtful. “Uh... I think so. Lemme get back to you on that one. Pretty sure the one I've been workin' on will do fine. I just gotta finish fixing it. What else ya got?”

Puffing up my cheeks, I blew out a breath. “Well, I went on the job for the MC club this morning and—”

His eyebrows flew up. “You did what? I gave that job to Angelo! What were you thinking?”

I frowned. “Well, first of all, he never actually told me where I was going. He gave me an address and asked me to cover him since he had something he had to do. Second, it

wasn't that hard a job. I can handle bigger stuff, you know. Just because I'm a woman doesn't mean—"

He shot me a dry look. "Don't start. This ain't about that. It's about the fact that the job was dangerous and Angelo said he'd handle it. I woulda done it myself before sending you out there. You alright?"

"I'm fine, Russel. I got the job done without any problems. A few catcalls, but everyone kept their distance and let me do my work."

He didn't look convinced until I glared at him. A smile tugged at his lips and he relaxed. "Alright, alright. What's the problem then?"

"It's not really a problem. I noticed their wires were seriously damaged and mentioned it to the guy in charge. I recommended getting ahold of you for an assessment and replacing them, but he said he'd only work with me."

Russel's eyebrows drew down. "What? Why?"

I lifted a shoulder. "No idea. I told him it was your thing, but he said if we wanted the job, it had to be through me. I'm not really sure what to do with that."

He scrubbed his face, his nails scratching against his five o'clock shadow. "I don't know, Sammy. That's a strange request, especially with a building full of dangerous men. The Devil's Disciples are well known in these parts, and I don't want you hanging around them by yourself. I didn't want you out there in the first place."

"Well, if it's my safety you're worried about, I can say that the guy I'm going to be working with isn't dangerous. He's a goofball and kind of obnoxious, but not in any way that made me uncomfortable. The guy in charge, Croy, said since the original caller, Nevada, was busy, Clink was going to be my point of reference from now on."

He made a face. "Those aren't real names."

I pursed my lips, trying and failing to hide my smile. "Probably not, but I'm sure as hell not going to say anything

about it. I think I can pull off the job and, for the most part, I didn't feel unsafe while I was there."

Scowling, he crossed his arms. "For the most part?"

Rolling my eyes, I copied his posture. "Yes, for the most part. Croy's seriously intimidating and so were a few of the others, but I didn't feel like they were going to hurt me. Mostly, I'd prefer to avoid them. Clink is fine. A few others were alright. There was even a woman there, Riley. She said she was Croy's old lady, whatever that means."

"Old lady is like a wife or girlfriend. She's Croy's woman."

I scrunched my nose. "That sounds off. Whatever, I'm not judging."

He shifted his stance, still not comfortable with the idea of sending me there on my own. I understood and if I had any inkling that I might be in some kind of trouble while I was there, I would avoid the job, but it went way better than I thought and I really wanted the job. I wanted to prove I was capable. Russel was a good guy, but he liked to baby me a lot, giving me the easier jobs while the other guys got the cool stuff. This could be my shot to finally get him to take me seriously.

He could see the determination in my face, and eventually, he relented. "Alright, fine. I guess we'll give it a shot. I want you checking in often, though. I wanna know you're okay. And if for even one second you feel like you're unsafe, I want you to come back. We'll renegotiate with them. I'm a little worried backing out would piss them off, so I need you to be sure this is what you want to do. I don't want you to feel pressured."

I nodded. "I'm good, I can do it. I had a good teacher."

He smirked, shaking his head. "Alright, alright, flatterer. I gotta get going. Set up a time for the assessment but make it next week. I wanna go over it with you again since you'll be doing it on your own for the first time."

When I made a face, he shot me a look. “You’re still a rookie in my eyes, Sammy. A week or no deal. Got it?”

“Fine!” I threw my hands up in defeat. “One week to prove to you I can handle it. Then you’ll stop underestimating me, right?”

He rolled his eyes. “We’ll see. Now get gone! I don’t wanna run over your toes.”

Taking a few steps back from his truck, I waved at him as he drove off, trying to hide my giddy grin. I was so pissed at Angelo for foisting this job onto me, but it was turning out to be my big opportunity. If I could do it well, I could finally drop the rookie title and Russel would take me seriously. Nothing and I mean nothing was going to stand in the way of me absolutely killing it at this job.

CHAPTER 5

CLINK

I didn't expect Sam to call back that quickly, but she called only a few hours later saying her boss was good with letting her do the work by herself. She seemed fucking giddy about it and I wanted to ask, but she seemed like she was in a hurry and I had my own shit to do, so I let her know I was good with whenever she wanted to do the assessment and she gave me a date before hanging up.

That was a few hours ago. I'd updated Croy on the news and hung out with Brewer for a while, but I had a job to do tonight, so I went upstairs early. I was supposed to be getting some rest beforehand, but my mind wouldn't shut off. My leg jiggled restlessly, my hands were sweating. I wiped them off on my thighs a few times, but it wasn't making any difference. I knew what would make a difference, but I told myself last time would be the last time.

In desperate need of a distraction, I shot off a text, staring anxiously at the phone. Please answer, please answer.

Clink: This isn't a dick pic. Are you proud of me?

Sam: ☐ Good job. What's up?

I let out a slow breath. She was fast at responding, thank fuck.

Clink: I'm bored. What are you wearing?

Sam: ☹️👩‍🦰Nope.

Clink: Who uses emojis anymore? ☹️😞

Sam: The cool people do. 😞☹️

I chuckled to myself. It was working. She was a fun distraction, and she hadn't told me to leave her alone yet, so I took that as a good sign.

Clink: ☹️ Why do they only have crotch rockets?

Sam: ☹️👩‍🦰Were you just looking for an excuse to say crotch? 😞

Clink: 😞😞

Clink: What are you doing?

Sam: ☹️😞

Clink: Gonna bring me some? ☹️

Sam: ☹️?

Snorting, I typed out a response, but before I could reply, another text came in from the person I'd been hoping to avoid.

D: Need a hit?

“Fuck.”

I thought I blocked him, but somehow I skipped that step. I swiped the message away, trying to focus on texting Sam back, but my mind kept skittering back to the text and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't put it out of my head. I pulled up the message, typing out a response to tell him no, but then deleted it. Twice more I played the same game before I finally sent a response.

Clink: Yeah, hmu.

D: C U at the club then

I looked at my watch again. If I left now, I'd have enough time to get there and back without pissing off Croy. I shoved my phone into my pocket and grabbed my keys off the nightstand. Just one more. While I was there, I'd tell him I was done. This was the last time.

No one paid me any attention when I ducked outside and got on my bike. Croy might've been chomping at the bit to put the girls on lockdown, but he didn't do the same for us. We could handle ourselves and so far, Hammer wasn't stupid enough to come for one of the crew. He liked to sneak around like a fucking bitch and try and take our women instead. Twice now he'd hurt one of them and run off like the coward he was. I couldn't wait until he was tied to that chair in the gas station. We were going to rip him to pieces without an ounce of mercy after what he'd done.

My mind drifted to the last time Hammer was in town. We had the fucker cornered, or at least we thought we did. Turned out he wasn't with the rest of his crew. He tried sneaking over here with a few other assholes so he could take the girls while we were busy wiping out his crew. Only Riley's quick thinking and Mass's sacrifice kept them safe.

My chest tightened at the thought of Mass. He was a good brother. We were a lot alike, both of us easy going compared to the rest of the crew. We used to play a game to see who

could get the sweetbutt before the other. I was winning before he died, but it felt like a sour victory when he was gone before we could actually call it. He was the only one who knew about my problem and was helping me handle it. With him gone, I had to learn to deal with it on my own. I was doing okay for a while until the shit that went down a few weeks ago with Reaper.

Pulling up to the club, I tried to tell myself to keep going, to drive the fuck away. Croy set the rule when he took over that no club members could do drugs. He didn't want his people partaking in his product. If he found out what I was doing... Well, let's just say Croy wasn't a forgiving guy.

Right as I'd convinced myself to drive away, a familiar face appeared at the entrance of the club. He studied me, lifting his eyebrow in question when I didn't move. Letting out a growl, I turned off my engine. He turned around when I walked up to him, leading me past the bouncers and into the club proper.

None of the guys came out here, so it was where we always met. The pounding of the music, the flashing lights, it was all as familiar to me as the clubhouse. It triggered something in me and my will to say no disappeared when D handed me a little baggie of white powder.

"You want more? I got a surplus after taking some shit off some fuckers who thought they could sell in my territory."

I opened the bag and checked the contents. I'd worked with D a lot, but that didn't mean I trusted him. He was a dealer. His first priority was in making money, not in selling good product. At least we had the decency to get the purest shit we could before we sold it off. Dipping my finger inside, I scooped a little and rubbed it on my gums. It hit pretty quick, which meant it was a decent batch. He tried giving me some half ass shit before, got his ass kicked for it. I guess he learned his lesson.

Sticking the baggie in my pocket, I pulled out my wallet and handed him some cash. "Nah. I can't get caught with that shit on me. One is enough."

He nodded. He knew Croy's rule and what would happen to me if I got caught. He lost a lot of business when Croy took over and threatened to start shit over it, but I talked him down by making him one of our buyers. He got a more decent product and made up the lost revenue when people kept coming back for more.

“Who was it in your territory?”

“No fuckin' clue. The kids I took it off of weren't even in high school yet. Who the fuck hires thirteen-year-olds to sell their shit?”

Disgust overtook my face. “The fuck?”

D nodded slowly. “Little shits got lucky it was me they were dealing with. Anyone else would've been killed on the spot.”

“What'd you do with 'em?”

He smirked. “Told their mamas. They cried harder facing them than me. It was pretty funny, to be honest.”

I snorted. If it had been me, I would've cried too. My mama was a strict woman. She'd have tanned my ass so bad I wouldn't have been able to sit for a month if she caught me dealing at thirteen. Then again, if she was still alive, she'd probably tan my ass now for the shit I was involved with. It was a small consolation that she wasn't around to be disappointed in me.

The amount of people I'd lost in my life was starting to add up and a wave of sadness threatened to buckle me. Shaking my head, I jerked my chin towards the bathrooms.

“I'm gonna handle business. I'll see ya around.”

He gave me a mock salute before disappearing into the crowd. I went straight for the bathroom. The taste from before had been just enough to tease me. I needed more to quiet the shit going on in my head.

I was just coming back out, feeling plenty energetic to get the job done, when someone appeared in my path who I wasn't expecting.

“Clink?”

I froze, willing myself not to panic. There was no way in hell anyone knew why I was here. Wiping my face to make sure there were no traces of what I was doing, I glanced over my shoulder at Allie.

“Hey, Trouble. Fancy meeting you here.”

Allie was Reaper’s little sister, literally the last person on the planet that I wanted to catch me out here. I figured she’d be home with the girls since Croy was pushing for a lockdown. She was dressed to make a statement, the short dress just shy of indecent. She crossed her arms indignantly.

“Did Zayne send you? I swear to god, if he sent you—”

Relief flooded me, and I smirked at her. “Relax, Trouble. I’m not here for you. Sweetbutts got boring, wanted to see if I could catch some tail before the job. Something to look forward to when I finish, you know?”

She made a face. The girls never liked how we talked about chasing tail. It never stopped me, since I enjoyed how much it irritated them. Looking over her head, I frowned.

“You here alone? Where’s Knox?”

She waved her hand toward the bar. “Watching my drink. I need to pee.”

Following her gesture, I saw Knox leaning against the bar, watching us with narrowed eyes. Fuck. It was just one person after another tonight. Allie might be easily distracted, but he wouldn’t be. I’d need to play this right to keep him off the scent.

“Go pee, Trouble. I’ll watch the door.”

She rolled her eyes and shoved past me, disappearing into the ladies’ room. I stayed put since I had a better view of the bathroom, giving myself a chance to come up with a decent lie. When Allie came back, I tossed my arm around her shoulders and led her back to her old man, lifting my chin in greeting when we got close.

“Sup? Didn’t expect to find you two here.”

An irritated look flashed over his face. “I had to bring her out one last time before she’d agree to a lockdown. Even though she was the last one to deal with Hammer head on,” he snarled.

She crossed her arms defiantly, glowering at him. Allie had always been trouble, hence the nickname, but she got worse over the years. I got her being upset. It wasn’t like she chose to be part of the MC life before she got herself claimed. She was Reaper’s little sister. She was part of it because of him, but he was overprotective to the point of smothering, and she ran to get away from him. It surprised the hell out of me when she came back with Knox claiming her. The man had balls of steel to go up against Reaper.

“What are you doin’ here, man? Don’t you got a job tonight?”

I put on an annoyed expression, rolling my eyes. “Yeah. One of our buyers was complaining about someone else dealing in his territory, so I came to check in. With Hammer fucking about, I wanted to make sure he wasn’t heading back our way.”

Knox’s face darkened, and he pulled Allie away from me and back into his arms. “Was it him?”

I shook my head. “Not that I’m aware of. Kids trying to be cool or some shit. I’ll keep an eye on it, though.”

Allie made a face. “Kids? How old?”

Normally, I wouldn’t get into it with women. It was club business. But I wanted to sell the lie and Allie knew more than most because Reaper had to explain shit to her in order for her to behave.

“Thirteen. They got lucky that the buyer doesn’t hurt kids. Might send a prospect out here to scare ‘em a little, make sure they don’t come back for more.”

She looked rightfully horrified, and neither one of them questioned me anymore about why I was here. I tipped my head towards the exit.

“I gotta get back for the job. Don’t worry, Trouble, I won’t tell Reaper you’re out here.”

“I don’t answer to him!” she shrieked.

Raising my eyebrows slowly, I gave her a significant look. It didn’t matter that she had an old man now. Reaper would always be Reaper and he wasn’t going to let his little sister get hurt if he had anything to say about it. Knox shoved me, keeping Allie tucked up against him.

“Fuck off, man. You piss her off, I’m the one that’s gotta deal with it. We’re fine here.”

I laughed at the look on Allie’s face. She looked ready to hurt someone. Since Knox decided to fuck around behind the crew’s back, I decided to stick it to him a little more before I left.

“I’m just sayin’, man. Pretty sure he let you win last time. I’ve seen the shit he can do. Wouldn’t want him murdering you for taking Trouble out when he already demanded a lockdown.”

Knox glared at me, still new to having an old lady and looking to prove himself. I chuckled and put my hands up innocently, walking backwards towards the exit. “Alright, your funeral. See you at the clubhouse.”

Spinning around, I let out a breath. Part of me couldn’t believe I got away with that. I was on a lucky streak today. Met a hot babe, got my hit, didn’t get caught. I whistled as I headed back to my bike. This was gonna be a great fucking night.

CHAPTER 6

SAM

Frowning at my phone, I tossed it onto my bed. I'd been waiting for Clink to reply and I saw the bubbles pop up, but they disappeared and he hadn't responded since. I was a little disappointed. I spent most nights by myself and it was fun for a minute to pretend I had a friend my age to talk to. In no way was I admitting to myself or anyone else that the kiss had something to do with me staring at my phone. Heaving out a sigh, I turned my focus back to the television. Another dinner alone in front of the tv.

The steak burrito I'd made sat half eaten on a plate in my lap, the tv still on the Netflix menu as I tried to pick something to watch. I scrolled around for a little while before settling on a show I'd seen a million times. The familiarity was relaxing and I only half paid attention to it, scrolling through my phone as I ate. I wanted to be one hundred percent ready for Russel's evaluation of my assessments, so I figured I'd use the evening to study up.

I knew I shouldn't have replied to Clink's text, but I was bored and he made me laugh. I didn't see the harm in chatting with him as long as I ignored his flirting. Seriously. Stop thinking about the kiss. I wasn't interested in dating, and he didn't seem like the type to let up if I gave it any sort of attention. I had to ignore it and pretend it didn't happen.

My phone buzzed and my heart picked up a few paces until I saw who it was from. I growled, swiping the message away. I wasn't going to answer. They needed to stop trying.

When my phone rang a few minutes later, I felt my temper spiral out of control. I picked it up without looking, growling

at the person on the other end.

“What the fuck do you want?”

“Woah, easy there, sweetheart.”

I nearly swallowed my tongue. I hadn't realized it was Clink calling me and now I felt like an idiot. I grimaced, putting my plate on the coffee table and curling my legs against my chest.

“Sorry, I thought you were someone else.”

He paused for a second. “You alright? If someone's fuckin' with you, I can—”

Oh, no. Absolutely not. There was no way that I was going to let an MC club get involved with my baggage. That would be like asking for drama, and I needed none of that in my life. It was why I ignored that text message.

“No! I'm fine, I promise. What's up? You were supposed to text me back.”

“Yeah, sorry. I had to handle something. Hey, any chance we can move that assessment by a day or two? I've got something on that day I forgot about.”

Disappointment settled over my shoulders. I'd been looking forward to getting started, and Russel was already making me wait a week.

“Uh, sure. That's fine. Just let me know when is a good time.”

“Great! I swear, I need an assistant or something to keep up with all this shit so I don't overlap meetings.”

He seemed chipper, and he was talking really fast. A part of me was suspicious, but I didn't know what the rules were about those guys. It was well known that the Devil's Disciples sold drugs, so it wasn't a stretch to think he was using. Either that or he was just happy I wasn't a huge pain in the ass about him switching the schedule around.

“It's not a problem. Just let me know when is good for you. I don't get as many jobs as the other guys, so my

schedule is pretty open.”

He didn't answer right away, and I heard static on the other end, like he was holding the phone against his chest to block the sound. After a minute, I got annoyed. He was the one who called me. Why was I the one forced to wait around for him?

“Clink!”

“Huh? Oh, my bad. I'm working, you know how it is. Friday will probably work.”

Fighting to keep my voice neutral, I ground my teeth. “Friday is okay, as long as you don't mind me being there after lunch. I have something to do in the morning.”

“Sounds good. Just text me when you're on your way. Hey, I gotta go.”

He didn't even give me a chance to reply before he shouted something on the other end and hung up. I was probably more annoyed than I needed to be, but when he called, I got my hopes up. I was being stupid, and I took out my frustrations on my burrito, inhaling the thing while putting something gorey on the tv. The boredom was starting to get to me.

It was still early when I got ready for bed. Nothing was keeping my attention on the tv, so I figured I'd go read or something until I fell asleep. I was just brushing my teeth when my phone rang. I saw the name on the screen and a frustrated groan escaped me before I answered it.

“What?”

“Samantha. I'm so glad you picked up.”

I rolled my eyes, spitting toothpaste into the sink. “What do you want, Jess?”

My older sister's voice sounded plastic and fake as she wheedled me. “Oh, come on, Samantha. Don't be like that. We haven't spoken in a long while.”

“That was by design. I'm a little busy right now, so...”

“Busy doing what?”

The suspicion in her voice pissed me off. I didn't speak to my family, not after what they did, and her pretending like she cared only served to remind me of the events that lead up to me cutting them off.

"None of your business. Are you going to tell me what you want, or can I go?"

Her voice lost some of the fakeness and she finally spit out her purpose for calling. "I'm only trying to help, Samantha. Your... history caused a lot of pain and embarrassment for our family. I'm trying to move past that and extend an olive branch. Even though you should be the one doing this."

I huffed out a laugh. "Are you serious right now?"

She ground her teeth so loudly I could hear it over the phone. "Yes, I—"

"Save it. Who put you up to this?"

She hesitated long enough to confirm my suspicions. She wasn't calling to reconnect like she said. Someone wanted her to make this phone call and the list of people who would give a shit was miniscule.

"Any day now," I growled when she was quiet for too long.

She made an irritated noise. "Fine. There's a new pastor at church. He is big on helping those who can't help themselves and has been pushing us to reach out to the black sheep and calling them home. You need to come back to church so we can move past your sins and fix our reputation. You owe us."

My mouth fell open. "Excuse me?"

Out of everyone in my family, Jessica was the worst. She was the first person to blame me when our parents were killed. She said since they were coming to pick me up, it was my fault. And when the pastor tried to coerce me into sleeping with him to 'atone for my sins', she refused to believe me and told everyone I came on to him. She turned my family against me, the church against me, demanding that they not give me the time of day. In one of the most difficult times in my life, she tossed me to the curb.

“I’m serious, Samantha. No matter what I do at church, I’m constantly being bugged about what happened to you. I’m tired of hearing about it. Just show up and be freaking normal for once so I can—”

“Go fuck yourself,” I snarled. It silenced her. Jessica was a very religious person, especially after our parents died, and cursing was a big no-no in her world. Before she could start again on what I owed her, I continued.

“I don’t owe you shit. Maybe the reason you can’t get any headway at church is because they all know what a complete piece of shit you are. I was homeless because of you. I had no support, no one to turn to, not even a freaking roof over my head or food in my belly. I’ve got no interest in helping you or going to your stupid church. Tell your pastor to mind his fucking business and don’t call me again.”

I hung up, glaring at the screen of my phone before losing my temper and throwing it at the wall. It hit with a loud thud and dropped to the ground. The fact that I would probably need to buy a new one only pissed me off more. This was why I avoided her phone calls. I spiraled every damn time and lost my temper. I couldn’t afford to be breaking my things just because my sister was a raging bitch.

A wave of heartache swept through me, and I clenched my jaw against the urge to cry. No. I was not going to let Jessica and her big fat mouth knock me down. I stared at the wall for a while, an internal war in my head as the monsters that I constantly battled tried again to sway me. I hated that after this long, I still couldn’t control my thoughts after speaking to her. When I couldn’t shut it down with the normal tactics, I turned and went back to my phone, grimacing at the shattered screen. At least I could still use it tonight. I tapped carefully around the cracks, putting it on speaker so I wouldn’t have to put the shattered glass against my face.

“Hello?”

“I need you.”

CHAPTER 7

SAM

Pacing my tiny apartment, I shook out my hands while I waited. This always happened every time she called me and I needed someone to talk to. He said he was coming. He always showed up when I needed him. I tapped my foot on the floor, willing for him to appear as I stared at the door. When the knock came, I launched myself toward it and threw the door open, letting out a relieved sigh.

“Tyson.”

He flashed me a small smile, holding up a bag of fast food. “I brought treats. Let’s set up in the kitchen and you can tell me what happened.”

Tyson was my lifeline, the best person on the planet, and one of my only friends. Most people got awkward when they heard my story and started treating me differently. Tyson never did. He was the first person ever to believe me. He treated me like a person. And when I was alone in the world, living on the streets, he took me in and helped me get my life together.

We settled at the table, my gaze dropped to my hands. Jess’s words still swirled in my head and I hated that I let her get to me. Tyson took my hand, frowning at me.

“Lemme guess. Your sister.”

“How’d you know?”

He shook his head slowly. “You’ve been doing really well. You haven’t felt the need to call me this late in a while. The only person who can make you like this is her.”

I grimaced. Tyson was a sponsor for NA. He was observant. I didn't do drugs, but I got pretty low a time or two, and he was there for me when my thoughts got too dark to cope with. Depression is no joke. He told me not to answer when Jess called. I shouldn't have picked up the stupid phone.

“Tell me what happened.”

Letting out a slow breath, I fidgeted with my broken phone. “She started off with the fake shit, pretending she wanted to reconnect. I saw right through that, though. I know when she's faking.”

This wasn't the first time one of my siblings called. Never to actually connect with me or apologize. Usually, they wanted something from me. Like for me to bow out of accepting my portion of my parent's estate or asking me to sell the house that we all owned in part. It took years for me to figure out that answering the phone was only going to hurt me. They didn't want to be part of my life and I needed to get it through my head. The only family I had was Tyson.

“What did she want?”

My lip curled, and I glared at the table. “She's got a new pastor. He's spouting bullshit about bringing the people in your life who'd strayed back to the church. She said I *owed* her, Tyson.”

His brow furrowed, and he looked confused. “In what universe?”

“I guess her reputation has taken a hit since my fallout with her and the church. She spouted some bullshit about how no matter what she does, all people want to ask her about is me. How is that my fault? I haven't been back to church since—”

I cut myself off, shaking my head. Tyson knew that story. I didn't need to go through it again. It took him months to get me to open up enough to tell him what happened, just like it took him months to get me to trust him enough to talk to him. After what happened at the church, I had a serious issue with authority figures. Tyson had to prove he was my friend, not

just an older guy looking to help a homeless teen so he could get something from her.

So much for helping the less fortunate. After my siblings kicked me out, I went to church thinking at least for the night, I'd have somewhere warm to sleep. The pastor, a creepy old bastard, told me I asked for what happened by being promiscuous. He said if I wanted to atone, then I needed to demonstrate the sins that played through my head so that he could properly ask God for forgiveness. Bastard wanted me to get on my knees and it wasn't to pray. And when I tried telling my siblings, hoping they'd at least let me stay at home until I could find some place to live, Jess lost her ever loving shit and said I was lying and I probably came onto the pastor myself. She screamed so loud that the neighbors called the cops, and because I was a terrified teen, I ran.

That night was the first night I spent on the streets. I spiraled hard, the loss of what little support I had made me fall into a depression. I lost my will to live. I was starving myself and refused to let anyone close to me because I couldn't take the pain of being tossed aside again. It was Tyson who found me while doing outreach in the park. He saw an angry homeless teen and decided he was going to help me. He offered me a place to stay and brought me food, sitting with me until I ate. I told him no at first, I didn't trust him not to betray me like my family did, but he kept coming back. I think he could see that I needed him, even if I didn't want to admit it.

“Sam.” His soft-spoken voice pulled my attention off the past. He tugged gently on my arm, stopping me from rubbing my fingers over the scars on my wrist. An old habit to punish myself. I only ever wanted to pick it back up again when my siblings called.

Settling his hand over mine, he leveled me with a look. “You owe absolutely nothing to anyone. You are not responsible for what happened. It was an accident, and you weren't even there that night. Parents pick up their kids. You couldn't have known what was going to happen.”

I let out a small breath, shaking my head. We went through this almost every time I had a breakdown like this and the message still wouldn't stick. After years of everyone telling me it was my fault that my parents died, I believed it. I never meant for them to get hurt. I was a stupid teen, drinking and smoking pot with my friends. My dad always said if I ever got into trouble, to call and he'd come get me. No questions asked. Since it was a bad trip, I got scared and asked for my mom, so she went with him. But they never showed up. A drunk driver hit them head on, going the wrong way on the highway. And it was my fault because I was the one who called them. If I'd been at home, doing my homework like I was supposed to, they wouldn't have gotten in the car that night. As much as Tyson said it wasn't, it felt like my fault and whenever my family called, they reminded me they thought it was my fault, too.

“Tyson...”

He shook his head vehemently. “No, Sammy. I'm your friend, and I'm telling you, it wasn't your fault. I hear stories all day about people who hurt their family to get their fix. That wasn't you. You were just a kid getting picked up by her parents. There's nothing wrong with that.”

I bobbed my head slowly, my eyes still locked on my hands. The arguments were still there, my siblings' words in my head telling me I was a murderer, but I wanted so badly to believe Tyson. I'd been working so hard at accepting that it wasn't my fault, but I spiraled every time they called.

“What's it going to take for you to believe me?”

I huffed out a dry laugh. “A lobotomy.”

He chuckled, shaking his head. “I'm no doctor, Sammy. And I'm not sure that's really what's best. You need to move past it, not forget it completely. Because even though it was tragic and horrible, you still learned something that night.”

Lifting my head, I locked eyes with him, my brows pulled together.

“What?”

He smiled softly, squeezing my hand. “That your parents loved you so much that they were willing to get into the car in the middle of the night to go get you. No yelling, no telling you to deal with your own consequences. I know of so many kids whose parents would’ve just told them to deal with it. Not yours. They were coming to get you because they loved you. That’s something to hold on to.”

Tears slipped over my cheeks, and I clenched my jaw to stop it from trembling. My heart ached every time I thought about my parents. They were good people. Strict when they had to be, but fair and kind. They never would’ve kicked me out or let me live on the street.

“I feel like I lost my entire family that night.”

Tyson sighed, pulling me into a hug. “I know. And I’m sorry for that. It’s not fair what your siblings did. But you have a family. You’ve got me. We may not be blood related, but I’ll be damned if I ever let anything happen to you.”

I snorted, hugging him tightly. When I pulled away, scrubbing my fists over my eyes to dash the tears away, he gave me a significant look and I rolled my eyes.

“Yeah, yeah. I know. You’re like a really annoying cousin. Or maybe an uncle. Because you’re so old.”

“Hey! Watch it, you little shit!”

I burst out laughing, and he joined me, shaking his head. Tyson was a lot older than me, early forties, but I didn’t really pay attention to that. He was my friend. He lost his whole family when he started doing drugs. They pushed him away, cut him off, a lot like my family did to me. He took the place of my siblings, and I took the place of his family. We relied on each other.

Tyson was never in a rush for me to get over my spiral. He held my hand and sat with me, talking me down until I could breathe on my own again and the urge to punish myself for something that I never meant to happen disappeared. I had no idea what I’d do without him.

Once I was no longer a fidgeting mess, he opened the bag of food he brought, passing me some fries. I fought back a grin.

“Every time. Are you addicted to these? Should I be worried?”

He chuckled. “Shut up. It’s comfort food. Stop complaining and tell me what’s going on in your life. We were due for our weekly phone call tomorrow anyway.”

I hummed, nibbling on the fries. They weren’t hot anymore, which was disappointing, but he didn’t seem to care. He tossed them into the microwave and listened to me talk about work with an easy smile on his face until I mentioned going to work at the motorcycle club. He stiffened and his face fell.

“Hold on. What motorcycle club?”

My lips pursed. He wasn’t going to like it when I told him. Tyson was annoyingly overprotective sometimes. A lot like Russel. He didn’t think I could handle myself in the world.

“Ever heard of the Devil’s Disciples?”

His eyes widened, and I was right. He looked pissed. “Sam!”

I grimaced. “I know, I know, but hear me out.”

He shoved away from the table, pacing my tiny kitchen. “You can’t be thinking of taking the job, Sam. Talk about the worst idea on the planet. They’re dangerous! What if you do something that they don’t like and they hurt you for it? We don’t even know half the stuff they get into. They could be human traffickers, for all we know!”

“Not that I noticed. The only woman I saw not wearing a leather vest was the president’s wife.”

He spun around to face me, his eyebrows almost in his hairline. “You already went?”

He was getting worked up, and he wasn’t going to let me get a word in edgewise unless I calmed him down. I put my hands up, rushing to explain myself.

“Hold on, let me explain. I didn’t actually know where I was going when I took the job.”

His brows furrowed so fast it was almost comical. Ya know, if he wasn’t freaking out right now.

“I fucking know Russel wouldn’t send you out to a job like that. Try again.”

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. “He didn’t! Can you sit down and let me talk? You’re stressing me out.”

He still looked pissed, but he did as I asked, dropping back into his seat with his arms folded across his chest. He kept his mouth shut as I explained Angelo’s request, what happened while I was at the MC, and why Russel was going to let me go.

“For some reason, the president only wants to work with me. I don’t know why, but this is a big opportunity for me. Russel will finally start taking me seriously if I can pull off a job like this on my own.”

Tyson still looked uncomfortable, shaking his head slowly. “Sam...”

“I know. And I agree, the rumors about them are pretty sketchy. But I need to do this. It’s a big job, I’ll be plenty busy, and I’m pretty sure I won’t be allowed to be alone for any of it. I had security with me the entire time I did the patch and no one did anything to make me feel like they were going to hurt me. Please, Tyson. I need to do this.”

I didn’t need his permission, but I didn’t want him to be mad at me by taking this job. He was the only family I had, and his opinion mattered. If he truly wanted me to give up the job, I felt like I’d be betraying our friendship by ignoring him. I didn’t want to cause a rift between us. I needed him too much.

He studied me, indecision written on his face. I wanted to keep fighting, to prove that I knew what I was doing, but I knew Tyson. The more I pushed, the more stubborn he’d get. So I stayed quiet, straightening my back and lifting my chin, trying to project the confidence I lacked when I was at the MC

earlier. Tyson studied me with a frown before finally giving in. He pointed at me, a fierce look on his face.

“Fine. I trust you. But if there’s even a mention of them hurting you in any way, even as a joke, I want you to promise me you’ll get into your truck and drive away. No job is worth your safety, Sammy. If you need me to talk to Russel on your behalf to get him to treat you more seriously, I will. I’d rather do that than let you get hurt. I honestly can’t believe Russel let you take on this job.”

“It took some convincing, that’s for sure. But I swear, I saw nothing to make me feel like they were going to hurt me or I wouldn’t have asked to come back. It seemed like a regular place and they mostly just teased each other and joked around.”

“They’re notorious drug dealers, Sam,” he scoffed. He sucked in a deep breath, letting it out slowly. “But I believe you, because you’re not the type to lie to me. But I want you calling me every day anyway. Even if there’s nothing there, there could be people there who are high or something and they could act erratically. Until we can be sure you’re completely safe, I want to hear from you every day.”

After years of knowing Tyson, I knew he wasn’t trying to smother me. He genuinely cared and if anything happened to me, he was probably the only person on the planet who would be upset about it. It didn’t bother me when he got all protective like it did when Russel did it. I knew it came from a good place.

Taking his hand, I squeezed it tightly. “Every day then. I promise.”

His hand squeezed mine, and he relaxed a little. Leaning forward, he pulled me into a hug. I sighed, hugging him tight.

“Thanks for coming.”

His grip tightened a little before he leaned away. “I’ll always be there for you.”

CHAPTER 8

CLINK

“Read ‘em and weep, bitches.”

They groaned, tossing their cards onto the table while I cackled. I was on a winning streak, and it pissed them off to no end. I gathered up my chips, my grin fucking huge at this point. I was never this good at cards.

“Man, how the fuck are you winning so much? You’re usually so damn easy to read.”

I shook my head with a mock frown. “All that pussy is putting you off your A-game, man. If you aren’t careful, your ol’ lady is gonna be the one supporting your ass when you lose your next paycheck to me.”

Knox reached for me, looking like he wanted to hit me, but I leaned out of his reach, chuckling to myself. This used to be a club of single guys, but the women were slowly infiltrating the inner circle of officers. I’d complain if the few sweetbutts who targeted officers weren’t upping their game to come after me and Brewer now that we were the only single officers left.

Like summoned by my thoughts, slender arms wrapped around my neck from behind, a cloud of perfume overwhelming my senses. I didn’t even have to look to know who it was. She pressed her tits up against the back of my neck, leaning to purr in my ear.

“Winners should get more than money. Wanna go upstairs?”

A smug grin crossed my face. They came at me like flies now and since a few of the guys at the table weren’t officers,

they would only get second choice material. Chase sat across from me, shaking his head.

“Problem, brother?”

His focus was on shuffling the cards, but he rolled his eyes at my comment. “Not even a little bit. You playing the next round or what?”

Chase was the only one of my brothers who confused the fuck outta me. Other than his initiation, he steered clear of the sweetbutts. He had a protective streak a mile wide with the old ladies, but he wasn't stupid enough to try shit with them. I thought maybe he swung the other way, but I'd caught him more than once staring at some chick's tits at the bar. He was selective and none of the sweetbutts seemed to hit his mark.

“Head's up! Here comes trouble!”

We all looked up. Sure enough, the old ladies were coming downstairs. They were around a lot since Croy put them on lockdown, but they were dressed like they were going out anyway; short dresses and heels and way too much makeup. I let out a whistle, grinning when Riley rolled her eyes at me. I had no interest in my brother's woman, but there was nothing wrong with giving her a compliment. Croy landed himself a fine ass woman.

The arms around my neck tightened slightly. I'd forgotten she was there for a minute. Patting her arm, I shrugged her off. “In a minute, I'm killin' it right now.”

She huffed in annoyance, pulling away from me. It wasn't like I wasn't interested. I just didn't want her upstairs. Some sweetbutts were nosy as shit, and I didn't want her poking around and finding my stash. After I finished my game, I'd take her outside. It was still nice out and there were a few dark corners where we'd have some privacy.

I was looking over my next hand when I felt Chrissie stiffen behind me. I tried not to smirk. She only got that bent out of shape around one person.

“Where's Croy?”

“In his office. You guys look nice,” Brewer commented.

When I looked up, Riley shrugged. “Just because we can’t go out doesn’t mean we can’t have fun.”

I snorted. I got the feeling that their idea of fun was a punishment for their old men for keeping them here. Reaper was with Croy, but Knox was staring at Allie with a hungry look on his face. I’d bet my winnings that if he asked her to go upstairs, he’d be hit with an immediate no. They were dressed to the nines to fuck with the guys, and I was here for it.

“Want me to get him to come out here?” I offered.

She flashed me a smirk, but her eyes narrowed on Chrissie. “Problem?”

Chrissie made an irritated noise, crossing her arms defensively. “Did I say there was?”

Riley and her had it out when Riley was still struggling to come to terms with her place as Croy’s old lady. Chrissie decided to be a bitch and tried to stake a claim on Croy right in front of Riley. Riley wasn’t a fucking pushover though, and she took issue with it. Since then, she and Chrissie had avoided each other, but they were bound to be around each other eventually.

Allie dropped into Knox’s lap in a possessive gesture, scowling at Chrissie. Chrissie rolled her eyes. “Don’t worry, I’ve got no interest in Knox. He’s not my type.”

Allie made a face. “Like I give a shit what your type is. Go away.”

“I’ve got just as much right to be here as you do,” Chrissie glared at her.

I huffed out a laugh, shaking my head. Wrong thing to say. Now I wasn’t gonna get fucking laid.

“No, you fucking don’t,” Allie snarled.

“Why don’t you go throw your snatch at someone else and stop wasting all the good air around here,” Riley added, a bored look on her face.

Chrissie let out an outraged shriek. “Fuck you!”

Riley scrunched her nose. “No thanks. I wouldn’t want to catch anything.”

I couldn’t hold back my bark of laughter. Riley had some excellent comebacks. Chrissie screeched and stomped her foot, but before she could say some shit that might get her killed, Croy’s office door opened and him and Reaper strolled out, effectively silencing Chrissie’s rant. If you wanted to live, you didn’t piss off those two. Hell, if you wanted to die a quick death, you pissed off anyone but those two.

Chrissie moved closer to me at their approach, like I would save her or some shit. She had the wrong guy for that. My brotherhood came before any pussy, even one as willing as hers. Sweetbutts weren’t part of our crew and my loyalty couldn’t be bought with the promise of a good time.

“What the fuck is goin’ on over here?” Crow growled.

Riley had been around long enough that most of the sweetbutts learned to stay the fuck away from Croy. Not Chrissie. She pouted, trying to get in his good graces.

“I didn’t do anything. I was just asking Clink if he wanted to go upstairs and they attacked me.”

Quinn scoffed. “Yeah, right. Maybe if you kept your big mouth shut, we wouldn’t have engaged with you.”

She was the quiet one, and whenever she got catty, it was a shock to the system. Reaper seemed to enjoy it, though. He pulled her against his side, wrapping her hair around his fist in a possessive gesture. Croy was a little less subtle about it. He tugged Riley backwards against his chest and put his hand on her neck. She melted into it, a smile pulling at her lips even when she was still shooting daggers at Chrissie.

“Croy,” Chrissie whined. “She shouldn’t get to attack me every time I come over. I didn’t do anything wrong.”

He wouldn’t even look in Chrissie’s direction, tipping Riley’s head so he could run his teeth along her neck. Jealousy shot through me and stunned the shit out of me. I’d never been jealous of my brothers before. I liked being single, but listening to Chrissie’s bullshit was annoying as fuck and

seeing how easy Croy, Reaper, and Knox had it with their old ladies was eye opening.

“Somehow, I don’t fuckin’ believe you. Riley can do whatever the fuck she wants. She’s the first lady, not you. Now fuck off. You’re ruinin’ a good time,” Croy growled.

Chrissie’s mouth fell open, and she whipped her head around, looking to me to come to her rescue. I shrugged.

“You heard ‘im.”

She screeched and stomped her foot again before storming out of the MC. Letting out a sigh, I slouched a little. There went my evening.

“You can do better.”

Quinn’s comment caught my attention, and I smirked at her. “Not really lookin’ for better right now, sweetheart. Just lookin’ for a good time. Here, play for me. I gotta make a call.”

I handed her my cards. No doubt unless Reaper played for her, my entire pot would be gone before I got back, but if I wasn’t gonna get laid, I might as well take a hit. I still had some leftovers. I had to get rid of the shit before I cut myself off again anyway. I wasn’t going to waste it by throwing it in the trash or something.

Taking the stairs two at a time, I strolled casually to my room. I looked around to make sure no one followed me before ducking inside. I’d hid the little baggy when I got back last time and no one was any wiser that I had any product here. Pulling it out of its hiding spot, I moved into the bathroom for another layer of security. I didn’t generally mess with the shit while at the clubhouse, but I needed a hit.

I’d lined the shit up on the counter when the bathroom door flew open. I couldn’t do shit to hide it even if I hadn’t already done a line and my brain was still buzzing from the effects. I stared at Reaper, dumbfounded.

“Uh... Hey, man.”

CHAPTER 9

CLINK

Somewhere in the back of my head, I felt like I should probably be panicking. I wanted to, but it was like I stalled out and I could only stare at him while the drugs already in my system drop kicked me into a false sense of ease. I shot him a grin.

“What are ya doing up here, man? Thought you’d be with your—”

He didn’t give me a chance to finish. He lunged for me, grabbing a fistful of my shirt and hauling my ass out of the bathroom. I stumbled, his movements too quick for me to keep up with, and hit the deck. On any normal occasion, I’d be fighting back, but this was Reaper we were talking about. You didn’t get into a fight with that bastard unless you were looking to die.

“Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t bring your ass to Croy right now. One fucking reason, Clink.”

I shook my head slowly, trying to think straight. Fuck, usually the drugs helped me sort my shit out, but today they were leaving me muddled, and I was struggling to focus. I used the edge of my bed to push myself into a sitting position. Couldn’t make myself look him in the eye, though.

“It’s not what it looks like.”

“Like fuck, it isn’t. You know the fucking rules. And after all that shit with Wrecker, you thought now was a good time to start skimming?”

My head jerked up, and I scowled at him. “No one is fuckin’ skimming, man. I get my shit from my dealer. I don’t steal from my crew.”

Yeah, it was against the rules for members to do drugs. Croy made it a fucking law when he took over as Prez because he didn’t want his crew partaking in his product. He said it caused too many headaches between keeping the crew from stealing and chasing after the guys too high to do their jobs. I knew I fucked up when I started using again, but I didn’t fucking steal. My crew was my family and I would never do that shit.

“Prove it. Show me fucking receipts. Because if I find out you’ve been skimming, Clink, I swear to fucking god, I’m gonna tear you to pieces.”

I had a sarcastic comment all primed and ready, but now was not the time. I fucked up, should’ve locked the fucking door. I pulled my phone out of my pocket, pulling up the messages from my dealer. Every two days for the last few weeks. I’m fucking pathetic.

Handing the phone to Reaper, I leaned back against my bed. The euphoric feeling that normally came with a hit was nowhere in sight. I felt agitated and antsy and I didn’t get nearly enough to get the high I wanted. My gaze flicked to the bathroom. There was another line just waiting for me. I just had to get Reaper to fuck off.

“How long?”

My brow furrowed. “Huh?”

He glared down at me, my phone still clutched in his hand. “How fucking long, Clink? How long have you been using?”

Turning my face away from him, I glared at the wall. “What the fuck does that matter?”

I didn’t want to admit it. He’d only blame himself. Five years sober down the drain because of a job we did together. Reaper was a good man, a good brother, and protective as all hell. He’d take the blame for my using when it was my

fucking choice. I knew what to do when I got exposed. I chose to ignore it.

I waited for him to drag me down to Croy. After the shitshow of Wrecker stealing from the crew and all the fucked up shit that came along with it, there was a zero tolerance policy. The thought of them kicking my ass or killing me didn't bother me as much as the potential that they'd kick my ass to the curb. I couldn't lose my brotherhood. It'd fucking kill me.

When Reaper sat down across from me, his back up against the wall, I frowned at him. "What are you doing?"

He drew his legs up, resting his arms on his knees, my phone dangling between his fingertips. He didn't look pissed. He looked... tired.

"We're gonna wait out your fucking high. I'm sweeping your room once you crash and can't try shit and tomorrow we're gonna go to a meeting. This is my fault and—"

I made an irritated sound. "No, the fuck it isn't. You can't blame yourself for every fuckin' thing, Reap. I knew better. I did it anyway."

He shook his head slowly. "No, Clink. If I'd known you were one of the guys who got clean, I never would've had you around that shit. Does Croy know?"

I didn't answer. Most of the guys who got clean were pretty open about that shit. They said it helped them stay accountable or whatever. I didn't tell anyone. I didn't want that to be how people saw me. I was the king of good times and they'd always be suspicious that it was because of the drugs.

"Clink."

I scowled. "No. I didn't want to stunt my progression. You fuckin' know he wouldn't have made me Treasurer if he knew I was a user."

"If you were clean, why the fuck would that matter?" Reaper frowned.

He didn't fucking get it. He never would. Reaper never touched the product. He had his own shit to deal with, but he dealt with it with a clear fucking head. I had no idea how he managed that shit.

He was being too damn calm about this, and I felt myself losing control. He was just fucking sitting there, staring at me.

“Fuck off, Reaper! I can deal with this shit myself!”

He didn't even flinch, blinking slowly. I snarled, shoving to my feet. “Get the fuck out. I don't need your help.”

He stood, and I stupidly hoped for a second that he was going to listen to me. Yeah, no such fucking luck. He went for the bathroom instead. My heart lodged in my throat. He was going for the fucking drugs.

“Reaper, don't!”

He didn't even hesitate, sweeping the rest of the lines into the sink. Before he could turn on the tap, I lunged at him. It was fucking stupid, but I could probably salvage some of it if I could get him to back the fuck off.

Yeah, I should've known better. It didn't matter that he was injured and fucking tortured a week ago. For Reaper, fighting was as easy as breathing. He saw me coming a mile away and blocked the punch I had aimed for his face. Grabbing my wrist, he yanked my arm above my head, exposing my ribs. Aw fuck.

It only took one solid hit for him to buckle me, but he kept going until I was sure ribs were broken. I collapsed onto the floor, gasping, while he hadn't even broken a sweat. The sound of the tap turning on was like icing on a very fucked up cake and I felt my eyes slip closed. This night was one of the worst trips of my life, and I knew he wouldn't let it go. I was starting to resent the old ladies because I could've been balls deep in Chrissie right now instead of dealing with this shit.

“This is fucking stupid.”

“I don’t give a shit. Get moving,” he growled, shoving my shoulder.

Just like I predicted, Reaper hadn’t let it go. He knocked my ass out and swept my room, finding another stash and dumping the shit down the toilet. I couldn’t do shit about it since any time I tried to get up off the floor, he beat the shit out of me. I was now sporting a fucking black eye and probably at least two broken ribs. Asshole nearly broke my leg kicking me when I tried to run. I was walking with a limp because of his fucking need to fix this shit.

We got a few curious looks on our way out this morning, but so far, he hadn’t said shit to anyone. Not even Croy. He didn’t even tell Quinn anything other than that he had shit to deal with, so she shouldn’t wait up for him. I might’ve appreciated his discretion if I wasn’t so pissed off right now.

He was even decent enough to drag my ass all the way to the city for a meeting. There was one in our town, but half the people who went there were in our crew and I wasn’t setting foot near that place without being gagged and bound, so here we were. In an NA meeting in the city.

“Man, I don’t need to go to this shit. I can do it on my own.”

He shoved me again, ignoring my protests. “Stop bitching and move. We’re gonna be late.”

Growling, I shoved past the doors and into the community center they held this shit in. The room was more crowded than I expected, men and women talking amongst themselves. Everyone was different. A few people in suits, a few in blue collar uniforms. Some in just jeans and t-shirts. All eyes swung our way, and I knew this was a bad fucking idea. The Devil’s Disciples weren’t quiet about our involvement in the drug trade. We provided the product that probably put a few of these people on the path they were on now. I took a step back, only to be shoved forward again by Reaper, his grip tight on my shoulder to prevent me from running.

One of the gawkers stepped forward, a man who looked like he was in his forties, with long blonde hair tied back into a

ponytail. He cocked his head, a slight frown on his face.

“Can I help you?”

Reaper answered before I could get a word in edgewise. “My friend here had a relapse.”

I tried to shrug off his grip, but he just squeezed until it fucking hurt and I had no choice but to settle. The man watched us curiously, his lips pursed.

“I understand you want to help him, but until he’s ready—”

“I’m fuckin’ ready. I just don’t need help. I can do this shit on my own,” I snapped.

Reaper may have been understanding and kept quiet, but his patience only stretched so far. He already warned me. Get sober or he’ll kick my ass out of the crew. I wasn’t going to lose my brotherhood for a high. It was incentive enough. I didn’t need to go to meetings.

The man gave me a look of understanding. “I feel you on that. I thought the same thing once. Why don’t you hang out for a little while, get the feel of the place. If you still hate it once we’re through, we can talk about some other options.” He offered me his hand. “I’m Tyson, by the way.”

With a put-upon sigh, I shook his hand. “I’m—” My eyes strayed while I spoke and I froze, my tongue turning to lead.

“Sam?”

CHAPTER 10

SAM

Of all the people I expected to walk into the Narcotics Anonymous meeting this morning, Clink wasn't one of them. I had a split second fear that I was wrong before and he was here for me or something, but he looked none too pleased to be here and his friend wasn't discreet in saying he had a relapse. I recognized him as one of the terrifying guys from that office meeting, though I never did learn his name. He had his hand on Clink's shoulder, like he was keeping him from running away.

When Tyson told Clink to stick around, I wanted to hide. There was no way we'd get through this meeting without him realizing I was here. I didn't want to hinder his process or anything by threatening his anonymity. I didn't know he'd come here or I wouldn't have volunteered today.

“Sam?”

Shit.

Tyson looked over his shoulder at me with a frown. “You two know each other?”

Well, now I just looked stupid hiding on the other side of the room, so with a grimace, I crossed the room to join them.

“Hey, Clink.”

He looked confused, staring at me. The longer he stared, the more awkward I felt. I started chewing on the side of my nail without thinking about it, jumping when Tyson grabbed my hand and gently pushed it away from my mouth. He knew I hated that habit and he didn't mention it other than to help

me. Clink's brows drew down further, his gaze flicking between me and Tyson.

"You volunteer here or something?" The man behind Clink spoke low, his expression more curious. I mean, as curious as you can look when you still look like you could murder anyone and everyone in the room with no effort. It wouldn't surprise me if this dude didn't know how to smile.

I nodded slowly. I started coming to the community center after Tyson took me in. There was a teen outreach program across the hall that I normally volunteered at, but Tyson needed a hand today, so I stuck around. I volunteered here before and the members didn't mind me hanging around since it was an open meeting on Fridays, but I was seriously regretting being here today of all days.

"Sam volunteers here when we need her. Usually she's across the hall at the teen center, but they're on a field trip today. We've got some treats in the back if you're hungry. We'll be starting the meeting soon." Tyson to the rescue. He redirected the conversation before tipping his head toward the little set up where everyone else was taking a seat. I could see a few people who were none too pleased about Clink and his friend being here. I understood why, but Clink was looking to get sober and that was all that mattered.

"Come on." Tyson led me away with a hand on my upper back, sitting me down in the front near him. I used to hide in the back, I didn't think I belonged there because I wasn't a user, but after a few years, I lost some of the self consciousness. The people here were kind, and since they knew I was here with Tyson and that I wasn't going to cause them any trouble, they didn't mind me being around.

The uncertainty came screaming back now that Clink was here, though. I was supposed to go back to the MC after this to start on the assessment. There was no avoiding him, especially since Croy said Clink would be who I worked with during the whole repair. This would put a serious awkwardness to our relationship and I felt bad being here.

Tyson moved to the podium in front, smiling down at the group. “Good morning, everyone. I’m glad you’re here. As most of you all know, my name is Tyson and I’m an addict.”

I tried to pay attention while he went through the motions of the meeting, but my knee started bouncing restlessly as I fought back the urge to look over my shoulder at Clink. I wanted to know what he was thinking, or if he was pissed at me for being here.

“And now I’d like to invite my friend Sam up here to speak. Sam?”

Blinking a few times, I looked up with a frown. “I–What?”

He flashed me a soft smile. “You had a rough day the other day with your family. Maybe you’d like to tell us what happened?”

Stunned, I just stared at him. I didn’t belong up there. I wasn’t an addict.

Bart, a long-time member, nudged my shoulder, jerking his chin toward the podium. “We know you ain’t usin’, Sammy. But you’re here a lot. If we can help, we will.”

My stomach twisted into knots as I pushed to my feet, looking around the room. All I saw were encouraging smiles, but I still didn’t feel right going up there. And I hated public speaking.

Tyson stepped off the podium, taking my hands and squeezing them with a smile. “It’ll be good for them to see that they aren’t alone in their struggles. And you did the right thing by calling me. Tell them about it. Let them support you.”

It took a second for it to sink in before I realized what he was doing. He was always pushing me to trust people more. After what happened with my family, I kept people at a distance. But I’ve been volunteering here for years. I didn’t distrust the people here. Turning so that they couldn’t see me, I gave Tyson an irritated look. He just smiled, leaning closer to whisper to me.

“You need more people in your corner. And maybe if you hear it from more people, you’ll realize it wasn’t your fault.”

My heart picked up, and I thought about telling him no, but I trusted Tyson. If he thought it’d be good for me, then I’d give it a shot. And if it went poorly, then maybe I’d finally stop lying to myself. I took a few deep breaths, hesitantly moving to stand behind the podium. Bouncing on my toes, I tried not to grimace.

“Uh, hi. I’m Sam and I’m... not an addict.” I paused while the group chuckled. “I, uh... had a bad day the other day, though.” I cleared my throat nervously. “Last weekend, I got a phone call from my sister. We hadn’t spoken since she cut me off after our parents died. She and a lot of other people blamed me for what happened and—” I paused, dropping my gaze from the crowd to my hands. “I blamed myself for a long time, too. I still do sometimes. Anyway... She wanted me to go back to her church and show the congregation that I was no longer an embarrassment to the family. She said I owed her.”

I swallowed hard at the memory. Tyson stayed on my couch that night to make sure I was okay, but it took a few days for me to feel like myself again.

“What happened to your parents?” Tyson asked calmly.

I shot him a pained look, but he wasn’t backing down. With a sigh, I replied, “They died in a car accident, coming to pick me up from a party. They had a rule that if me or any of my siblings got into trouble, we could call them and they’d come, no questions asked. I was messing around with my friends, drinking and smoking weed, and the combination didn’t sit well. It freaked me out. So I called home, and my parents came to get me. Only, they never made it to my friend’s house. A drunk driver hit them head on, going the wrong way on the road.”

“How the fuck is that your fault?”

Clink sounded outraged, which was reassuring. I lifted a shoulder. “They never would’ve been out there if it wasn’t for me. I was sixteen. I wasn’t supposed to be drinking or doing drugs. My sister says that because I was such a bad kid, God

punished me by taking away our parents. That's why she doesn't speak to me anymore. She doesn't want to be punished for knowing me."

I finally let my eyes drift over the group, taking in the understanding nods and soft smiles. When I looked at Clink, he was leaning forward in his chair, his elbows on his knees and his hands covering his mouth. I could hear the jingle of the chain on his belt, signaling he was feeling twitchy either from being pissed on my behalf or because he was getting sober. I pushed through, willing myself to finish.

"I don't normally answer when my family calls. It doesn't do us any good and we always fight. I was stupid to pick it up, but I guess a small part of me always hopes they'll change their minds. Or at least acknowledge that I didn't mean for it to happen. But I really need to stop answering their calls. Every time I do, I end up getting really depressed and it's hard for me to live my life and do my job." I bit my lip, bouncing on my toes a little. "I might not go for drugs, but I definitely spiraled. I used to punish myself for what happened and the urge pops up now and then to fall into old habits. I had to call Tyson to help me. He's always helped me. And he'll help you too, if you give him the chance. So uh... I'm still not an addict. But thanks for listening."

My face burned as the group clapped and cheered. I hated public speaking. Tyson clapped my shoulder, a proud look on his face as he stepped past me to take over.

"Good job, Sammy." He turned back to the group. "I know Sam isn't an addict, but I wanted you to hear her story. Sometimes, no matter how much we want them to, our family isn't going to ever see past what they want to see. Their toxicity will only drag you down and make it harder to achieve your goals. I want to encourage you to really look at the relationships in your life and how they affect your sobriety. If your family isn't willing to support you through the hard parts and the good parts, then maybe it's best to take a step back from that relationship and focus on those who have your back."

While he went on to talk about how the struggle to stay sober was a lifelong battle, and finding your support system was important, I sat back in my seat, staring at my hands. I couldn't even say how much I longed to have my family back when I was younger. Even after they cast me out, I was almost desperate to have them back. I pleaded with them, wanting to prove to them and to myself that I wasn't at fault.

I'd never get my family back. That much was clear years later. They weren't interested in being part of my life. Tyson was, though. He treated me like a person, and didn't sugarcoat when I was being an ass. He gave it to me straight, and I felt like I was flying every time he said he was proud of me. Tyson wasn't the family I was born with. He was the family I chose, and I'd do a thousand public speeches if it made him happy.

“So when I asked you if someone was screwing with you, you were lying, right?”

I jumped, surprised. Clink had been sitting in the back but had somehow snuck around until he was sitting behind me, leaning close to whisper to me. I shot him a look over my shoulder, shushing him.

“Pay attention.”

The pissed off look he came in here with lifted a little and he smirked at me. He listened, though, and leaned back in his seat with his arms over his chest, feigning paying attention. I knew he was faking because I could feel his gaze burning the back of my neck. This wasn't a good idea, having him here. He knew too much already, and that would make it harder to keep him at a distance. I'd need to figure out some way to get him to find a new spot. There had to be another meeting closer to the clubhouse. The convenience would sway him, surely.

The rest of the meeting passed with no interruption from Clink. A few other people said their peace, and we wrapped things up with a prayer. Given my history with the church, I didn't participate in that part, but it didn't hurt to say the words even if I wasn't certain I believed. I believed in the message and that was all that mattered.

A few people approached me afterwards, hugging me and telling me it wasn't my fault. I felt like I was choking on the lump in my throat by the time the room cleared out and I took a minute to take some deep breaths while Tyson said his goodbyes at the door. I was gathering my things when I felt a presence at my back. I sighed, turning to face Clink. He studied me curiously, like he was trying to read me. It made me uncomfortable, and I crossed my arms over my chest defensively, glaring at him.

“What?”

He shook his head slowly. “Nothing.”

I rolled my eyes. “Whatever. Are you gonna let Tyson help you? I'm pretty sure there's an NA charter closer to you, if it'd be easier. Getting sober isn't something you can do on your own.” I'd volunteered long enough to see many people try. It was easier when you had people to rely on.

He lifted a shoulder, only to be smacked in the back of his head by his friend. He flinched and ducked, glowering at the man over his shoulder.

“Dammit, Reaper. I—”

“Keep pretending this isn't a big deal, and I'll knock your ass out. Again.”

Now that I wasn't reeling from his arrival, I could see the bruises on his face and the way he favored his left side. I tipped my head with a frown.

“Wait. Did you really kick his ass?”

Reaper nodded. “Asshole thought he could take me on while high off his ass. Idiot can't even fight me sober.”

Clink scowled, shifting not so subtly away from his friend. “I would've done more damage if I wasn't on a bad trip.”

Reaper rolled his eyes, clearly not believing a word Clink was saying. I didn't doubt his prowess. Reaper seemed to exude dangerous energy, where Clink more reminded me of a golden retriever. I couldn't see him fighting. Their dynamic was interesting, though. Even though they were talking about

fighting each other, it was obvious Reaper cared. He brought Clink here, after all, and stayed for the whole meeting. Most family members didn't do that.

Their banter benefited me because it drew Clink's attention off me while he snapped at Reaper about how it was an unfair fight. They followed me towards the door where Tyson was waiting, offering his support and words of advice to people as they left. He beamed at me when I approached, pulling me into a hug.

"I'm proud of you. I know speaking like that isn't easy. It helped though, I promise. A few people mentioned on their way out that they were going to think about their relationships more and how it affected them. Thank you."

Squeezing his middle tightly, I stepped back and smiled. "Glad my misery could be of some use."

He rolled his eyes, shoving my shoulder lightly. "Shut up. You headed to work?"

"Yep." I jerked my thumb over my shoulder towards the bikers behind me. "I've got the assessment on their clubhouse, remember?"

"You remember our deal, right?"

I gave him a thumbs up and headed out of the community center after Tyson gave Clink his number and told him to call so they could run through some ideas on getting him sober together. Clink didn't seem interested in sticking around, and he followed me out, with Reaper scowling behind him.

Clink and Reaper's bikes were parked nearby, but they followed me to my truck instead. When I frowned at them, Reaper spoke.

"Just making sure you get to your truck safely. It'd be a fucking pain in the ass to find a new electrician we can trust right now."

I made a face, scrunching up my nose. "Uh, thanks?"

He nodded and loped away to his bike while Clink waited by the door as I tossed my stuff into the passenger seat. He

looked inside curiously, but I didn't miss his grimace.

“What's with the face?”

“Can't stand cages. I prefer the wind on my face.”

I looked between him and his bike. “You don't wear a helmet?”

CHAPTER 11

SAM

He cackled at me as he walked away, like the idea of wearing a helmet was the most ridiculous thing on the planet. You'd think someone who cared enough to get sober would care enough to put on something to stop their brain from splattering all over the pavement during a crash. Neither of them even wore a leather jacket or something for protection. I watched them after climbing in the driver's seat, frowning. Clink had on an old band t-shirt with his leather vest, jeans, and boots. Yes, he looked like a biker, but he had absolutely no protection if he was in an accident. All that skin exposed would be ripped to shreds.

I shouldn't have been focusing on his skin. He was off limits. I don't date. It opens up the chance for heartbreak, and I didn't think I could go through that twice. I couldn't think about the lean muscles of his arms or the way his shirt was tight across his chest, even with the loose fit everywhere else. It was obvious he was trim, probably without an ounce of body fat. I wasn't going to think about that either.

The drive to the clubhouse was a task and a half because I kept looking out the rearview mirror at the two men behind me. I had like a million questions. Like why someone who was in a group that notoriously dealt drugs was looking to get sober. Or why anyone in the club even cared one way or another. Was it a personal thing, or a club thing? Were the rumors about them wrong?

My mind wandered the entire way there, so I drove mostly on autopilot, only half listening to the directions on my GPS. When I pulled up in front of the clubhouse, the two guys

behind me finally broke away, pulling into the parking lot off to one side instead. I took a second to bolster myself and clear my head before grabbing my gear and hopping out of my truck.

“Jesus. You need a ladder to get into that thing?”

Spinning around, I frowned at the speaker. Another biker, this one with brown hair and green eyes, his arm tossed casually around a blonde woman’s shoulders. They both watched me curiously. I glanced behind me at my truck and back at them.

“Uh, no. There’s a step right there,” I replied, pointing to it.

The woman snorted, stepping away from her man to offer me a handshake. “I’m Allie. You’re the electrician, right?”

I nodded. “Sam. Are you like... a member or something?”

That made her man chuckle, and she rolled her eyes. “No. It’s a boy’s club, no girls allowed. I’m Knox’s old lady.” She tipped her head toward the biker behind her, who pulled her back under his arm as he joined us. She didn’t seem to mind the possessive gesture, though she did stiffen when Clink and Reaper came up from behind my truck. Her glare was locked on Reaper. She must be brave as hell to glare at that man.

“Hey, Trouble! What are you doin’ out here?” Clink called with a grin.

She shifted her glare onto Clink for a moment before a calculating look crossed her face. Suddenly the tension left her and she lifted a shoulder casually, leaning against Knox’s side.

“Spending time with my ol’ man. What about you?”

Clink’s eyebrows went up. He’d obviously been expecting her to get mad, and her relaxed response took him off guard. A grin split across his face, but before he could say anything, Reaper interrupted him.

“You’re supposed to be on lockdown,” he seethed.

Allie’s attention swung to Reaper, and her eyes narrowed. I got the feeling Knox’s grip around her neck was more to keep

her in the spot beside him than a show of possession, because he tightened it slightly when she clenched her fists at her side. He answered for her, locking eyes with Reaper.

“Took her to the range. I wanted to see if what happened when we got back was dumb luck or not. She’s been asking for her weapon back.”

Reaper looked irritated. “Croy clear you?”

Knox dipped his chin. To anyone else, it might look like he was bored answering questions, but I could see the tension in his arm around Allie. He was waiting for Reaper to start something. I frowned, glancing at Allie.

“Is fighting really common around here?”

She snorted, the tension bleeding away. “You have no idea. Come on, I’ll introduce you to the rest of the old ladies. We’re better company than these guys.”

She grabbed my wrist, pulling me inside and leaving the rest of them by my truck. I glanced over my shoulder, watching them.

“They aren’t gonna mess up my truck, are they?”

Allie pursed her lips. “Probably not, but if they do, they’ve got a mechanic who can fix it. I don’t think I’ve ever heard of an MC that didn’t have at least one mechanic.”

“How many MCs you know about?” Croy’s growl was more intimidating than all the others combined. Allie dragged me to the kitchen in the corner, giving Croy a droll look.

“A few. The San Diego charter had two. They fixed my tires before we left.”

He grunted, lifting his chin to greet me. He was leaning up against the island, Riley in a leather vest leaning back against him as she talked to a blonde with mile long hair.

“I thought you said it was a boy’s club.”

That drew Riley’s attention, and she turned to me with a smile. “It is. It’s a property cut, not a membership cut.” She turned to give me a view of her back. The patch looked similar

to the rest of the guys, but it said ‘Property of Croy’ across the top. I couldn’t help the face I made, which made her snort.

“I know. I thought the same thing. It took some explaining before I was willing to accept it.”

You couldn’t pay me money to agree to be someone’s property, in name or not. It felt really creepy, but I wasn’t going to judge other people’s lifestyles. She seemed happy, and it didn’t feel like she was being forced into it or anything, so that was what mattered with kinks like that.

“I know Reaper is working on getting Quinn one. Is Knox going to do the same for you?” Riley queried, her attention on Allie.

“Eventually. We’ve been a little busy since we got back. He doesn’t trust me to stay here without him, so he can’t go out and get it done.” She rolled her eyes heavily. Riley snickered.

“I mean, can you blame him?”

Allie scowled. “Shut up.”

Their dynamic was fun. Allie introduced me to the other woman, a sweet and quiet woman named Quinn. She wiggled her fingers, smiling at me. It wasn’t until Riley said she was Reaper’s old lady that I started to question things.

“Hold on. You?”

Her brow furrowed, but Riley laughed, nodding her head.

“I know, right? They’re like a study in opposites. But Quinn’s been in love with Reaper since we were kids.”

Allie made a face. “Don’t remind me. It’s still gross that you’re claimed by my brother.”

My mouth fell open. “He’s your brother?!”

“Oh yeah. The blowout when Allie found out was insane. Everything is back to normal now, thank god,” Riley replied.

Allie scoffed. “Speak for yourself. It’s still weird as hell to watch them all over each other.” She visibly shuddered.

Quinn's chin dropped, and the corners of her mouth drew down. She looked ashamed. It must've been a hell of a conflict to start dating your best friend's brother. Lucky for me, Tyson doesn't have any siblings anywhere close to my age.

Allie noticed Quinn's reaction and threw an arm around her shoulder, giving her a reassuring smile. "Don't stress out. Pretty sure if you weren't distracting him, I'd still be in California. Besides, he didn't immediately start bitching when he found out Knox brought me to the range. I have to assume that's because of you."

It settled Quinn a little, and she relaxed, leaning her head against Allie's shoulder.

"Where the fuck is Clink? He's supposed to be helping you."

Croy had been talking quietly to Nevada, but he finally turned his attention back in our direction. I glanced over my shoulder with a frown.

"He was outside a second ago."

Normally, I'd probably stay out of it. Clink and I were barely acquaintances and Croy seemed pissed that he wasn't where he was supposed to be. I wouldn't want to put myself on Croy's radar for someone I barely knew. But given where I met Clink this morning, I was more than a little suspicious about leaving him alone. I scanned the room, but he was nowhere to be found and that made alarm bells go off in my head.

"I'll, uh, go look for him. I need to get started on my assessment." I took a few steps back, waving at the group of women before going in search of Clink. He was right where I left him, leaning against my truck casually as he talked to Reaper and a few other bikers. I jogged down the steps and scowled at him.

"My truck is not a leaning post. Aren't you supposed to be my shadow or something?"

He flashed me a grin, giving me his full attention. "Sorry, sweetheart. We're just talking a little club business. I'll be

there in a minute.”

I rolled my eyes. “I’ve got a name, Clink. And it’s your funeral. Croy’s the one who was asking where you were. I’m not waiting around for you to start my work.”

Spinning on my heel, I walked away from him. He could face Croy’s wrath on his own.

When I came back inside alone, I saw Croy’s eyes narrow on me. I shrugged, turning my attention to the tv set up they had. Riley mentioned some outlets didn’t work at all in her room. I’d need to check all of them to be certain. I decided to start with the main floor, since there were plenty of people down here. If Croy was going to get pissed, at least it wouldn’t be because I was doing anything suspicious, like wandering around on my own.

He didn’t say anything to me about it. He did scowl though and after a quick but insanely passionate kiss for Riley, he stormed out of the MC. Clink was probably going to have a few new bruises. This place was seriously violent, and I almost felt bad for not waiting for him. Almost. Maybe I would’ve if he wouldn’t have been so condescending when I went looking for him.

CHAPTER 12

CLINK

“You’re sure?”

The prospect nodded. “I recognized him from the photo of the past crew inside. I dusted that wall sixteen times over. I’ve gotten familiar with the faces. He was in the city at the club.”

Motherfucker. We’d been dealing with Hammer and his bullshit for years. After we destroyed his crew, we figured he’d finally back the fuck off. But apparently not only was he gathering forces in the background for the past year, stealing from us, and infiltrating our own guys, he now was moving back to town.

“This asshole doesn’t know when to quit,” Reaper snarled. He had a grudge almost as big as Croy since Hammer just recently tried to kidnap Allie. It was also our crew member who had been working for Hammer that tried to take Quinn, too. The asshole was fucking stupid, always going for the women instead of coming at us like a man.

“So what’s the plan, then? We can’t just sit around waiting for him to come to us again,” I demanded. Last time we played the waiting game and Hammer fucked with us for weeks. We lost a good man playing those games with him. I wanted to hunt him down and end this once and for all.

“We aren’t doing shit until we talk to Croy,” Knox snapped.

“Talk to Croy about what?”

Speak of the devil. I glanced over my shoulder to find Croy and Nevada standing by the door. I jerked my chin in

greeting before looking back at the prospect.

“Gabe says he saw Hammer at a club in the city.”

Croy always looked pissed off, but that news made him look murderous. His lip curled up in a snarl, and he growled.

“Church. Now.”

We all trooped inside and I looked around for Sam on instinct. She was already working, doing some fancy shit with a sensor near the TV. No one seemed to pay her any mind, which was a relief. I was the one who was supposed to be looking out for her. Not that I didn't trust my brothers, for the most part I did. There were just a few who were more annoying than the rest. I was glad that Wrecker wasn't alive to cause Sam any issues. That asshole liked to say he was a ladies' man, but he didn't know when to fucking quit.

It wasn't a full church meeting. We weren't calling in the rest of the crew. It was the officers and the prospect that gathered in what we called church, a meeting room that was soundproof where we met to discuss business. Church and Croy's office were the most secure rooms in the entire building. While it may look like a bunch of guys were just lazing about, there were always a few stationed downstairs to watch over the rooms.

Sitting at the round table in the middle of the room, I tried to relax, but the fact that Hammer was closing in made me antsy. My mind kept drifting back to the last time he attacked here. Watching Mass die in Croy's arms would never leave me. Not unless I had another hit. If I wanted to get through the hunt, I'd need it. I couldn't afford to be emotional and shit about this.

“Prospect. Start from the beginning.”

My knee bounced restlessly as Gabe recounted the story. He'd already told us outside, so it was just a rehash for Croy and Nevada's benefit. My gaze drifted to the door, wondering if I could figure out a way to ditch Reaper long enough to find my shit. I watched him search the room. I knew of a few places he didn't look.

Croy scowled. “If he’s this close to town, he’ll be coming back eventually. We need more information. Reaper?”

“I’ll handle it. Prospect, I want the address, the time, everything on the last place you saw Hammer.” He stood and hesitated, his brow furrowing. “What about the girls?”

Croy shook his head. “Don’t worry about it. I’ll put Chase on ‘em. They seem to behave better around him.”

It was Chase who got the girls out before Hammer’s last attack. We knew we could trust him around them, he’s proven it time and time again. Still...

“I thought they were on lockdown?”

Croy looked irritated. “It’s harder than it looks to keep them from going to work. If it was anyone else, I’d send them with security, but it’s Hammer and they’re all targets right now.”

They tossed out ideas on how to keep the girls from causing trouble, but there wasn’t a lot that would make a difference. The only person who knew about this life beforehand was Allie and she was the most likely to fight if Croy said they couldn’t leave to work.

“Why don’t we tell them the truth?”

All eyes swung my way. Reaper scowled. “Because it’s fucking club business.”

I rolled my eyes. “I know that. But it’s Hammer. The girls know how dangerous he is and what his goal is. They might be more likely to listen if they knew why.” I didn’t have an old lady to deal with, but I knew the girls pretty well. They did better when they had the full picture. It wasn’t like we were telling them about the product or anything. This had to do with their safety. It was more than just club business.

“I agree with Clink,” Knox replied. “Allie will behave more if she knows it’s him. She’s already had a run in with him once. She knows what would happen if she got caught.”

Brewer agreed, as did Nevada. Croy and Reaper were less amenable, but eventually they agreed to let the girls in the loop

just enough to make them stay put. I let out a relieved breath. The old ladies were a newer addition to the crew and I like having them around. They brought in a different kind of fun to the club and I would carve out Hammer's insides if he so much as looked in their direction. They were under our protection, old ladies or not.

By the time we finished up our meeting, I was jonesing for a fix. I'd start the getting clean shit once Hammer was handled and out of our hair. I couldn't focus when I was like this. It shouldn't take that long, not with Reaper on the hunt. I only needed a little to get by. I didn't need to go nuts about it.

Feeling pretty confident about my decision, I headed straight upstairs. My room was down the hall towards the back, two windows looking over the backyard and the parking lot. I got the best room, in my opinion. It was also pretty out of the way, nowhere near the stairs, so most people wouldn't come over here unless they needed something from me. I unlocked the door, reminding myself to lock the doorway behind me, but I never got the fucking chance.

"It's a little early for bed, isn't it?"

Fuck. I'd honestly forgotten about Sam. I should've checked in with her before I headed up here. Spinning around, I shot her a grin.

"Just grabbing something real quick. How's the assessment coming?"

Her eyes narrowed suspiciously and my hackles went up. Out of anyone, Sam might be able to pick up on the innocent act. I seriously doubted that was her first meeting, and while she didn't use drugs herself, she probably heard plenty of stories. I didn't want her calling attention to that shit.

"Did you need something?"

Her brows furrowed, and her gaze shifted to my room. She pursed her lips before nodding her head. "Yeah. I need to go on the roof because some of the stuff I need is up there, but I don't know where the access is."

I relaxed a little. “Uh... I’m not sure. Pretty sure Nevada would know. He’s downstairs. I’ll meet you down there in a minute, ‘kay?”

Nodding slowly, she turned around and headed down the hall again. I waited until she turned the corner before going into my room. I locked the door and felt a smirk cross my face. Not even Sam knew what I was up to. That would make this a lot easier. I turned toward the bed, pulling off the corner of the sheets. There was a small cut in the side that I hid my shit in sometimes. No one was in here doing my laundry but me, so it was an easy place to hide shit and Reaper didn’t know to look there. He looked under the mattress itself, not inside it.

I was just pulling out the drugs when someone pounded on my door.

“Clink, open the fucking door.”

Motherfucker. I shoved the drugs back in the mattress and fixed the sheets before going to answer it. If I ignored him, he’d break my door down and that’d be a pain in the fucking ass to deal with. I opened my door with a scowl, but came up short. Reaper wasn’t alone. Sam stood behind him, her eyes narrowed and suspicious.

“What?”

Reaper made an irritated noise. “Don’t start. What the fuck were you doing in there?”

I rolled my eyes. “I was about to take a shit. Why? Wanna join?”

His lip twitched like he was holding back his temper. He could try shit if he wanted. I wasn’t on a bad trip anymore. As much as people thought he was the best fighter, I was no fucking slouch. I could take him on if I had to.

When he didn’t move, I let out an exasperated sigh. “Reap, you were the one who searched my room. You’ve been next to me this whole fucking morning. You know there’s nothing in there. Is there seriously no trust between us anymore?”

He wavered, just like I hoped. I felt bad for lying to him, but I said I’d get sober once shit was less insane. I didn’t want

him hounding me the entire time. Besides, he needed to focus on himself. He was technically still healing from getting shot. I didn't want him to be distracted by focusing on me.

Putting my hand on his shoulder, I leveled him with a look. "You've got club business to handle. Croy will lose his mind if he finds you standing around here for no good reason. I got this. I'm good."

He studied me suspiciously before dipping his chin once. I had to fight not to let out a relieved sigh. Stepping back, I jerked my chin towards the hall.

"Now let a man shit in peace. I'll be down in a—"

Sam scoffed, brushing past Reaper. I sidestepped her to block her, and she glared at me. "If there's nothing in there, then there's nothing to hide. Move."

I scowled. "Sweetheart, I don't even know you. I don't need you looking through my shit. Don't you have work you should be doing?"

She crossed her arms and glared at me, clearly not believing anything I just said to Reaper. It made me antsy, and I snarled at her without thinking.

"Get your ass back to work and mind your fuckin' business."

Her eyebrows flew up and a tinge of fear crossed her face before she masked it. Guilt sank into my gut, but I needed some way to get her to leave me the fuck alone. She took a step back, but the triumph was sour given how hurt she looked.

"Clink, move the fuck out of the way."

CHAPTER 13

SAM

It wasn't hard to figure out Clink was lying. His eyes kept darting around and he looked anxious even when he plastered on that easy going persona and grinned at me. I thought about leaving him alone, I wasn't his sponsor and his sobriety wasn't my responsibility, but I couldn't justify that in my head. I'd been volunteering with Tyson for a while. Sometimes I went with him when someone was just starting out to help him check for drugs. Some women especially felt more comfortable when it wasn't just them alone with Tyson. Some had issues with men, from pimps who forced drugs on them to spouses who beat them and they used to numb the pain. I knew the signs that someone was hiding something and I felt like if I ignored what I knew to be true, I'd be just as responsible for Clink's slip as he was. So when I saw Reaper near the top of the stairs, I asked him to come with me to check on Clink. He didn't question my reasoning, he just spun on his heel and headed for Clink's room.

Clink wasn't happy about us barging in. And he was definitely a master at manipulating people into getting his way. He went after what he knew would work with Reaper, not once fearing the consequences of lying to that man. I wasn't part of his crew, though, and I could see right through him. He was going to say anything to get us to walk away and leave him alone. He said Reaper searched his room, but Reaper never said anything about doing drugs in the past. He wouldn't know just how good people could get at hiding it.

When I tried to bypass them, Clink blocked me, not bothering to hide his scowl. He knew I would be better at

finding it than Reaper.

“Get back to work and mind your fuckin’ business.”

I almost flinched. Deep down, I knew he was lashing out to protect himself and to keep me from finding the drugs, but it still hurt. There was a reason I was glad I’d never be a sponsor. I wasn’t built to handle stuff like this. Patience wasn’t my strong suit. I either shut down or fought back. Neither would help Clink right now.

I took a few steps back, considering calling Tyson to help, when Reaper intervened.

“Clink, move the fuck out of the way.”

Clink swung his furious gaze to Reaper. “Fuck no. We just went over this. I—”

Without warning, Reaper moved. He had Clink in a choke hold in an instant, kicking his legs out so he landed on his knees on the floor. My mouth fell open, and I turned to run away, but Reaper’s snarl made me pause.

“You think he’s still hiding shit?”

With a grimace, I turned around slowly and nodded. “Yes. He’s deflecting and lashing out to get us to go away. People with nothing to hide don’t do that.”

Clink struggled in Reaper’s grasp, his glare locked on me even as his face turned red from the lack of oxygen. Reaper didn’t seem to even notice, tipping his head towards Clink’s room.

“Find it then. I found the shit in the vent, but everything else was clean.”

“That’s because it is clean, you asshole,” Clink choked. “She’s probably fucking projecting and using herself.”

If he’d kept his mouth shut, maybe I would’ve been nicer and told Reaper that I was wrong. But his comment about me projecting made my spine stiffen, and I swung around to glare at him. I didn’t touch drugs. Not after what happened. Not when my parents’ deaths could be tied to the one night I ever touched drugs. Without a word, I marched into his room. I

zeroed in on the body spray on his dresser, remembering someone using the same one to hide drugs before. I grabbed it and pulled off the bottom, dumping the little dime baggie of white powder onto the top of the dresser. When I looked back at Clink, his eyes were wide and angry and he struggled harder against Reaper's hold. He wouldn't still be fighting if that was it, so I kept going, finding two more baggies with little effort. One was behind the baseboard under his bed. The other was tucked into the toe of one of his boots in his closet.

I washed my hands, not willing to accidentally ingest it or something in case some of it was coating the outside. Reaper finally released Clink, tossing him to the floor and pocketing the drugs I'd found. While drying my hands, I nodded to him.

"You're going to want to dump those as soon as possible. If he thinks he still has a chance of stealing them from you, he'll try it. As loyal as he says he is, addicts don't always focus on that when they're looking to get high."

Reaper nodded, shooting a dirty look towards Clink. I basically just ripped apart Clink's whole speech about trust and brotherhood. I felt a little guilty, but it was for his own good. His friends obviously didn't know anything about dealing with addicts. They supplied to them, they didn't spend time around them.

"Thank you. I'll make sure it's handled. You should get back to work. I'll have one of the guys help you while Clink is busy."

Nodding slowly, I edged past him but came up short when I saw Clink flick his gaze up and drop it back down. He was sitting on the floor, leaning against the door jamb, like he was trying to get his strength back, but for some reason he was holding his breath. I took a step back, watching his body language. He tensed when I stopped alongside the end of his bed. Frowning, I grabbed the sheets and yanked them off the bed. There, right along the seam, was a hole just big enough to hide something in it. When I reached in and pulled out another bag, I sighed.

"Is that it, then?"

He lifted his gaze slowly. If looks could kill, I'd be dead on the floor. So much for us being friends. At that moment, it looked like he hated me. I lifted my chin, refusing to let him see how much it bothered me when he glared at me like that. I studied him and nodded once, looking at Reaper instead.

"That's it. If you guys keep that stuff in the building though—"

"We don't."

I wasn't sure if I believed him, but Reaper had no reason to lie. He looked just as angry as Clink was, though his glare was locked on his friend, who sat on the floor with a betrayed look on his face. I swallowed hard and stepped past him.

"I'll, uh... head downstairs. Clink said Nevada would know how to get onto the roof?"

Reaper nodded. "He's in Croy's office."

Great. One more angry biker to deal with. I kept my face blank, giving Clink one last look before hustling down the hall and away. When I was out of their sight, I let out a heavy sigh. That was the most intense moment of my life and the guilt was overwhelming. I picked up my phone, dialing Tyson's number automatically.

"Sam? Everything okay?"

"I... Thank you. For looking out for me. I didn't realize just how hard it would be. Thank you."

I could hear the frown in his voice. "What happened?"

After talking through everything with Tyson, I felt better about what happened. He agreed I wasn't wrong by seeking help instead of letting Clink figure things out on his own, but he also reminded me that if I was going to step into that support role with Clink, I needed to be fully committed to it. I couldn't just help when it was convenient. I needed to be there for him at all hours. I wasn't sure I was up for that. I wasn't a user, I

couldn't be a sponsor, and I didn't know if I wanted to be his friend anymore. He obviously had a lot going on, and after his big speech to Reaper, I found it hard to believe I'd ever fully trust him. Besides, friends weren't somewhat terrified of their friends. And with the way Clink glared at me, I was a little afraid of the repercussions.

I got too comfortable around him, his easy going and flirtatious attitude making me relax and forget that he was a dangerous biker in a notorious gang that could easily kill me and hide my body and no one would know, except maybe Tyson. I didn't want to put Tyson in danger, either. No, I'd tell Reaper to find Clink someone to watch out for him who wouldn't be manipulated or terrified by Clink. I wasn't going to mention Tyson. I couldn't stand the thought of losing him because he accidentally pissed off a biker.

Trooping downstairs, I went looking for Nevada. Luckily, I caught him leaving Croy's office, so I didn't have to deal with the club president, who already seemed like he was in a foul mood. Nevada raised his bushy eyebrows at my approach, tipping his head.

“Can I help ya with somethin', darlin'?”

When Clink called me sweetheart, it was annoying and borderline condescending. Nevada calling me darling didn't bother me as much. It was just something I expected from the older generations and he was definitely one of the oldest here.

“Uh, yeah. I need access to the roof. Can you tell me how to get up there?”

He pursed his lips thoughtfully. “Should be a ladder round back. Lemme grab the keys and I'll show ya the way. Don't want anyone getting drunk and goin' up there, so we keep it locked.”

It was a smart move, especially if they were big on partying. I almost shuddered at the thought of Clink going up there while he was high. I hadn't had a drink since my parents died, but before I decided to mix drugs and alcohol, I felt like I was on top of the world while drinking. I thought about mentioning it, but I didn't know how many people knew about

Clink's addiction and I wasn't about to break his anonymity in front of his crew.

"How's it goin' so far?"

"Not terrible. Honestly, though, with a space this big, it might be easier if it wasn't just me."

He frowned. "You gonna need help?"

I lifted a shoulder. "I mean, I can do it on my own, but it'll take longer. With someone else helping me, it'll be less of a disruption too. I'll have to shut the power off while I'm dealing with the wiring."

He huffed out a laugh. "Figured as much. Won't need to worry about that. We'll be in and out a lot. Shits about to get busy around here and we'd prefer to just work with you."

With most of the other guys, I was too nervous to ask the big questions. Nevada seemed okay, though. He was by far the calmest biker I'd ever met, and I didn't feel like he was holding back his temper by being around me. It made it easier for me to ask questions.

"If you don't mind me asking..."

"You wanna know why we only wanna work with you?"

My eyebrows flew up, and I studied him as we walked out the sliding back door and around the side of the building.

"I suppose saying it's club business won't really be enough for ya, will it?"

I twisted my mouth to one side, hiding my smirk. "No, not really. I'm not even sure I know what that means."

He chuckled. "Means what it means, I suppose. There's stuff you don't need to know because you ain't part of our crew. But I suppose it doesn't hurt to tell ya a little, just to make sure you're comfortable. My wife says we're too hush-hush about stuff that ain't that important."

I considered him. It was hard to imagine any of these hard ass bikers being married, but if I had to choose any out of the

bunch that might be, it'd be him. He wasn't as terrifying as the rest.

“The reason we wanna work with you is cause there's an asshole out there who likes to fuck with us. He's gotten a mole in here before and we don't trust him not to try again.”

Frowning, I stopped alongside the ladder as he unlocked the chain that was blocking it off. “What does that have to do with me?”

“Hammer wouldn't be caught dead workin' with a woman unless she was workin' the streets, if ya know what I mean.”

I made a face. “I think I can figure it out. So you guys want to work with me because I'm a woman?”

When he nodded, I huffed out a laugh. “That's a first. Usually it's the opposite.”

He sighed heavily. “Yeah, I figured as much. Sorry about when you got here. I was just surprised. I wasn't lookin' to drop the job just cause you ain't a guy. When you signed your emails with the name Sam, I was expecting someone else.”

“I do that on purpose. I've had people ask me to send my manager without even giving me a shot because I'm a woman. They're more likely to let me do my job if I show up. They don't want to admit to my face that they don't want me merely because of my gender.”

He grimaced. “Sounds like a pain in the ass.”

I hummed my response. It was kind of annoying, but I was used to it at this point. They'd probably leave me alone if I dressed more masculine, but apparently feminine electricians are rare and they don't know what to do with me when I show up. Even when I wore my work polo and no makeup, I was too girly for the job.

CHAPTER 14

CLINK

Reaper waited until Sam was out of sight before turning to face me, the betrayal and fury written across his face. The guilt sat in the pit of my stomach like a heavy weight and I fought back a grimace.

“I swear, I had a reason.”

He scoffed. “This’ll be fucking good. Name it.”

A muscle ticked in my jaw as I fought to keep myself in check. I was already fucked after that whole speech. If I kept going, Reaper wouldn’t hesitate to boot me from the club.

“I can’t deal with Hammer and get sober at the same time. It’s a distraction I don’t need right now. I’ll join the hunt, we’ll nail his ass, and then I’ll get sober.”

He made an irritated sound, crossing his arms over his chest. “Fuck that. You’re not going anywhere near the hunt high. You’re not doing anything. Not until you get this shit back under control. I’ll talk to Croy about—”

“No!” I whipped my head up, not above begging. Not when it came to keeping my crew out of it. I needed to do this on my own, without them constantly staring at me, waiting for me to fail.

“There’s not a fucking chance I’m just going to walk away, Clink. And I’ve got shit to do. So either we tell Croy so the crew can watch out for you, or I’ll send you to the rehab Quinn’s mom is at.”

Yeah, that wasn’t going to fucking happen. I needed to be here. With Hammer circling, it was dangerous as fuck, and I

wasn't going to leave my brothers down a man.

"I can handle it on my own, Reap—"

"No. You can't. I gave you your options. Fucking pick one," he snarled.

Neither of them worked for me, not if I wanted to keep this to myself. The guys would need to know why I went missing for weeks on end, especially Croy.

"Come on, Reap... Don't do this to me."

His fierce expression never wavered. "Pick. One."

My mind scrambled for an option, any option that didn't involve my crew, but I came up blank. I ran my fingers roughly through my hair, scowling at the floor.

"I can't fucking do this if everyone is going to be staring at me, waiting for me to fuck up," I muttered.

"You can't do this on your own, either. How'd you manage it last time?"

My expression shuttered, and I turned my face away. I knew he wouldn't let me just not answer him, but it took work to force the words past my throat. "Mass."

"What?"

Growling, I lifted my glare to him. "Mass. He was like my sponsor. Kept me on track, checked in with me. That kind of thing. He had my back."

A familiar pain flashed across his face. We all felt it any time Mass's name was mentioned. He was a good brother, a good man. He shouldn't have gone out the way he did. Even though he did it for a good reason, to keep the girls safe, I was still pissed at him for doing it. Riley told me once that she begged him to go with her. He refused because he was a cocky shit.

"So pick someone."

My brow furrowed, and I shook my head. "What?"

He rolled his eyes. “If it was any other time, it’d be me watching out for you. Since I’ve got shit to handle, pick someone. I get it, you don’t want the whole crew watching, but you’re not going to keep getting high until this is over before trying again. You’re getting clean now. So pick someone to take Mass’s place.”

It wasn’t the worst plan. I didn’t want it to be him anyway, since he’d most likely kick my ass if I had another slip. I didn’t need a concussion every time I had a bad day. Bringing other people in on my shit wasn’t a pleasant idea, but it was a good compromise.

“Fine. Brewer.”

He nodded once. “I’ll talk to him. Meanwhile, you’re gonna call that sponsor guy. Brewer can watch your back, make sure you don’t wander off, but he’s never touched the product, he won’t know what to look for. Either that or go bug the electrician. She seems like she can call your bluff, since you seem so eager to lie to your own brotherhood.”

I grimaced. I wasn’t going to talk to Sam about it. I was already a dick to her in my desperation to get the two of them to leave me the fuck alone. Besides, it pissed me off just how easily she read me. I didn’t need that kind of energy around. She’d be a tremendous pain in my ass about it without a doubt, and I still had work to do.

“I’ll call him.”

He gave me a pointed look, not moving until I dialed the damn phone. No amount of glaring at him made any difference, and my throat still hurt from him choking me, so I wasn’t looking to fight with him right now. I pulled out my phone, dialing the number that Tyson guy left me.

“Hello?”

I grimaced. What the fuck do you even say to this guy?

“Hello?”

I didn’t reply until Reaper kicked my leg, making me yelp. “God damnit, Reaper!”

Tyson paused before speaking again. “Is this Clink? From the MC?”

Still scowling at Reaper, I huffed out a breath. “Yeah. I, uh... You said to call if there was a problem, or whatever, and—”

“Is Sam okay?”

The obvious concern in his voice made me pause. He was way older than her, but that didn’t stop a lot of women when it came to picking their men. It almost felt like those two were a thing. I wasn’t going to admit out loud how much that thought pissed me off.

“Yeah, she’s fine. Tore through my room like a hellion and found my stash, which was fucking great.”

He hummed his acknowledgement. “She told me that part. I’m assuming you’re not happy about that.”

“Would you be?” I snapped.

He drew in a breath, letting it out slowly. “Honestly? Yes. Since my goal is to stay sober, I’d take all the help I could get. Removing the temptation is part of the process. But like I said before, if you’re not ready—”

“I’m fucking ready. I just...” I sighed. This was going to be hard without bringing him into club business. “There’s shit I need to take care of, and it felt easier to keep using until things were less chaotic.”

His voice was calm and lacked any judgment as he responded. “I get that. It’ll feel like that a lot. Life would just be easier if you just kept using. But I think you know that’s a lie. Your brain is going to use any excuse to get what it wants. There’s never a ‘good’ time to get sober. It’s always going to be inconvenient and hard. Really hard. Do you have a support system to help you?”

Reaper walked away at one point, probably to go talk to Brewer. I’d be triumphant if Sam didn’t completely decimate every stash I had. It was like she could read my fucking mind and found every spot I hid the product. For someone who’d

never used before, she knew a lot of fucking shit about where I hid it.

“I’m working on it. I don’t want my whole crew to know and watch me, waiting for me to screw up. Reaper is bringing someone in to babysit me because he doesn’t trust me.”

“Does he have a reason not to trust you?” Again, there was no judgment in his voice. Just understanding. I couldn’t tell if that was fucking annoying or a relief. Maybe a bit of both.

“Yeah. I lied to his face to get him to fuck off. Sam saw right through me, though, and called me out while he was still standing there.”

He chuckled lightly. “She’ll do that. Sammy is a force to be reckoned with when she sees you as her friend. I wouldn’t take that lightly. She doesn’t trust easily, and that she cared enough to step in was a big deal for her.”

She probably didn’t think of me as a friend anymore. I was a huge asshole to her. It was probably how Reaper figured out I was lying. I never lash out like that with women. I’m the charmer of the crew. I could get the fucking queen to drop her panties if I wanted to. Telling Sam to fuck off and get to work was outside my norm by a lot, and I wasn’t blind to the fear that flashed across her face when I snapped at her. It gut punched me, but I’d been so desperate to get her to leave, I said the first thing that came to my mind.

“Whatever. How does this work? Because I’m not coming to the city every time I get the urge. That’ll draw too much attention to me.”

“Did that matter when you were looking to score?”

My lip lifted into a scowl. Asshole was too perceptive. “I don’t like you.”

He laughed, amusement lacing his voice. “I’m okay with that. I don’t need you to like me. I need you to trust me enough to call when you need help. And I need you to show up to meetings. I can get you information about one closer to you—”

“No!” Dammit, how many times did I have to go over this shit? “No. There’s too many guys in the crew at the joint near here. I’ll come to you.”

He paused for a second before replying. “Gotta say, I’m surprised that there are so many of you trying to get sober. Given your reputation, I’d kind of assume the opposite.”

Leaning my head back against the door jamb, I sighed. “Yeah, well, you can thank our prez for that. It’s his rule. No brother can touch the product. We all had to get straight when he took over.”

He hummed. “Don’t suppose you could convince him to stop dealing to help with your sobriety?”

A smirk pulled at my lips. “I’m not looking to die today, man. His patience only stretches so far.”

His sigh was heavy, and I could hear the weariness in his tone. “Yeah, I figured it’d be too big a favor. But I figured it couldn’t hurt to ask.”

It might not hurt him, but it’d definitely hurt me. Croy wasn’t Reaper. He lacked a certain level of patience when it came to his crew screwing around. That’s why he left the discipline shit to Reaper. It was hard to imagine someone more violent than Reaper, but Croy took the cake on that title.

“So now what?”

“That depends on you. How bad is it right now?”

Honestly, not as bad as I thought. Since there wasn’t anything left in my room, I didn’t feel the need to go looking for more. I saw all the places Sam hit. She didn’t leave anything behind. And I wasn’t stupid enough to message D and ask for more. I wouldn’t get five minutes from here without Reaper swooping down and kicking my ass.

“I’m alright, I guess.”

“Did you want to talk some more, or are you feeling okay to go back to work? Or whatever it is that you do.”

I snorted, shaking my head. “That’s club business. But yeah, I’m alright. Probably. I gotta go check on Sam. I’m

supposed to be watching her.”

“Okay, then here’s how it’s going to go. You’ve got my number, and you can use it whenever you need. Doesn’t matter the time of day. I’d rather miss a few hours of sleep than have one of my people relapse. You’ll come to meetings, speak your truth, listen to other people’s struggles, and figure out what works for you when it comes to getting sober. I suggest bringing your friend, or whoever you choose as your support system, for at least a few meetings. There’s family-centered meetings I can recommend, too. To help with the strain the family members feel and walk them through what you’re going through.”

Yeah, right. Brewer wasn’t going to go anywhere near that shit. They were my brothers, but not like that. This didn’t affect them like it might affect some people’s family members. The most affected person was Reaper, since he was trying to take the blame, and he wouldn’t go near some group therapy shit with a ten-foot pole.

“And Clink?”

“Yeah?”

“If I hear even a whisper of you hurting Sam as some kind of revenge, I don’t give a shit how many people are in that MC. I’ll come for you myself. She’s a good kid. She did what she did because she was being kind. Leave her the hell alone.”

My eyebrows went up, and I fought back a grin. The guy had balls of steel to threaten someone in a crew, but I got the picture.

“Don’t worry. I won’t touch your woman. I don’t hurt women in general. That’s messed up.”

He made an irritated noise. “There’s plenty about your crew that’s messed up. You might want to think about getting some new friends if you’re really committed to getting sober.”

My face fell. “You’re overstepping now. My crew is my family, and I’m doing this for them. Don’t judge them when you don’t even know them.”

His voice went terse, but he didn't talk any more shit. "Call me if you need anything or if you get another urge for a hit. If talking on the phone doesn't help, I can always come by or we can meet somewhere to talk."

"Will do."

I hung up, but didn't immediately move from my spot on the floor. Shit had gone sideways in the last few weeks and I was dead tired. I still wanted a hit, but knowing Reaper, the drugs were probably gone by now. Asshole.

CHAPTER 15

SAM

After making a rough estimate of what it'd take to rewire the whole warehouse, I called Russel and talked him through what I found. He agreed with my assessment, and I went to sit in my truck while I drew up the contract to give to Croy. I was supposed to be working with Clink, but I kind of doubted he wanted to talk to me anymore. Tyson said I did the right thing, but I still felt guilty about it.

I was so focused on what I was doing, I didn't notice someone coming up beside me until he spoke.

"You know, there's AC inside the house."

I jumped, nearly tossing my laptop out of the truck. Clink leaned against the truck door, raising an eyebrow at me. I scowled at him, readjusting my laptop and turning away from him.

"There's also an entire MC in there. I'm good here."

It was hot today, but I left the door to my truck open so I could get some air. It didn't help that much, but I still felt better than being inside.

Clink snorted. "Whatever you say, honey. Pretty sure you're about to short your computer with your sweat, though."

I rolled my eyes. I wasn't sweating that bad. "I figured you'd send someone else to work with me." There was an edge to my tone, and it took work for me not to grimace. I could still see the betrayed look on his face and it shook me to my core.

"And give up the view? Yeah, I'm good."

His blatant flirting made me scoff, but when I looked up at him, he was frowning.

“I called Tyson.” My spine stiffened, but Clink didn’t seem to notice, staring off down the street. “He said you stepping in was a big deal for you. I’d say thanks, but it seriously pissed me off, so I’ll stick with good for you.”

I waffled between being embarrassed that Tyson was sharing stuff about me and relieved that Clink didn’t hate me after I called his bluff.

“I was just trying to help.”

He rolled his head against the door to look at me. “I’ll forgive you if you flash me your tits.”

He said it so seriously, but when I threw my pen at him, he started laughing, the tension wiped away and his easy going aura came back. He put his hands up in surrender, ducking when I threw an empty paper coffee cup at him. It was when I threatened to throw my phone that he grabbed my hand, his eyes dancing mischievously.

“Based on that screen, honey, another hit would total your device. Seriously, what the hell did you do to that thing?”

With a scowl, I tossed my phone onto the seat next to me. “I threw it at a wall. I used to have a better case for it, but it broke when I dropped it on a construction site a few weeks back, and I forgot to get a new one.”

He rested one arm against the truck, leaning over me as he studied my face. I kind of hated just how good looking he was. It made it hard to focus when he was speaking to me, and I almost missed his comment.

“You still haven’t told me what happened the other night.”

I shot him a dirty look. “If you’d been paying attention during the meeting, you’d know the answer to that. I’m trying to work, Clink.”

I expected him to laugh or say something snarky, but his eyes narrowed and he reached for me, running his fingers along my jaw. “Believe me, honey, I was paying attention.

Maybe I'm just waiting for you to tell me the whole bit. That way I can help."

Rolling my eyes, I batted his hand away and gave my focus back to my laptop. "I don't need your help. I called Tyson."

He went quiet for a moment before nodding. "Yeah, I guess calling your boyfriend was a smart move. Even though he didn't take action like I would've."

Scrunching up my face, I shot him a confused look. "Tyson's not my boyfriend. He's my friend. And he's like forty-five."

Something flashed over Clink's face before he shrugged. "Could've fooled me. He basically threatened my entire crew if I went looking for revenge."

I sighed heavily. Of course he did. Tyson had always been overprotective. It was a little terrifying that he'd go so far as to threaten an actual gang member to protect me, though.

"Ignore him. He's just looking out for me. I wasn't ever worried about you getting revenge anyway."

Like he could see through the lie, he raised an eyebrow. "Oh yeah? Why's that?"

I wasn't willing to admit that he scared me before. He didn't need any new ways to manipulate people.

I shrugged, going for unaffected. "You don't really strike me as dangerous. Nothing like Croy or Reaper, anyway."

A slow smirk crossed his face. "Sure. Let's go with that."

It was condescending, the way he tried to placate me, and I seriously considered throwing my phone at him again, but I needed to finish up my assessment paperwork so I could get going. If Croy agreed to the updates, I'd need to plan everything out to make sure I didn't have to drive back and forth for things, and I'd need to get blueprints of the warehouse before the county clerk's office closed.

Once I finished writing up the paper version of the contract, I handed it to Clink. "This is what we're projecting

for the work. Once you sign off on it, I'll start on the project.”

He was still grinning like an idiot and when he shook his head slowly, I fought back a scowl.

“What?”

“Sorry, honey. I'm in charge of the coffers, sure, but shit like this needs to be signed off by the prez. You're gonna have to meet with him.”

Clink seemed to get enjoyment out of just how uncomfortable I was meeting with Croy. I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of showing that I was nervous, so I snatched the paper back and pushed him out of my way, slamming my truck door behind me. He was laughing as he followed me inside, his hands shoved into his pockets, but he caught me around the waist and hauled me backwards when I lifted my hand to knock on Croy's office door.

“Hold it.”

Jerking away from him, I spun around with a scowl, but he wasn't focused on me. He tipped his head, listening for a second, before nodding his head.

“Okay, you're good.”

I hesitated, looking between him and the door. “What were you listening for?”

The mischievous grin came back, and he winked at me. “The First Lady. She and the boss man get it on in his office after they fight. I wouldn't want to subject you to that.”

My face flushed, but before I could respond, someone shrieked.

“Clink!”

We both spun around at the same time. Riley stood behind us, her face bright red and her fists clenched at her sides as she glowered at Clink. This wasn't the first time he'd brought that up. He seemed to like to tease her about it, and once the initial shock from his dirty statements passed, I mimicked her stance and glared at him.

“You’ve got serious issues when it comes to other people’s privacy. Stop listening in to their private moments. Pervert.”

His mouth fell open and a huge grin spread across Riley’s face. She stepped past him, linking arms with me, and shot him a smug look.

“Yeah! Not everyone is into exhibitionism like you. Mind your business.”

The burn in my cheeks had just gone down, but it flared back up when she said that. I did *not* need to know about Clink’s kinks. And because she decided to share, now I wouldn’t be able to stop thinking about what kind of exhibitionism a guy like him would be into. Did he just like the idea of being caught or did he full blown want people to watch? And why the hell were both scenarios so hot?

Before either of them could call me out for blushing so badly that I looked like a lobster, Riley tugged my arm and led me into Croy’s office without knocking. He glanced up with an irritated glare, but when he saw Riley, his expression softened a little.

“Baby, what did I say about coming in here without knocking?”

She shrugged. “You go back and forth a lot. You want me in here and you don’t. Pick one. Besides, Sam’s got something for you.”

I eyed Riley for a second. She had serious lady balls to be so combative with Croy. Shaking my head, I handed him the contract.

“I’ll be emailing a digital copy that’s more official. This is just a placeholder since I don’t have a printer in my truck. It has the projected costs, the expectations of what’s provided and—”

“How long?”

Biting my lip, I tried not to grimace. “At least a couple of weeks. It’d be faster if I could get some help, but—”

He made an irritated noise. “You need help, you find it here. There’s plenty of lazy shits sitting around. Get them to help you.”

Stunned, I jerked my head back a little. “You... You want me to make your people do electrical work? They aren’t trained and—”

He flashed me an annoyed look before aggressively signing the paper and handing it back to me. “I told you before. Just you. If you can’t handle it, we’ll put this shit on hold until later.”

The thought of him taking the job away pushed the nerves back, and I straightened my spine, lifting my chin. “No, I can handle it. I’ll get it done.”

He nodded once. “Good. Now get gone. I’ve got shit to do.”

I shot Riley a confused look, but she just shrugged and gestured towards the door. She moved to follow me out, but Croy’s growl stopped her.

“Baby, where the fuck do you think you’re going?”

When I glanced over my shoulder at her, worried that she was still in trouble for coming in without knocking, she flashed me a grin and winked before nudging me out the door and closing it behind her. Shaking my head, I spun around and aimed for the door, coming to an abrupt stop when I realized Clink wasn’t around anymore. I wasn’t his sponsor, it wasn’t my job to follow him around and make sure he stayed sober, but worry still passed through me and I found myself going to look for him instead. Just a quick check, then I’d get out of here.

CHAPTER 16

CLINK

Reaper and Brewer approached me right after Riley dragged Sam into Croy's office. Agitation spread through me at their approach, but I masked it with a grin, lifting my chin in greeting.

“Sup?”

“Church,” was Reaper's brusque reply. Since I knew what this was about, I grudgingly followed. At least he was kind enough to keep it out of the general public. Church was soundproofed. You had to have your ear pressed to the door to get anything and it wouldn't be much.

Dropping myself into a chair at the wooden table in the middle of the room, I let the mask fall and glowered at the wall. None of this was my idea, and I hated being forced into it. I could do this shit just fine on my own.

The other two sat down next to me, and Reaper spoke first. “I told Brewer what's what. He's your new shadow. You work together, you hunt together. That's the fucking deal until we can trust that you're not going to sneak off to get high. Got it?”

Surprised, I jerked my head up. “Hold up. You said I couldn't join in hunting Hammer.”

Reaper's face darkened, and he crossed his arms, leaning back in his chair. He didn't look pleased with the idea, but Brewer answered for him.

“That was my idea. You can't keep this on the DL if you're hiding in the clubhouse. Figured you'd rather have a babysitter

than be trapped here all day.”

Letting out a slow breath, I considered it before nodding. “Yeah, alright. I appreciate it, man. I can do my damn job. But what are we gonna tell Croy?”

“Nothing, for now. He wants to up security around the product, so I can be there when you meet with the sellers and shit without drawing attention. And he won’t even blink about us hunting together. It’s smarter to move in pairs, anyway.”

Some of the fight drained out of me and I relaxed a little. It pissed me off, the whole babysitter shit. I wasn’t a prospect who didn’t know how to wipe their own ass. But Brewer was a good choice. He was doing his best to make this as painless as possible, and I appreciated it. I wasn’t going to be a sappy dick about it, though, so I just nodded.

“Alright. We got a timeline on when the hunt starts?”

Reaper shot me an irritated look. “No, because I’m here with you instead of out there handling business. For now, shadow the electrician. Croy seems to think Hammer won’t get involved with women to get to us, but I don’t trust the asshole. Make sure she’s legit.”

There was no doubt in my mind that Sam wouldn’t get involved with Hammer. She didn’t strike me as the type to let someone talk shit, and Hammer didn’t have a polite bone in his body. She wouldn’t give that slimy piece of shit the time of day.

No sooner had the thought crossed my mind before I heard her shout. All three of us whipped our heads towards the door and I was out of my seat before we could question it. I threw the door open, stalking out of the room, and came up short, looking between Sam and the prospect who was on the floor with a bloody nose.

“What the fuck?”

She spun around, seething, her face flushed. Whatever happened, it pissed her off. She looked ready for heads to roll.

“What happened?”

Before she could speak, the prospect launched to his feet, pointing an accusing finger at her. “I found her sneaking around and when I called her out, she hit me.”

That made no fucking sense. I glanced at Sam, jumping in to stop her from hitting him again as she shouted at him.

“You’re a fucking liar!”

She struggled against me, and I nearly lost my hold on her, but it was the tears in her eyes that made me pause. I pulled her away, wrapping my arms around her to keep her from hitting me, too.

“Sam! Sweetheart, what the fuck is happening right now?”

“That asshole grabbed me and he’s acting like I’m the crazy one!”

I stiffened, shifting enough to look down at her without giving her the opportunity to slip free.

“What do you mean by that?”

She was still glaring at the prospect over my shoulder, her entire body tense. “I was looking for you. I was going to make sure you were okay before I left. He found me by your room and started accusing me of sneaking around and when I tried to explain, he cut me off and grabbed my arm. He was dragging me to Croy’s office, and I would’ve gone with and explained myself to someone rational, but he was hurting me and he wouldn’t let go, so I punched him.” She lifted her chin, like she was daring me not to believe her, and I could see the fear underneath. She’d been accused of shit before, and this was triggering her.

Deep-seated rage rushed through my system and I released her, going straight for the prospect. He was newer, been here less than a year, and eager as all hell, but that was no fucking excuse for hurting a woman.

He was standing by Brewer and Reaper, probably giving his bullshit side of the story, but I was on him before he even saw me coming, knocking his ass to the ground and pummeling his fucking face. The guys had to haul me off him, and Reaper shoved me back, giving me an incredulous look.

“Clink, what the hell?”

“Fucking piece of shit hurt her! And for what, asshole? She was looking for me!”

There wasn't really a point in yelling at him. He was half out of it and bleeding on the floor. I was still pissed, though, and only Croy barreling out of his office stopped me from going after the shit again.

“What the fuck is going on out here?”

Jerking away from Reaper, I went back to Sam. She looked stunned, staring at me like she'd never met me before. She said something earlier about how I wasn't as scary as Reaper or Croy. I'd laughed it off, because that's the image I went for. I was the nice one. It didn't mean I didn't have my rough spots. I just didn't project it like the rest of them.

“Show me where he grabbed you.”

She frowned, her hand covering her arm automatically before she dropped it and shook her head. “I'm fine, Clink. I—”

Grabbing her hand, I forced her sleeve up. There was a definite red mark on her upper arm that would probably bruise. Another wave of fury passed through me, but before I could walk away to shoot the little shit, Sam reached out and grabbed my cut to stop me.

“Don't! Seriously, you've done enough!”

I shot her a look. “I haven't even gotten started yet, sweetheart. That asshole deserves to die for hurting you.”

She scowled, the fear on her face disappearing. “I handled it just fine on my own. I don't need you to rescue me. He hurt me, I hurt him back. End of story.”

“That's not how it works here,” Croy growled. He was standing behind me, with Riley at his side, her arms crossed and a pissed off look on her face. I stiffened, thinking maybe they were going to take this shit out on Sam, but her gaze dropped to Sam's arm and she shot a look at Croy. He saw it too and shook his head.

“Fuck. Baby, take the electrician upstairs and take a look at that. We’ll handle the prospect.”

It took some convincing to get Sam to walk away. She wasn’t oblivious, and she got the picture of what we meant when we said handle. We weren’t going to kill the prospect, but he was going to get his ass handed to him for hurting a woman. I brushed a kiss over the mark, distracting her long enough to nudge her towards Riley, who took her hand and pulled her along behind her. While we waited for Riley and the other old ladies to bring Sam upstairs, Croy spoke low to me.

“The fuck made him react like that?”

I shook my head slowly, still beyond pissed. “She was looking upstairs for me and he accused her of sneaking around. She said she would’ve gone with him to explain herself, but the little shit wouldn’t let go, so she hit him.”

Brewer scowled, crossing his arms as he watched her go. “This is fucking bullshit. We’re all on edge since Wrecker’s betrayal, to the point where we’re accusing random ass women if they’re involved. Hammer needs to be dealt with. This is putting a strain on the whole MC.”

Croy flicked his gaze to Reaper. “Time to go. Me and you are going to the city. Nevada’s on his way back. He’ll watch the MC.” When he turned his gaze to me and Brewer, he snarled. “Watch the women. With that asshole on the loose, they’re the fucking target. Put guys on ‘em and keep them here. That includes the electrician. If he finds out she’s working for us, he’s gonna go after her. Put a prospect on her to watch her place at night.”

Like hell. It was going to take convincing just to keep her on the job. I wasn’t letting any other prospects near her. I wasn’t going to argue with Croy about it, though. He didn’t give a shit who watched her, as long as she was being watched.

He and Reaper walked away, leaving me and Brewer to deal with the prospect. He was sitting up now, surrounded by a few of the other guys, to make sure he didn’t run off. I shoved

them out of the way, grabbing his collar and forcing him to his feet.

“Let’s go, asshole.”

CHAPTER 17

SAM

“Are they going to kill him? I hurt him back, they don’t need to—”

Riley shook her head, nudging me to sit on the bed. We’d gone to her room, which was cramped with an enormous bed and a dresser along one wall. There was a window overlooking the backyard, and an attached bath, but I wasn’t really interested in looking around. If I’d known my saying something to the jerk who grabbed me would’ve gotten him killed, I would’ve kept my mouth shut.

“They’re not going to kill him. But they are going to teach him a lesson. Around here, Croy’s word is law and not hurting women is one of the big ones. Not only that, but prospects aren’t allowed to touch women. It’s against the rules.”

Allie nodded, moving to sit beside me. “It’s true. While they’re prospecting, their job is to keep their heads down and do their work. They aren’t even allowed to touch the sweetbutts, and those bitches are just begging for it.”

My frown deepened the more they spoke. I had no idea what a prospect, or a sweetbutt was, nor did I really care.

“I think I need to leave. I’m sorry, I can’t handle this.”

Riley took a deep breath, nodding slowly. “I get that. But let me look at your arm first. It’s really red.”

“I’m fine, really. He was just a little rough.”

Riley raised an eyebrow. “I’m a nurse, Sam. I know what I’m doing. Let me take a look and I’ll stop bothering you about it.”

She was stubborn, and the other two didn't do a thing to argue with her. I didn't really feel like I had much of a choice. I pulled the sleeve up, averting my eyes. There was a reason I wore long sleeves in the summer.

If she noticed the scars on my wrist, she didn't say anything about them. She was either a terrible nurse, or she was being polite by not mentioning them. She checked the red mark and pursed her lips before pulling my sleeve back down.

“Well, it'll bruise for sure. I recommend an ice pack for the swelling. But no permanent damage.”

I rolled my eyes. “I told you. I'm fine.”

She looked like she was holding back a smile, and when I narrowed my eyes, she snickered. My mouth fell open.

“You're trying to distract me, aren't you?”

She scrunched her nose, shrugging. “Maybe a little. You looked ready to bolt. It's not that bad here, I promise. I didn't want one stupid prospect to scare you off of the job. I'm really tired of only half my outlets working.”

That made me snort and the rest of the women giggled. Riley looked pleased with herself, dropping onto the bed and stretching out her legs in front of her. Her teasing did a lot to settle me and I let out a long breath.

“I don't know how you guys handle being here all the time. It's like an emotional roller coaster between fear and irritation.”

Allie tipped her head, thoughtful. “You're not wrong, at least not about the irritating part. The fear will go away after you get to know the crew. They're not that bad.”

“Coming from you, that's high praise,” Quinn commented as she sat down next to Riley. Allie smirked at her before shrugging.

“The first lady of the San Diego charter gave me some advice on dealing with them.”

“Oh, this I've gotta hear,” Riley chuckled.

They chatted with each other, but my focus kept shifting to Clink. I hadn't had someone stand up for me like that in a really long time. He believed me without question. The second I said the prospect hurt me, he jumped into action and kicked his ass. It was almost concerning just how happy that made me. After the amount of people I've had tell me I was at fault, it felt good that someone stuck up for me like that. And that kiss...

Clink kissing the bruise on my arm had been unbelievably sweet. Butterflies exploded in my belly, and I almost wished he'd kissed my lips instead. Which was an insane thought, and I banished it as quickly as it came. I wasn't going to get involved with a biker. No matter how fun he was.

I was still worried that he'd actually kill the prospect, though. His easy expression had vanished when he was fighting, and he looked almost feral while he beat the guy's face in. That reaction must've been why he was so smug earlier when I said he wasn't scary. It was almost worse than being around Reaper and Croy because they didn't hide it as well as Clink could.

The bedroom door opened, and Croy and Reaper filled the doorway, dark looks on their faces. Riley sat up with a frown.

“What's wrong?”

His gaze flicked to me and it looked like he wasn't going to say anything with me around, so I stood, gesturing towards the door.

“I need to get going. I need to order the materials for the job.”

Surprisingly, they let me pass without a word. I waved over my shoulder at the women before heading downstairs. I was a little on edge wandering around, not looking to get on someone else's bad side, but no one said a word to me as I headed out the front door. Clink was nowhere in sight, but that was probably a good thing. At least I wouldn't have to explain it to his face that I wasn't coming back.

Since it was a Friday, I had the entire weekend to figure out what I wanted to do about the MC job. I promised Tyson that I would bow out if I ever felt unsafe. I rubbed at my arm unconsciously, frowning at my laptop. I had an email all drawn up to ask the MC to work with Russel instead. I'd been staring at it for at least thirty minutes, but I hadn't made myself press send yet. This job was supposed to be my big break, to get Russel to take me seriously. I didn't know if there was ever going to be an opportunity like this again. My phone buzzed beside me, and I dragged my attention off my computer screen to check the message.

Clink: You up?

Frowning, I considered not replying, but that seemed mean after he kicked a guy's ass for me this afternoon.

Sam: It's 9pm. ☐

Clink: And yet you're in your pjs

Whipping my head up, I looked around warily. There was no way he could see me. My apartment was on the third floor and the curtains were closed.

Sam: How did you know that?

Clink: Lucky guess. Pics?

I rolled my eyes so hard it almost hurt.

Sam: Not gonna happen

Clink: 😞😞👎

I snickered at his emojis, shaking my head. He'd teased me about them at first, but now he was using them just as much as I did.

Sam: What do you want, Clink?

Clink: I want to come over, but I get the feeling you'd say no to that

Sam: 🙄🙄♀

He was quiet for a minute and I saw the bubbles pop up and disappear a few times before he finally replied.

Clink: I also want a hit tbh

That made me hesitate. He was being honest with me and I didn't want to play it off as nothing. And after him sticking up for me the way he did, I felt bad blowing him off. Instead of texting him back, I called him, tucking my legs under my oversized sweater and muting the TV. It was quiet when he answered, which only made me worry more.

“Clink?”

“Yeah?”

“Are you okay?”

He sighed, and I heard him shifting. “Yes, and no. I’m seriously considering casing Reaper’s room. He wouldn’t just throw out good shit like that, right?”

Biting my lip, I tried to think of what to say. I wasn’t a sponsor. I had no idea what to say to stop him.

“Have you called Tyson?”

He made an irritated sound. “No. He’ll just tell me not to.”

I wanted to roll my eyes, but I was too worried to react like that. I played with the edge of my sweater, frowning at my toes.

“So will I, Clink. I know you want to, but you can’t.”

“Tell me something I don’t know,” he snapped.

“I’m deathly afraid of rats.”

He huffed out a laugh. “What?”

Biting back a smile, I felt my face flush. “You said to tell you something you don’t know. I’m afraid of rats. And mice. Basically any rodent freaks me out.”

When he started laughing, I felt myself relax. I wasn’t good at the sponsor bit, but at least I could distract him until he felt ready to call Tyson.

“Shut up! They carry diseases and they bite! They’re gross!”

He chuckled, and I could almost see his big grin in my head. “You’re like ten times bigger than them. Why are you afraid?”

“Because I lived on the streets for a while and I woke up a few times to them crawling on me. I was really afraid of one biting me and giving me rabies.”

I hadn’t meant to go so dark and Clink went quiet again. I dropped my forehead against my knees, biting back an embarrassed groan.

“Your turn.”

It was a desperate bid to move the conversation along. I thought he'd be more of a jerk about it, maybe teasing me some more, but his answer rang with honesty and made me suck in a breath.

“I'm afraid of losing my brothers. We lost one a little over a year ago and I'm still reeling.”

My stomach sank at his confession and my voice was barely a whisper when I asked, “Is that why you started using?”

“I don't wanna talk about it.”

His dismissal stung. I knew I shouldn't take it personally. We didn't know each other that well, but that kiss felt intimate. And after he stood up for me, it felt like we were friends. Friends share with one another.

I was thinking up some excuse to get off the phone when he spoke again.

“Sorry. That was a dick thing to say. I just don't like talking about Mass. We were close and—” He went quiet again. I nodded, mostly to myself.

“I understand. You're not ready. You don't have to force it. You should think about calling Tyson. It might be easier to talk to him.”

“I like talking to you.”

His words melted my resolve a little, and I hugged my legs closer to my chest, closing my eyes to listen.

“Why?”

“Well, for one thing, you're a badass. I think you broke the prospect's nose. Who taught you how to throw a right hook like that?”

A smile tugged at my lips. “My dad. He taught all my siblings. Said he didn't want us ever to be in a situation where we'd need to know and didn't.”

That was true about a lot of things. By the time I was a pre-teen, I knew the basics of self defense, car maintenance, and basic household maintenance. It's why I chose to be an electrician. I remembered his lessons on how to check the fuse box after a power outage and how to switch out the fuses. It was all fascinating to me as a little kid that one big box controlled the entire house.

“Smart guy. Any other moves I should be on the lookout for?”

He effortlessly took the melancholy off the conversation, and I rolled my eyes, smirking. “Why? Are you going to give me a reason to hit you?”

He chuckled. “Careful, sweetheart. You wrestle with me and you're going to end up underneath me.”

“If you could see how hard I'm rolling my eyes right now...”

He laughed, but I wasn't expecting him to try to video call me. My phone beeped and when I pulled the phone away and saw the request, I snickered as I answered it. His face popped up, that mischievous grin back. It looked like he was lounging in bed, one arm tucked beneath his head. He raised his eyebrows expectantly, and I rolled my eyes, making him bark out another laugh.

“God, you're great. Tell me you're starting this job soon. If I gotta wait another week to see you, I'm gonna consider stalking as a viable option.”

My face fell, and I looked away automatically. I still hadn't told him about me not coming back. He must've seen it in my face, though, because he called me out a minute later.

“You can't quit, Sam.”

I grimaced, shaking my head. “You can't babysit me all the time. I'm sure you've got your own work to do. Who's to say what'll happen the next time one of your friends finds me wandering around. I've gotta work through the whole building. Someone is going to take exception and I'm not looking to get murdered just for doing my job.”

His expression darkened and his voice went rough. “No one’s gonna touch you. That’s not how shit works here. The prospect was looking to prove himself and he got his ass handed to him for his efforts. I swear to god, Sammy, you’re safe here.”

I didn’t reply right away. I wanted to believe him, this job meant a lot to me and I didn’t want to give it up, but I was still scared. I hadn’t even been doing anything suspicious. I’d been trying to remember which room was Clink’s and I was just standing there when the prospect walked up to me.

“Let me prove it to you.”

Frowning, I swung my gaze back to him. “How?”

“We have parties most weekends. Come join us and meet the guys. The real ones, not the little shits trying to prove themselves.”

I shook my head quickly. “I don’t think that’s a good idea. I don’t party anymore.”

He made a face. “I’m not asking you to drink. You already said you don’t do that. I’m just asking you to come hang out.”

It still sounded like a bad idea. A party at an MC club was like the exact opposite of how I lived my life now. The last party I went to killed my parents. I didn’t want to relive that night.

“I don’t know, Clink...”

“If you’re so stuck in the past that you can’t handle going out every once in a while, are you really living? You can’t keep blaming yourself forever. Your parents would have wanted you to live your life.”

Biting my lip, I thought about it. He had a point, even though it bugged me just how annoying he had to be about it. Tyson said it a lot too, that eventually I was going to have to move past what happened and open up a little, even to something as simple as going out past sundown.

“You promise you won’t push me to drink or anything?”

The annoyingly condescending look disappeared, and his face softened. “I promise. I’ll even keep everyone else off your back. Just come hang out with me. Please? We’ll watch each other’s backs and just have fun.”

Giving in, I nodded. “Okay. I guess I’ll give it a shot. What time?”

CHAPTER 18

SAM

This felt like a really bad idea. My anxiety was off the charts. I kept having flashes of the night my parents died. I almost talked myself out of it several times, but Clink's words kept coming back to me and I tightened my grip on the steering wheel, determined to try something new. Clink wasn't wrong. If I wasn't allowed to enjoy myself, I wasn't really living my life. My parents would've been really unhappy if they knew just how often I hid from the world after they were gone. I hadn't even thought of that before Clink mentioned it. Now that I did, I was determined to do better. But I did make sure to fully charge my phone, and I parked right in front to make sure I had an escape route and the ability to call Tyson if anything went wrong.

I stared anxiously at the front door of the clubhouse until someone knocked on my window, making me jump and squeak. When I glanced over my shoulder, Clink was smirking at me, lifting his eyebrows.

“Gonna come inside?”

Pursing my lips, I unrolled my window a little. “I'm still debating.”

He chuckled. “Take your time. These things can go all night.”

My eyes widened, and I jerked to look at the building and back at him. “I'm not staying all night. A few hours at most.” It was already later than I was comfortable, after dark, and just getting here had been a trial.

He didn't argue, pulling open my door before I could protest. "Then don't waste them sitting in your truck. Come on, we're missing out on all the fun."

He tugged my hand, barely giving me enough time to unbuckle my seatbelt before he was pulling me out of the truck and towards the clubhouse. I dragged my feet a little, but that didn't seem to phase him.

Luckily, it wasn't as wild and crazy as I'd been expecting. When we stepped inside, I looked around, letting out a slow breath. Some guys were playing pool, others were sitting around a poker table, a few more on the sofas. Music was playing loudly throughout the building, the air pulsing with the vibrations. There were a bunch of women I didn't recognize sitting around with the men. Girlfriends maybe? I saw Allie, Quinn, and Riley by the kitchen, talking amongst themselves, but Clink didn't pull me in that direction. He led me over to the pool table instead.

"Fellas. You met the electrician yet?"

A few guys lifted their chin in greeting. I recognized one from my first day, the one who'd been basically sleeping while I worked on the wiring issue. He was the only one who frowned at me, tipping his head and narrowing his eyes.

"How's a woman that tiny, strong enough to knock the prospect on his ass?"

My cheeks burned, but he didn't look angry. A smirk pulled at his lips when the rest of the guys playing all whipped their heads around to him, then back to me.

"Say what now?"

"Wait, that was you?"

"No fucking way."

They didn't seem to care much about the fact that I punched one of their guys in the face, but they grilled me about the hit itself. The one who introduced himself as Chase even requested I punch his open hand to prove it wasn't a one off. I raised an eyebrow at Clink, who just jerked his chin at me, a huge grin on his face. Rolling my eyes, I shifted my

stance and drew back my hand, hitting Chase's palm with enough follow through to make him wince. He shook out his hand and laughed.

“Damn. She hits harder than you do, Clink.”

Clink snorted, raising an eyebrow at him. “Wanna test that theory?”

Chase just grinned at him. They were a lot more relaxed than I thought. After meeting Croy and Reaper, I kind of expected them all to be gruff and terrifying. None of the guys here made me nervous, though. Chase was kind and thoughtful, bringing me a cola when I refused any alcohol. A big guy named Bear brought me a stool to sit down so I could watch them play. Brewer was more stoic and quiet, but he was polite and asked questions about my work, which made me a little less jittery.

Clink was in his element, playing pool and making jokes. He seemed to have unending energy, which made me a little suspicious, but when Brewer caught me staring with narrowed eyes too long, he moved to stand beside me, lowering his voice as he spoke.

“He's clean. I've been watchin' him. This is just who he is. Fucker doesn't shut up, even in his sleep.”

It made me feel better that someone was watching over him and I let out a breath, finally tearing my gaze away from Clink to look at Brewer.

“How do you know what he does in his sleep?”

He made a tick sound behind his teeth, shooting me a look. I snickered, sipping my drink to hide it. It was a stupid joke, but he didn't get mad at it. It was good to know that they weren't a bunch of homophobes who couldn't even handle jokes.

“We work together a lot. When we gotta take a cage, the little shit conks out almost instantly.”

I frowned. “Why do you call it a cage?”

“Anything that ain't a bike feels like a cage to a biker.”

When I made a face, he raised an eyebrow. “Ever been on a bike before?”

I shook my head quickly. “No way. Those things are death traps.”

He snorted, but it was Clink’s gasp that drew my attention. “Sammy, sweetheart, you did not just insult a bike in the middle of a motorcycle club. You’re lookin’ for trouble, you realize that?”

When I looked around, no one seemed particularly put out about my comment, so I rolled my eyes at him. “Shut up.”

Brewer pointed a finger at me, smirking at Clink. “I like her.”

I laughed, but Clink’s eyes narrowed and he rounded the pool table, moving to stand beside me. When I frowned at him, he ignored me and tossed an arm over my shoulder, glaring at Brewer. Brewer looked nonplussed, taking a drink of his bourbon like Clink wasn’t shooting daggers at him.

“What are you doing?”

He opened his mouth to respond, but someone pushed his head and knocked his arm away.

“Stop hanging on the electrician. You’ll scare her away and I need her.”

Riley and the others appeared behind us and she nudged Clink away, moving to take his place. She flashed me a grin, bumping my shoulder with hers.

“I’m glad you came back. I was a little worried the prospect scared you off.”

Biting my lip, I dropped my gaze to my hands. I hadn’t been thinking about that. Clink had a way of making me relax and I’d completely forgotten about earlier. Someone made an irritated noise, and a shadow stopped in front of me, rough hands forcing my chin back up.

“You’ve got nothing to be afraid of here. I told you that. No hiding.”

I batted him away with a scowl, but Clink didn't move from my bubble, and I didn't actually want him to. I didn't know why I felt safer with him around. I'd seen the violence he could dish out earlier. But when he dropped a hand on my knee, I didn't push him away.

"He's right. Anyone has a problem with you, they can come talk to me," Bear growled.

Chase raised his beer. "Same."

Anyone close enough to hear Clink's promise offered up the same, and my cheeks burned at the attention. Apparently, I was letting one bad apple turn me away from the entire group, who weren't as bad as I thought. I offered a small smile, my shoulders up by my ears.

"Thanks. I was a little freaked out earlier, but I really want to do this job. My boss likes to baby me because I'm the only girl, and I want to prove I'm just as good as the rest of them."

Brewer nodded once. "You show 'em."

Allie scrunched her nose with a frown. "Why do you care so much?"

"Because only one outlet works in his room. He's been bitching non-stop for weeks," Chase chuckled.

When Brewer's fist shot out, it was so quick that Chase never saw it coming. Brewer hit him in the gut hard enough to make Chase double over, but he was laughing when he straightened again. Riley shook her head with an exasperated look.

"Boys. You're all children, I swear."

I kept waiting for someone to get mad or say something snarky to her, but no one seemed to care about what she said outside of teasing her right back. I felt the last of the tension slip away and, for the first time in what felt like years, I relaxed enough to enjoy myself. I even let Chase talk me into playing a round of pool, even though I had no idea what I was doing. He tried to show me, but Clink got there first, wrapping his arms around me as he showed me how to aim.

Heat settled low in my belly as he leaned over the table with me, talking quietly in my ear. He was wrapped around me, the position a lot more intimate than he probably intended. It'd been a long time since someone held me like that and my heart pounded so loudly in my ears, I almost couldn't hear him.

“Line it up. You're aiming from the white one, but you wanna focus on what's beyond it. Go for the striped ball by the pocket. Just a little hit should knock it in.”

It was hard to focus with him basically on top of me. My cheeks flushed so badly, I felt it spread down my neck, and I forced the shot too quickly just to get him to step back. If I wasn't careful, this charming man could slip right past my defenses.

The ball spun in a wildly different direction, smacking into a few more and bouncing off the side before it came to a stop. I grimaced, and when Clink straightened, I let out a shaky breath before standing again. I took a step back, trying to mask the freaked out look on my face.

“Wow, that was just sad. Do you need someone to play for you?” a sickly sweet voice spoke, dripping with condescension. The woman was a tall blonde, with the world's tightest dress and sky high heels. She wore a face full of makeup and her long hair was tossed over one shoulder as she sauntered around the pool table and took Clink's arm, pouting at him. “You said you'd play with me, remember?”

An ugly, green feeling settled in my stomach and I had to look away from the two of them. There was no way he'd say no to her. What man would say no to a woman practically throwing themselves at him? Besides, she was dressed to catch his attention, her boobs almost spilling out of the top of the dress. Meanwhile, it took me over an hour to choose my outfit and I was seriously under dressed compared to the rest of them in jeans and an off the shoulder top with my jacket. Embarrassment surged through me and I thrust the pool cue in her direction.

“Sure. You play.”

A triumphant look flashed across her face, but Clink frowned at me. I took a few steps back, my eyes on the floor. “I, um, should probably head home. I—”

“No way. It’s still early. Come on, let’s go have a drink,” Riley said, linking her arm with mine. I opened my mouth to protest, but she dragged me away and Quinn and Allie flanked us until we were in the kitchen. She released my arm, pointing at the liquor bottles along the wall.

“What’s your poison?”

“Nuh-uh. She’s had enough. She’s gotta drive home.” A presence at my back surprised me and when I spun around, Clink put his hand on my shoulder. I hadn’t actually drunk anything, but they didn’t know that and Riley seemed to accept his answer. She moved to the fridge instead, tipping her head as she looked inside. “Soda or water?”

“Uh, water’s good.”

She tossed me a bottle before moving to make her own drink. Clink steered me away from the kitchen, finding an open space on one of the couches, and nudged me into it. I stared at the bottle of water in my lap, frowning at the condensation dripping onto the hardwood floor.

“You look ready to bolt again.”

I sighed, shrugging helplessly. “Partying really isn’t my thing. I feel really out of place, and...” My brow furrowed. “I know you said earlier that I’m not really living but this feels dangerous. I’m never out this late.”

Putting his arm around my shoulders, he leaned close so he could speak quietly to me. “I’m not lookin’ to make you feel unsafe, honey. I just want you to have a good time. You deserve to have a little fun every once in a while.”

When I wouldn’t look at him, he used his knuckle to guide my chin up. I locked onto his bright blue eyes and sucked in a sharp breath. My no dating rule was easy when I stuck to my routine. The only people I hung out with were the people from work and the community center, none of which were my type.

Clink was stupidly handsome and being this close to him made me question whether a no dating rule was really necessary.

His eyes searched mine before dipping down to my lips. I held my breath, not moving even though my brain was screaming at me to pull back and run. This was a bad idea, but it'd been a long time since I kissed someone, and I couldn't force my body to listen. When he dipped closer, my eyes drifted shut automatically. I felt his breath on my lips, but before he could close the gap, a voice spoke, drawing us apart.

“Seriously?”

CHAPTER 19

CLINK

Chrissie was really getting on my nerves. Any time I got close to Sam, she appeared out of nowhere and kept trying to stake a claim. Which wasn't going to fucking happen. No one was claiming a sweetbutt, no matter how good a lay they were. No one was looking to claim something that everyone had already had a piece of. Most of the sweetbutts knew that and were just here looking for a good time, but a few of them got it in their heads that they'd be able to win over some biker and get the claim they were panting after.

Sam jerked back when Chrissie spoke, the unease coming back to her face. I fought back a growl, shooting a dirty look at Chrissie.

“What?”

She crossed her arms, giving me a petulant look. “I thought we were going upstairs. You know I'm a good time.”

“Seriously, how pathetic do you have to be? They were obviously having a moment, and you're just embarrassing yourself by interrupting them,” Allie commented. The girls were in the kitchen last I saw, but they seemed to have a beacon for Chrissie's bullshit and always showed up to put her in her place. Normally, it was funny, but Sam looked like she wanted to disappear. Her shoulders were by her ears and she was frowning at the bottle in her hand like it'd turn to poison the minute she looked away. I didn't like that look on her. Her fire was the thing that drew me to her, but right now she was making herself small for some bitch who didn't matter.

Stealing the bottle from her and setting it on the table, I took her hand and tugged her to her feet, guiding her away from the drama that was sure to unfold. I didn't want them spooking her and sending her running. "Come on, honey. Let's go for a walk."

She came without question, but it didn't feel like a win when she was acting like that. I pulled her out the front door and away from the crowd that was smoking nearby. A few whistled at us as I pulled Sam around the side of the building, I was known for fooling around outside, but I just flipped them off and tugged Sam until we were out of sight.

There wasn't enough light on this side of the building to see much of anything, but it was even harder to see her face when she was staring at the ground like that. I lifted her chin, raising my eyebrows at her.

"What is it?"

She shook her head quickly, glancing towards the front of the building. She parked her truck out front, and I knew if I gave her the opportunity, she'd run. I wasn't ready for her to go yet, though, so instead, I dipped my head, pressing my lips firmly against hers.

Her whole body froze for a second, but I didn't pull away, and she melted little by little, her hands coming up to clutch at my cut. I drew her closer, one hand cupping the back of her neck, the other settling on her hip. I wanted more, wanted to go full steam ahead like I always did, but Sammy was still a flight risk and I knew if I pushed too hard, too fast, I'd scare her away. I had to come at this different, keeping things teasing and light until I could feel her smile against my lips. I nipped playfully at her bottom lip and she giggled, the noise easing some tension inside of me that I hadn't known was there.

"You got a great laugh, honey."

She made a noise of disagreement, finally pulling away from me. "I do not."

I skipped her lips, nipping at her neck instead, and she laughed, wriggling to get away from me. “Clink! Stop! That tickles!”

When I shifted back to look her in the eye, a huge grin spread across my face. “You shouldn’t have said that.”

Her eyes went comically wide before she tried to dart away. I grabbed her before she could, tickling her ribs and making her squeal. Normally at this point, I’d only be interested in one thing, but Sam was fun and I cared a little less that I wasn’t getting lucky right now. At least until she decided to distract me by smashing her lips against mine. It stayed easy, though, and I was in no rush to push for more. We made out like teenagers until she pulled away, panting heavily and shaking her head.

“I-I can’t.”

My brow furrowed. “Why not?”

I couldn’t see it when it was this dark, but the way she ducked her head like that let me know she was blushing hard. I cupped her cheeks, forcing her to look at me, and raised my eyebrows. She scrunched her nose, which was just cute, shrugging as she averted her eyes.

“It’s one of my rules. No dating. I don’t... I don’t want any drama.”

She was lying. She didn’t want to get attached. She was keeping walls up, and who could blame her for that. “Who said anything about dating?”

I thought it’d help, but apparently, it was the wrong thing to say, and she stiffened, pulling away from me. “I’m not the type of girl to sleep around, Clink. If you’re looking for that, I’m pretty sure the woman inside will help you.”

She turned to leave, but I grabbed her wrist, pulling her back to me. I never usually had to work this hard for a woman, but Sam felt different. Even when she pissed me off, I still wanted her to be the one I talked to about it. It’s why I didn’t bother calling the Tyson guy. Sam was better. She made me feel better.

“Wait. Stop. That came out wrong. I’m sorry.” I wrapped my arms around her to keep her from running again. “Look, I know you’ve got your rules. Hell, I could probably use some of those, too. But I like you. I wanna keep hanging out with you. I’ve never been the relationship type, but...” I shrugged. “I’ll give it a shot if it means I get to spend more time with you.”

Her quiet gasp was her only response. It was hard to get a read on her, the shadows hiding her expressions, but her hands on my chest fist-ed my shirt, a subtle sign that she wasn’t ready to walk away just yet.

“I... I don’t know, Clink...”

Leaning closer, I rested my forehead against hers. “I’m not gonna cause drama or shit like that. Give me a shot, Sammy.”

It shouldn’t have mattered so much. I could get plenty of tail inside. But I waited on bated breath for her answer, and when she finally gave me a tentative nod, elation exploded through my system better than any high. I claimed her lips roughly, backing her up against the wall behind us. Gone were the teasing strokes, replaced with raw hunger as I ravaged her mouth. She made needy little noises, clinging to me, and it only spurred me on. I loved it when they were loud.

Ripping my mouth from hers, I dragged open mouth kisses along her jaw and down her neck. “We need to go upstairs, honey, or I’m not gonna be able to stop myself from taking you right here.”

A tremble worked its way through her, which only turned me on more. Fuck, she was so responsive. I tangled my tongue with hers, seriously considering taking her against the wall. It wouldn’t be the first time, but for some reason, something stopped me. I wasn’t looking to get caught, not with her. She’d run, and I wasn’t willing to let that happen.

Pulling away, I tugged her hands lightly. “Upstairs, honey.”

She followed me easily enough until we reached the front door. Then she hesitated, nibbling on her bottom lip.

“What is it, honey?”

“If we go inside, everyone will see us and know what we’re doing...”

True. And there would probably be more than a few hecklers. It was just how things worked around here. I could see how that’d embarrass her, though. Spinning around, I eyed her truck before nudging her toward it.

“Your place then.”

I forgot she lived in the city. The drive was longer than I planned and by the time we pulled up in front of her building, my leg was jiggling restlessly. She looked nervous, chewing on her bottom lip, and when I turned her face with a knuckle under her chin, she blushed.

“I, um... I’ve never had a guy here before. Except Tyson, but he doesn’t count. He only comes over when I’m having rough days. No one like you...”

A smirk pulled at my lips. “You’re stroking my ego, honey. Are you gonna invite me in?”

She rolled her eyes, a little of the nerves slipping away. I loved that me pushing her buttons relaxed her. She didn’t get all bent out of shape about it. She just shook her head and pushed her door open, giving me an exasperated look when I didn’t automatically follow. I grinned at her, leaning back in my seat until she finally asked, “Do you wanna come upstairs?”

“I thought you’d never ask.”

She scoffed, slamming her door shut. I laughed as I slipped out of the truck and came around to join her. When I tossed my arm over her shoulder, she elbowed me but didn’t push me away.

Her apartment was on the third floor, closer to the back, which would have been a good thing, but the building itself was shit, with zero security to speak of outside of a lock and chain on her door. I was suddenly really glad I came. This

place was a disaster and with Hammer fucking about, red flags popped up with how unsecure her building was. Putting a prospect out front wouldn't have been enough.

I locked the door behind us, snagging her hips as she moved away to turn on some lights. She giggled when I nipped at her neck, but she didn't run. She melted against me, seeming like she was more at ease here.

“Did you want something to drink? I've got water or sweet tea or—”

Her breath caught in her throat when I dragged my hands up her body, cupping her tits. “I want something, honey, but it's not tea.” When she shivered, I tugged on her earlobe with my teeth. “How about you show me your bedroom instead?”

She waved a hand, gesturing to the right without actually moving away from me. A smug grin pulled at my lips, and I walked her forward, my focus more on drawing those little noises from her instead of where we were going. When she stopped only a few feet away, I finally paused long enough to look around. There wasn't much light aside from the one above the stove in the kitchen, but it was enough to give me the basics. She had a studio, everything in one big space aside from the bathroom. She didn't have a ton in the way of decor. Most of the space was bare except for her bed tucked in one corner, separated from the room by a mostly empty bookshelf and a little living space. The couch was barely a two-seater and looked worn, the coffee table had a few magazines tucked under one leg to keep it balanced, and her TV was tiny. I was hit with a feeling I'd never had before, the urge to take care of her overwhelming.

“Honey...”

She must've heard the concern in my voice because she stiffened, pulling away from me. Embarrassment overtook her, and she winced, wrapping her arms around her middle.

“It's... It's not much. After my family kicked me out, I lived on the streets for a while. Then Tyson took me in and I slept on his couch for a bit. I finally earned enough money to

get this place, but between paying for rent and trade school, I couldn't really waste money on things like decorating."

I didn't want her to think I was judging her, so I stepped closer, running my fingers through her hair. "So when I called you a badass earlier, I hit the nail on the head, didn't I?"

My comment brought her smile back, and she rolled her eyes. I wasn't done talking to her about this, no way was I going to let her stay in this shithole, but there were more important things to focus on right now. She didn't pull away when I dipped my head to kiss her again. I tangled my tongue with hers, walking her backwards until the backs of her knees hit the bed. Nudging her onto the bed, I followed her without breaking away from the kiss. Her lips were perfect, and I couldn't wait to feel them wrapped around my dick.

The room was quiet outside of our heavy breathing. I wanted to fill it with her noises so I set to work stripping her clothes off, trailing my tongue along every inch of exposed skin. She squirmed, little whimpers escaping her, but it wasn't until I drew her nipple into my mouth that she finally gave me what I was looking for. She moaned, her fingers tentatively sliding into my hair. I flicked my tongue over the tightening bud, reveling in her noises.

When I shifted lower, she pressed her thighs together to stop me. I lifted my head, raising an eyebrow at her, and she blushed hard.

"You don't have to—"

A wicked grin spread across my face. "Yes, the fuck, I do. If I don't taste you soon, I'm gonna lose my fuckin' mind."

CHAPTER 20

CLINK

That surprised her, and when I nudged her knees apart, she hesitantly spread her legs, giving me the full view of her pretty pussy. I trailed my fingers along her sex, licking my lips when she jumped and moaned.

“Fuck, you’re gorgeous, honey.”

I didn’t give her a chance to argue with me before I dipped my head for a taste. She was like ambrosia, and I was instantly addicted, lapping at her like candy. She twisted and moaned, all her embarrassment gone. I wanted to spend all night eating her out, listening to those fucking noises that turned me on so damn much. I was so lost in what I was doing, I didn’t notice her tense until she came with a cry with my tongue buried inside her. A groan ripped out of me and I doubled down until she pushed me away, her cheeks and chest flushed from her release.

I was so busy focusing on her, I hadn’t gotten undressed yet. I shrugged off my cut, laying it at the foot of the bed before stripping off my shirt. Sam sat up to help me, but her eyes went wide at the array of tattoos on my chest.

“See something you like, honey?”

She bit her lip and nodded, her fingers trailing along the tats. I let her explore while I focused on my belt, enjoying her hands on me.

“Did they hurt?”

I hadn’t expected her to ask, and it took me a minute to think past the lust fog. “Uh... No, not really. But I gotta admit,

I was high every time I went.”

Understanding passed over her face. The lack of judgment was jarring. I kept waiting for her to say shit or tell me it was wrong. She never did. She’s been through her own shit and wasn’t the judgmental type. She shifted closer, pressing her body against mine, and stole my focus instead. It kicked me into high gear and I shed my pants and boxers in a hurry, knocking her backwards onto the mattress and dropping myself on top of her. She wrapped her arms around my neck, dragging my lips to hers. I figured she’d be more passive, but the fire I’d seen in brief glimpses of came out full force and she twisted until I was on my back and she was straddling me.

Running my hands up her thighs, I smirked at her. “Gonna ride me, honey?”

Her face flushed at my question, and she nodded slowly, rolling her hips against mine. Pleasure shot up my spine and I bit back a groan. As hot as it was to have her on top, I didn’t want her thinking she was in control right now. She was mine, not the other way around. I grabbed her hair, yanked her closer, and shoved my tongue between her lips. She moaned into my mouth, going pliant in my arms, and a sense of satisfaction washed over me. I reached between us, trying to readjust my cock, but she paused, pulling away from me with a frown.

“Do you have a condom?”

I nipped her chin, trying to draw her back down. “I’m clean, honey. You’re on birth control, right?”

When she shook her head, my eyebrows shot up. That was a first. I frowned, studying her.

“How long has it been, exactly?”

The embarrassment came back, and she ducked her head. I had to force her chin up to look at me. She winced, averting her eyes.

“I told you. It was one of my rules. No dating. And I don’t do one-night stands.”

All my breath rushed out of me at once and I stared at her with wide eyes. “Wait... You’re a virgin?”

She made a face, shaking her head. “No. I just haven’t been with anyone since Tyson found me.”

Relief flooded my veins. I was confident about my performance, but I was nowhere near gentle enough to be someone’s first time. That shit was too much pressure. I’ve heard rumors that the first lady was a virgin before she got with prez. I don’t know how he pulled that off. He didn’t have a gentle bone in his body.

“Thank fuck. Okay, shit. There’s a wrap in my wallet.”

I wasn’t stupid enough to hook up with sweetbutts without a cover. I blamed the lust fog for forgetting it with Sammy. She handed me my jeans, and I fished out the condom before tossing them aside. When I handed it to her, she grinned eagerly and ripped it open, rolling it down my length. I snatched her hips, yanking her back on top of me, and growled when she ground against me.

I wanted to slam into her and go buck wild, but her soft confession didn’t escape me. I wasn’t sure how long ago the shit with her family was, but she didn’t look older than early twenties. A few years was a long ass time to go without sex. I wasn’t first time gentle, but I could hold back for a minute until she got used to me. I put my hands behind my head, shooting her a cocky grin.

“I’m all yours, honey.”

She looked surprised for a minute before a sultry grin passed over her face. My cock jumped at the sight, dragging her attention back down south. She wrapped her hand around me, stroking me a few times until I gave her a narrow-eyed look. With a cheeky smile, she shifted her weight to her knees, hovering over me. She took it slow, letting her body adjust as she engulfed me. It was fucking torture, and I was here for it. I settled my hands on her hips, encouraging her, until she sat fully.

“Fuck, you’re tight,” I grit out, using every ounce of self-control I possessed not to lose my fucking mind.

She whimpered, moving her hips in small circles while keeping my cock deep inside her.

“Aw, fuck, Sammy. You’re killing me.”

SAM

Clink was a lot bigger than I expected. Even taking it slow, it felt like too much, and my body clenched around him in protest. He groaned loudly beneath me. I could see the struggle in his face, he was doing his best to give me time to adjust, but it wasn't easy on him. I felt guilty for taking too long, which only made me more tense.

Like he could tell I was losing focus, he wrapped his arms around me, pulling me against his chest. In one smooth move, he flipped us so that he was on top, but he didn't automatically start pounding into me like I expected. His hands started moving, dragging over my skin, cupping my breasts, and one slipped between us to rub circles on my clit.

My hips jerked automatically at the touch and I moaned, my body relaxing around him. He groaned, his face tight, and shook his head. His hips snapped against mine like he couldn't help himself and heat spread through my system like a wildfire. I moaned, which only seemed to encourage him. He moved his hand away, instead grabbing my hips as he thrust into me. I'd never been able to get off this way, that's why I tried to be on top, but Clink was hitting all the right angles. He seemed focused on the spots that made me cry out, and I was quickly racing towards what was sure to be an explosive release.

My skin felt like it was on fire and I broke out in a sheen of sweat. Clink was flushed too, his face taking on that feral look I recognized from the other day when he was fighting that prospect. Now all that heated attention was on me and my body coiled with expectation as he ground his hips against mine.

It was almost too good, tingles spreading through my body with every thrust. Every time I moaned, Clink's fingers on my hips tightened roughly, bringing on an edge of pain. It felt like he got just as much pleasure from the noises I made as the thrusts that buried himself deep inside me. Any embarrassment

over my noises fled, and I let myself just be in the moment with him.

When he lifted my hips, hitting a new angle I wasn't expecting, I shattered without warning. A scream ripped from my lips, every erogenous zone lighting up like the fourth of July. Ecstasy passed over Clink's face before his eyes rolled back and he let out a shout, his hips stilling with him deep inside me.

He collapsed on top of me, both of us breathing like we'd run a marathon, and covered in sweat. I kept waiting for the panic to settle in, I let down a lot of boundaries with Clink, but he didn't make me feel panicked. I felt safe with him, and that was a huge thing for me. The fact that I felt safe with a dangerous biker was a little hilarious, though.

When I giggled to myself, Clink's breath danced along the skin of my breast. "What's so funny?"

I shook my head, running my fingers through my hair. "Nothing. Just thinking."

He shifted enough to look up at me, but didn't pull away from using my boobs as a pillow. He lifted an eyebrow, but I didn't want to get into my weird anxiety issues right now. I raised my eyebrow back, giving him a look.

"Comfy?"

His wicked grin came back, and he moved to bury his face between my breasts. "I'm in fuckin' heaven," was his muffled reply.

He made me laugh and didn't seem at all interested in leaving. Which was good, because I was comfy too and I didn't realize until now that since I drove him here, I'd have to get up eventually to drive him back. The thought of driving this late at night was nerve-wracking. I almost asked Clink to drive on the way here, but I didn't want to take his bike. That was just terrifying.

I didn't seem to have to worry about it anyway. He only got up long enough to dispose of the condom before returning

to his spot on my boobs. I shook my head slowly, rolling my eyes at the ceiling.

“Is Clink your real name?”

It was late, but not that late. I wasn't ready to sleep.

He huffed out a laugh. “No. It's my road name.”

“What's that?”

I kept waiting for him to sit up and look at me, but he just nuzzled against me, letting out a yawn. “It's the name they give you when you finish prospecting. Croy gave me mine, believe it or not. I was a prospect when he took over and he had me promoted after I took a hit for the crew and spent some time in the slammer.”

That surprised me, and I dropped my chin to look at him. “You went to prison?”

He lifted a shoulder casually. “For a little while, yeah. Someone had to take the fall, and I was a nobody. First-time offenders get a lesser sentence and all that. I took the hit, got locked up, and my cut was waiting for me when I got out.”

“That's why they call you Clink?”

“Yeah. You know, spent some time in the clink? That kind of thing,” he chuckled.

The way he said it was so easy and relaxed, like it never affected him, but I got the feeling that wasn't the whole truth. It didn't feel like the best time to pry about his drug use, but it wouldn't surprise me if the first time he got clean was while he was locked up. It was probably hard to get drugs in there. Not that I'd know. Most of what I knew about prison was from tv.

“Am I allowed to know your real name, or is it a secret?”

He finally lifted his head, his smile softer without any of the mischievousness I was used to. “I'll tell you, honey, but you gotta promise to keep it to yourself.”

I mimicked pulling a zipper across my lips and locking it up. I was good at keeping secrets.

“Eric. Eric Schaeffer.”

CHAPTER 21

SAM

I must've fallen asleep at one point, but I woke up to a loud buzzing. It stopped after a minute, but started up again almost immediately. I nudged Clink, trying to get him to wake up, but he just grumbled, his grip around my waist tightening slightly. The buzzing stopped and started again. It sounded like a phone going off. Worried it was mine, and Tyson was calling, I wriggled free of Clink's octopus grasp, stumbling over to where I'd set down my purse by the door. It wasn't my phone, though. I had one message from Tyson checking in, but otherwise it was silent. Looking around, I followed the noise to Clink's jeans, pulling out his phone from his pocket.

Clink had several missed calls from names I recognized on his crew. I nudged his shoulder, but he just turned over. With a sigh, I answered it the next time someone called.

"Hello?"

There was a pause before I heard Brewer's voice. "Uh, hey. Is Clink around?"

"He's asleep. I tried to wake him, but he just ignored me."

Brewer huffed out a laugh. "Yeah, getting that asshole to wake up is a pain in the ass. I've lost count of the number of times I've had to toss his mattress."

I snickered at the thought, looking over at Clink. He lost all his mischievousness while he was asleep, but he was still so good looking it made my heart pound and butterflies explode in my belly. I was so distracted looking at him, I forgot I was on the phone.

“Hey, I’m supposed to be making sure he stays clean. He’s good with you, though, right?”

My eyebrows flew up. “You are?”

“Well, yeah... That shit’s heavy. He can’t do it on his own. No matter how much he likes to pretend he can. He hates me for it already, but—”

“But don’t stop. I know that feeling, wanting to do it on your own and resenting people for helping, but you’re right. He can’t do it on his own.”

Brewer went quiet for a minute before responding. “So, you too, huh?”

I grimaced. I didn’t share my story with just anyone, but since Brewer was just calling to make sure Clink was safe and sober, I wanted him to know he could trust me.

“Um, sort of. I’m not a user, but... I’ve had my own issues in the past.” My mind shifted to the marks on my wrists, but I pushed the thought away. “He’s okay here. I don’t even keep alcohol in the house. But if you’d rather I bring him back—”

“Nah, we’re good. He’s pissed, but resigned to me helping him. If I interrupt his sex life, he’ll actually try and kill me, and then I’ll have to kick his ass. I’m too tired to deal with that shit tonight. Just... Don’t let him get his own ride home. He’s barely been sober a week, and I’m sure you know he’s already gone lookin’ to score. He’s not ready to be on his own yet.”

Glancing over at Clink, I sighed. “I know. He’s okay for now. I kind of doubt I could wake him anyway.”

“Yeah, good luck with that in the morning. He sleeps like the dead and then wakes up with more energy than that stupid bunny on TV.”

I pursed my lips, fighting back a laugh. “Oh, joy. Thanks for the warning.”

He hung up, and I set Clink’s phone down on my nightstand, but before I could climb back into bed, another message popped up. Thinking maybe it was Brewer with

another funny warning or something, I didn't think twice about checking it. And I was really glad I did.

D: Want a hit?

I didn't need a fancy college degree to figure out who that was and what he was asking about. That was Clink's dealer. Which meant Clink was still in contact with him. My expression hardened, and I thought about telling the guy off and blocking him myself, but that wasn't my job. It was Clink who had to make that choice. I decided to wait and see what he'd do. Setting the phone down on the nightstand, I crawled back into bed, but I couldn't get comfortable anymore.

Gone was the blissful feeling of just being happy in bed with a guy I really liked. It was like someone dumped a bucket of ice water over my head, reminding me that the things that were important to me, like honesty and trust, were not a priority in Clink's life. I couldn't be in a relationship with a guy who didn't care about those things, no matter how much I liked him.

His arm snaked around my middle, pulling me back against his chest. Sadness washed over me. He said he wanted to try to be in a relationship with me. It was the first time I opened up like that in years. And now it felt tainted.

I did eventually fall back asleep, but it took a lot longer than normal. When I woke up, the sun was already out, and I still felt exhausted. I thought about turning over and going back to sleep, but when I tried, I noticed Clink wasn't in bed anymore. I sat up quickly, worried he snuck out while I was still asleep.

“Morning, sleepyhead.”

Clutching the sheets to my chest, I peeked past the bookshelf towards the tiny kitchen tucked into the corner of the room. If it could be called a kitchen. It didn't even have a full sized fridge. Counter space was extremely limited, and storage was basically non-existent. It was all I could afford, though, so I made do. Clink stood in the kitchen in his boxers, his focus on the pan in front of him.

“You know how to cook?”

There were more important things I could be asking him, like if he checked his messages, but him cooking threw me for a loop. He didn't seem like the type to cook.

“Yeah. Don't tell the guys, though.”

I frowned. “Why? Do you think they'd tease you or something?”

He snorted, glancing over his shoulder at me. “Most definitely. But no, I was more referring to the fact that a lot of them don't know how and they'd start demanding I cook for them. Which isn't gonna fuckin' happen.” He pointed the spatula in my direction. “You get special treatment because you let me stick my dick in you.”

My mouth fell open, and my cheeks burned. “Clink!”

He burst out laughing, that mischievous grin back in place. Too tired and embarrassed to argue with him, I wrapped the sheets around me and slid out of bed, hurrying to the bathroom. It was the one place in the apartment I could actually hide. I spent some time getting ready for the day, but I didn't have any clothes in here, so eventually I had to come back out. I wrapped the sheets tightly around me, drawing in a deep breath to bolster myself.

When I came out, Clink was poking through the cabinets, a frown on his face. “Where's your plates?”

“Left side,” I murmured, sneaking past him to the other side of the bed. I kept my clothes in totes underneath it to save on space. Pulling one out, I grabbed what I needed, trying to stay hidden behind the bookshelf.

“You know I saw everything last night, right?”

Looking up from where I was squatting on the floor, trying to pull on my clothes discreetly, I saw Clink watching me with an amused look on his face, his elbow leaning against the bookcase. I thought for sure my face couldn't turn more red than it already was, but my cheeks burned brighter at his obvious scrutiny.

“Can you turn around?”

Pursing his lips, he shook his head slowly. When I opened my mouth to protest, he grinned. “You aren't gonna convince me. Might as well get it over with.”

I scowled, giving up and pushing to my feet. “Brewer warned me that you had more energy in the morning than the energizer bunny.”

His brow furrowed. “When did he say that?”

“Last night. He called looking for you, but you ignored me when I tried to wake you.” I gestured to his phone, which was still on the nightstand where I left it last night. I wasn't sure if that was by design and he'd already checked his messages or not, but Clink's face wasn't giving away what he was thinking. He leaned, snatching the phone up, and frowned at the screen before tossing it on the bed.

“Asshole. He's like my own little stalker.”

My focus was still on the phone. He must've seen the message from his dealer, but he probably didn't want me to know, so he was keeping it to himself. My jaw tightened, and I quickly finished getting dressed.

“He's just trying to help.”

Clink moved back to the kitchen, grabbing two plates of food and setting them on the coffee table before grabbing his jeans and jerking them over his legs. “Yeah, yeah, whatever. Come on, let's eat. I hate when my shit gets cold.”

I kept looking back at his phone, waiting for him to sneak a message or something, but he just grabbed it and shoved it in his pocket. I couldn't decide what was worse. Him trying to sneakily answer right in front of me, or him being smart

enough to wait until we weren't around each other anymore to reply.

Feeling grouchy, I dropped onto the sofa beside him, picking up the plate. It wasn't a complicated meal, over easy eggs and bacon, but he cooked it perfectly and it still surprised me that he had that kind of skill.

"Who taught you how to cook?"

"My mom." He was busy shoveling food into his mouth, and when he answered with his mouth full, I made a face.

"Gross. Don't talk with food in your mouth."

He smirked at me, completely uncaring about his manners, and jerked his chin at my plate, encouraging me to eat. I did because it was delicious and really thoughtful for him to cook for me, but I was still glued to his phone and the message from his dealer.

"I gotta get back soon. I've got shit to do. You'll be back at the clubhouse on Monday, right?"

I hadn't decided fully on whether I was coming back or not. I wanted to do the job because it was good for my career, and I liked the guys a lot more now that I got to know them, but I went back and forth a lot. Between this stuff with Clink and the run-in with the guy the other day, I still wasn't one hundred percent comfortable.

When I didn't answer right away, Clink put his now empty plate down and shifted closer to me, his arm resting behind me along the back of the couch. "Tell me what's stopping you from coming back."

I sighed, putting my plate down. "I just... I promised Tyson if I ever felt unsafe, I wouldn't go back. I've been to the clubhouse twice and both times something happened to make me uncomfortable. I just don't think it's a good idea."

"If this is about the prospect, then—"

"It's not just that. I..." I didn't really know what to say. If I told him I knew about the message and I was worried about spending time with someone who was going to lie to me, he

would get mad. I wasn't afraid of Clink, but he was quickly working past my defenses and it'd hurt when he eventually moved on.

His fingers trailed along my chin, turning me gently to face him. It was strange, when he looked at me so seriously. He stroked his thumb along my jaw, his gentle care surprising me and crushing the walls I'd erected last night. I hated that I couldn't fully trust him. I wanted so badly to give in to him, to let myself be swept away by his charm. I couldn't, though. Not if I wanted to protect myself. There was too much on the line to let myself fall for a guy like Clink. No matter how much I wanted to.

CHAPTER 22

CLINK

Something was up with Sam. She seemed guarded and suspicious. I didn't know what the hell happened, she seemed good last night, but when she mentioned Brewer calling, my hackles went up. What the fuck did that asshole say to her to upset her so much? She wouldn't even make eye contact with me for more than a few seconds before her gaze darted away and she drifted away from me.

It irritated me, ruining my good mood completely, so when she grabbed her keys to give me a ride back, I shook my head.

"I'm good. I'll get a rideshare. You relax."

Suspicion flashed across her face and I fought back a scowl. Of course, that asshole made her think I was gonna go get high. I wasn't even thinking about that until right at this moment. It sure as hell would feel better than me dealing with that look on her face.

"I don't mind, Clink. I—"

"It's a thirty-minute drive, and you'd just be coming straight back here. I'm good." She opened her mouth to protest, and I leveled her with a look. "I said I'm good, Sam."

Her jaw snapped shut, and that guarded look came back up. Fuck, this was bullshit. Had the time of my life last night, but I guess she regretted it in the light of day thanks to my so-called brother. I yanked on my shirt and cut, heading for the door without a word. I couldn't deal with this shit right now. I had to get back. Croy and Reaper had been gone all night. They had to have some sort of clue about Hammer by now.

“Clink, I—”

“I’ll see you Monday. Or not. Whatever.”

Without looking back, I stalked out of her apartment. A small part of me felt like a dick leaving her like that after last night, but I was too pissed off to be good company right now, and I didn’t need a babysitter back to the clubhouse. I could get there on my own.

I strode down the street, my eyes on my phone as I looked up that rideshare app. I’d never had to use it before, last night was the first night I went back to a chick’s place instead of doing the deed at the MC, so I wasn’t really paying attention to what was around me until someone honked. Jerking my head up with a frown, I rolled my eyes when I saw who had pulled up next to me.

“Need a ride?”

I didn’t bother holding back my scowl this time. “Sam call you?”

Tyson raised his eyebrows, giving me a look. “Can you blame her? Come on, I was in the neighborhood.”

“I don’t need a fuckin’ babysitter. Fuck off.”

I stormed off, but the asshole kept pace with me, driving slowly beside me without a word. Coming to a halt, I spun around to face him again.

“You got a death wish or somethin’?”

His face was blank, not an ounce of fear on him. He was either an idiot or not familiar with the shit my crew does on the regular.

“Get in. We’ll talk on the way.”

“I can fucking kill you, you know that, right?”

He just looked bored. “You’d make Sam sad if you did.”

Motherfucker. It was almost scary how easily he got me. Pissed at her or not, I couldn’t do shit to make her unhappy. It was weird, I normally didn’t give a shit, but just the thought of making Sam sad riled me even more. With a snarl, I stormed

around his little sedan, dropping myself into the front seat. I shut the door so hard the stupid cage rocked, but he didn't comment. He didn't move either, just watching me with his eyebrows raised.

“Seatbelt.”

It was settled then. This guy had a death wish. I yanked the stupid belt over my lap, gesturing obnoxiously to show that I did. The corner of his mouth ticked up like he thought this shit was funny before he pulled away from the sidewalk and headed out.

“You wanna talk about what's got you so upset?”

I rolled my eyes, staring out the window. “Mind your business, asshole.”

“Sam is my business. I pulled that girl out of the gutter and I've been watching her back ever since. She asked me to help you, so I'm here to help. Besides, I told you I'd support you, Clink.”

“I don't need your fucking help. I do just fine on my own.”

He hummed his acknowledgement, nodding his head. “I'm sure it feels like that, but people wouldn't be doing this if they didn't care about you and think you needed a hand. And there's nothing wrong with asking for help when you need it. I know I—”

“Hold on, shut up.”

I'd been staring out the window while he'd been jabbering on, and I noticed something a few streets up. A bike, a very familiar one, was parked up in front of a diner not far from Sam's place.

“Clink, we only want to—”

“Yeah, yeah, shut up. Pull over. I need to check something.”

Unlike Sam, Tyson didn't argue, though he did look disappointed. I knew what he was thinking, that I was gonna go score or something, but this was different. I kept my eyes glued to the bike as I spoke.

“Stay here. I’ll only be a minute.”

I was out of the car and heading for the diner before he could speak. I could only hope he kept his dopey ass where he was. I didn’t like coming for Hammer on my own, but something told me he was there for a reason. He’s been hiding like a little bitch since we ran his ass out of town. No way he’d be so arrogant as to hang out in the open without a purpose.

The bell over the door rang as I stepped inside. It was one of those cheesy diners that looked like something straight out of the fifties. Red and white booths, checkered floors, a big ass island separating the kitchen from the dining area. Hammer sat on a stool at the end, his breakfast in front of him. It was so casual, it made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. This felt like a trap.

I pulled out my phone, ready to text the crew, when Hammer finally spoke. “Now I know you ain’t that much of a bitch that you can’t come talk to me on your own.”

My lip twitched against a scowl. Asshole was baiting me. All my instincts told me to call my crew, but instead, I shoved the phone back into my pocket, glaring at him as I moved closer.

“What the fuck are you doin’ here?”

He didn’t even look in my direction, taking a sip of his coffee like he had all the time in the world. What the fuck was it with this guy? He had all that confidence, but absolutely nothing to back it up. There wasn’t anyone here aside from him, no one to back him up.

“What’s it look like I’m doin’?” He glanced at me, raising one eyebrow, before turning back to his food. “You gonna sit, or you gonna run like a little bitch back to your daddy and tattle on me?”

Making an irritated sound, I leaned against the counter, my arms crossed. “You got a lotta nerve coming back. We ain’t teach you enough of a lesson last time? How much of your crew got away from us?”

I knew the answer to that already. Zero. Anyone who'd been at that farmhouse was long gone, as well as the few who went with him to attack the MC. Neo saw Hammer leave town solo on the cameras he had set up. Hammer didn't acknowledge that, though, taking a bite of his hash browns.

Him ignoring me only irritated me more. "Gone deaf in your old age? What the fuck are you doing here?"

With a sigh, he wiped his mouth on a napkin before turning to face me. "Croy let you talk to him like that?"

I snorted. "I respect Croy. Can't say the same about you."

The bell to the diner jingled again, and I swung around, my hackles up. I'd expected someone working for Hammer to be walking through the door. Instead, Tyson stood there with a frown on his face as he looked between us.

"What the fuck? I told you to wait outside."

Tyson looked suspicious, a deep frown on his face. "You don't have to do this. I know you want to, but—"

I shoved away from the counter, moving closer and growling low. "This ain't about that. If you value your damn life, you'll get back in your fucking car. I mean it. Get outta here."

Tyson studied my face for a minute and I glared at him until he backed down, dipping his chin to acknowledge me before heading back outside. Fuck, I did not need Sam's friend on Hammer's radar. I got the feeling with how often she talked about him that it'd kill her if he got hurt. This shit needed to end.

"That your boyfriend?" Hammer chuckled.

Hoping to throw him off the scent and get to the damn point of this little meeting, I stalked closer, scowling.

"No, he's tryin' to be my sponsor. I don't fuckin' need him, though."

Hammer made a face. "Croy still on that bullshit about not using? And you fuckers seriously listen to that shit?"

“He’s the prez,” I growled.

Hammer looked like he didn’t believe me, his beady eyes running over me. “In my crew, I don’t give a shit what you do on your own time. I’m not lookin’ to be your daddy.”

“What crew? Your crew got blown to bitty pieces last year. Remember?”

He ignored me, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it. There was more than one no smoking sign around the joint, but he didn’t give a shit and it wasn’t like there was anyone around to confront him about it. The longer we stood around here without someone coming in through the back, the more I knew this meeting wasn’t a fucking coincidence. He was hoping to meet me here, and he made sure we weren’t interrupted, either.

“What are you doing here, Hammer?”

Blowing out a puff of smoke, he considered me for a moment. “Heard there’s been some unrest at the MC. Some shit about you havin’ a babysitter, since they won’t let you live your life the way you want.”

Unease settled over my shoulders. How the fuck would he know that? Reaper and Brewer swore they weren’t going to say anything to anyone about this bullshit. So how the hell did Hammer know I was trying to get sober?

“Thought I’d offer for you to join me instead. I know you’re a whiz at numbers, and as long as the job gets done, I don’t give a shit what you do in your spare time. Hell, I’ll even supply you the good shit as part of your cut.”

My automatic response was an immediate hell no. I valued my brotherhood over everything, including the high. But Hammer’s offer made me pause. He was offering me a new brotherhood, one where I wasn’t going to be treated like a toddler who needed hand holding and who could choose how he wanted to live his life. I could drop this bullshit about getting sober and just enjoy my life.

I hesitated long enough that a smug look flashed across Hammer’s face. He stood, heading towards me and offering

me his hand.

“Think about it. If you wanna switch sides, then meet me at the club. I know you’re one of the best when it comes to numbers. Come help me instead. I’ll give you what you need.”

Without realizing it, I took his hand in a firm shake. He clapped my shoulder roughly and squeezed my hand before walking away. The door jingled, and I felt my fist close around the little baggy he had slipped to me. Just like that, I was back in. I went straight towards the bathroom, glancing over my shoulder when I shut the door behind me. No one followed me, no one chased me down and demanded I stop. It was just me and the hit I’d been hoping for.

Sam’s face flashed across my mind for a second and I came to a halt. Fuck. If I went through with it, I’d be proving her right. She’d have every right to be suspicious of me. I stared down at the bag in my hand, my face screwed up into a grimace. If I took Hammer’s deal, I’d have plenty of tail with sweetbutts, hopefully a new batch that’d show me a good time. But they wouldn’t be Sam. And she’d never trust me again.

A shout drew my focus, and I shoved the baggy into my pocket, rushing out of the diner just in time to see Hammer hop on his bike and jerk his chin with a smirk before taking off. I looked around for the source of the noise and swore under my breath when I figured it out. Running around the car, I found Tyson on the ground and bleeding. Hammer went after him while I was debating about getting high. Tyson was built like a twig, and Hammer had at least sixty pounds of muscle on him. Fucker was always picking on people smaller than him, like women and small guys like Tyson.

I helped him to his feet, putting his ass in the back so I could drive. I couldn’t take him to the hospital, not with what I had in my pocket. Instead, I dropped into the driver’s seat and pulled out of the parking lot, aiming for the clubhouse. I did a U-turn about a block away, swinging back to Sam’s place. No way in hell was I leaving her here with Hammer hanging around.

CHAPTER 23

CLINK

My knee jiggled as the phone rang against my ear. The drugs were burning a hole in my pocket, and it took everything not to open it and take a hit. No one would know. She answered before I had a chance, though.

“Hello?”

“Come downstairs.”

Her voice was hesitant and distrustful. “Clink, I don’t think—”

“Tyson’s hurt. I need to get him back to the club. And I can’t leave you here alone. Get your ass down here, Sammy, and make it quick.”

She didn’t argue anymore, and I heard her scrambling to move as I hung up. While I waited for her, I ground my teeth together. This was fucking bullshit. I never said anything to Hammer about him going after Tyson. He was annoying, sure, but he didn’t do anything wrong and didn’t deserve to get his ass kicked for trying to help me. This was the kind of shit I’d have to worry about if I switched teams. Hammer might be on some shit about how he didn’t interfere with lives outside of the job, but his logic was skewed and he didn’t wait around to talk it out before taking action.

My gaze jerked over my shoulder, checking behind me. Hammer knew the car Tyson drove. I didn’t want him realizing Sam was with me, so when she stepped outside, I got out of the car and jerked my chin toward her truck.

“We’re taking your ride. Hurry up.”

I grabbed Tyson from the back of his ride, throwing his arm over my shoulder to haul him out. He groaned, leaning heavily against me. He was too out of it to say anything, but the guilt was almost as bad as the need for a hit. He wouldn't have gotten hurt if I hadn't drawn attention to him by stopping to talk to Hammer. Croy was going to be pissed. Meeting with the enemy was a stupid idea.

“Just hold on, man. We've got you.”

Getting Tyson into the back was a pain in the ass when you had to fold the seat forward to get to the back row. He made a lot of noise, groaning and crying out, and he was bleeding heavily from somewhere. I nudged Sam into the back with him and slammed the door before going around the front.

“What happened?” Her voice was high and strained as she searched for where Tyson was hurt. Aside from putting my hand out for her keys, I ignored her, starting the truck up and taking off. I was going too fast, but I needed to get the hell out of here before Hammer came back looking for trouble.

“Oh, god, Tyson. It's okay. It's going to be okay. Clink, he's been stabbed! He needs a hospital, not the stupid MC!”

I shook my head quickly. “We got a doc on call and the first lady is a nurse. He'll be fine. Just put pressure on it.”

My mind was racing as we tore down the highway towards home. How likely was this to happen again if I kept this to myself? Hammer wouldn't take me disappearing off the map as an answer. If he was willing to come out of his hiding place to meet with me, he was willing to force my hand. I glanced at Sam in the rearview mirror and my fists tightened on the steering wheel. If I wanted to keep her safe, I needed to come clean to my crew. Not just a few of them. All of them.

“Tyson? No, don't shut your eyes. Tyson!”

“Is he breathing?”

She didn't answer me, too busy panicking and shaking him.

“Sam! Is he breathing?”

“Y-Yes, I think so. Please, Tyson, keep your eyes open!”

The more I thought about it, the more this felt like a warning. Hammer lost his mole in the crew when Allie shot Wrecker in the head. He somehow found out I was using and offered me a slot in his crew, but he followed up by hurting someone trying to help me. A clear cut warning that if I told anyone about what he said, he'd go after people who were more important than Tyson.

Pulling out my phone, I put it on speaker, pushing the pedal all the way to the floor in hopes of getting back faster.

“Clink?” Riley's voice was confused. I never called her. Had no reason to until now.

“I need you and the doc to meet me. I got a civvie with a stab wound in the back.”

“Who?”

Letting out a breath, I fought off a grimace. “My sponsor.”

When we arrived at the clubhouse, the doc and Riley were waiting, along with the rest of the officers. They helped pull Tyson out from the backseat of Sam's truck and disappeared inside. They'd bring him to the guest room so he could be treated. I came around front, but when I realized Sam wasn't following, I swung around to get her. One look at her tearful, horror-stricken face nearly buckled me. Tyson was her friend for years. And it was my fault he got hurt.

“Come on, honey. He's in good hands.” I reached for her, helping pull her out of the truck. She had blood on her clothes and her hands were clammy. I tucked her against me, bringing her inside.

I brought her to my room, grabbing some sweats and a t-shirt out of my dresser for her to change into. She looked like she was in shock and I wanted to stick around to help her, but I knew Croy wouldn't be patient about this. He needed to know

what was going on. Hell, they all did. Hammer was looking to poach, and that was a threat to our already shaky foundation.

“I’ve gotta run downstairs for a bit. I’ll ask one of the ol’ ladies to come in here and sit with you, alright? I set out some spare clothes and there’s a towel on the dresser that’s clean if you want to shower.”

Sam barely blinked, her pale face staring out one of the windows, but probably not really taking in shit. I brushed my lips against her forehead, squeezing her hands, before ducking into the hall and nearly crashing into Reaper. He looked suspicious, like usual, but damn, this time he had a reason to be.

“I know. I’m comin’. Can you have Quinn or Allie sit with Sam? She’s in shock.”

He studied me for a second before nodding once. Together, we walked back towards the guest room, where Croy and the other officers watched through the open door while Doc and Riley tried to save Tyson’s life. Quinn and Allie were inside to assist, getting water and towels and shit. Reaper stepped inside while I caught Croy’s attention, tipping my head towards the stairs.

“We need a church meeting.”

As Treasurer, I didn’t make calls like that. That was up to Croy, Nevada, and sometimes Knox when he was doling out Croy’s order. The fact that I was requesting it now was unusual, but it was fucking important.

It felt a little like I was marching onto death row. Not only was I about to admit that I was breaking the rules by using, I also had to admit that I’d met with Hammer on my own. That would paint me in a really bad light, and there was no telling how Croy would react. But I’d thought about it on the way here. If I took Hammer’s offer, I’d be no better than Wrecker. That little shit screwed us over selling to our rival, and he nearly got Reaper killed by giving up our supply locations. I couldn’t be that guy. It didn’t matter how badly I wanted to have free rein to use to my heart’s content. My brothers meant

more to me than anything. And I sure as hell wasn't going to side with the guy who killed Mass.

My leg started jiggling again as I sat in church, waiting for the rest of the guys to join us. Not just the officers, either. Croy demanded everyone join us, which was more than a little annoying. I didn't complain, though. I didn't have room to. I just waited, my agitated movements making me jingle like a fucking reindeer on Christmas. Once the whole crew, or most of them aside from the prospects and a few watching the door as security, joined us, Croy looked at me, his face blank.

"You've got somethin' to say, Clink?"

I nodded, staring at my hands. "Spoke to Hammer today. He's lookin' to poach our people." Lifting my gaze, I locked eyes with Croy. "He started with me."

Murmurs and protests started immediately. People called me a traitor before I even had a chance to explain myself. It was disheartening, to say the very least. My intention was never to betray my brotherhood. I'd gone inside with the intention of getting more information. And while I briefly considered taking the offer, I didn't think I'd ever go through with it. It was the drugs that tried to sway me.

Croy leaned back, his arms crossed over his chest. Last time he suspected one of his own was betraying him, he started brawling. I kept waiting for him to lose his cool and attack, but he just waited until the room quieted.

"Tell me what happened."

My eyebrows furrowed, not expecting his cool demeanor, but I did as he asked, spilling every detail I could remember.

"I was on my way back here when I noticed his bike outside a diner. That thing is easy to spot, and he wasn't tryin' to hide it."

Croy nodded. We'd always made fun of Hammer's bike. It was massive, with these ugly custom seats and tons of bells and whistles. We always said he was compensating for something with a ride like that. He looked like a tool riding around on it.

“It felt weird that he was being so obvious about where he was, especially since he’s a big chicken who’s been hiding. So I went inside to see what the fuck was going on. He acted like he knew I’d come, and he was waiting for me.”

Knox frowned. “Why the fuck didn’t you call for backup?”

I lifted a shoulder. “Wanted to see what he would say. I thought maybe if I stuck around, he’d let something slip. And he did. He wants me to leave the crew and join him. In exchange, he’ll give me what I want.”

Croy’s eyebrow went up, but he still wasn’t showing his cards. It was unnerving, the way he was watching me. “And what did he offer?”

This was the part that was going to hurt. Reaching into my pocket, I pulled out the dime baggy and flicked it across the table. He caught it, but his eyes never left me.

“Somehow, Hammer figured out I was off the wagon and offered me a cut of the product on top of my portion of the profits.” My gaze shifted to Brewer and then to Reaper. Neither of them flinched or made any indication that they were involved in the leak, but it had to come from somewhere. And it sure as shit wasn’t me.

“And are you interested in taking his deal?”

My spine stiffened, and I whipped my gaze to Croy. He was still watching me, but this time I could see the barely masked fury on his face. He was waiting for me to betray him, to slip and say something stupid, like I accepted. I leveled him with a glare, my lip curling up.

“No. Fuck no. Minus the time it took to pick up Sam and get Tyson in the truck, I came straight here. I won’t betray my crew.”

CHAPTER 24

SAM

It felt like everything was under water. Seeing Tyson like that, bleeding like a stuck pig and dropping in and out of consciousness, it tore me apart inside. And it was all my fault. I was the one who called him to check on Clink. I sent him out there and he got hurt because of it. I should've just let Clink walk away. It wasn't my job to keep him sober. I should've protected Tyson better.

There was a small knock on the door, but I didn't move to open it. I couldn't. I felt numb, my eyes locked on my hands that were covered in blood. Tyson's blood. The man who saved my life, dragging me off the streets and helping me start over. There was blood on my jeans, too. It was so much blood. How much was too much? Were they knocking so they could tell me that someone else died because of my stupid decisions?

“Sam?”

Quinn's voice permeated the buzzing in my ears. She sounded worried, and that only scared me more. I didn't want them to tell me he was dead. Maybe if I didn't answer, I could pretend for a little while longer.

When the door creaked open, I wrapped my arms around my middle, curling in on myself. Please go away.

“Hey... You doing okay?”

A tear slipped down my cheek, but I didn't brush it away. I couldn't. I'd get blood on my face.

Quinn came to sit next to me, putting her hand on my arm. A tremble worked its way through me and I sank further into a

little ball to hide it. If I broke down, I'd lose it completely. I couldn't live without Tyson. He felt like my lifeline and if I lost him, I'd end up back where I started. All alone with no one in the world who cared about me. I wouldn't want to live if he wasn't around.

Quinn didn't push me to talk. She didn't push me to do anything. She just sat beside me, a comforting presence in what was otherwise the most terrifying moment of my life. It felt like hours had gone by, or maybe just a few minutes, before someone else knocked on the door and Riley joined us. I was too afraid to look at her, too afraid to see the sympathy in her eyes when she told me my best friend was dead and it was all my fault.

“He's alive, Sam.”

My head whipped up, and the dam broke, big tears spilling down my face. “Really?”

She nodded. “It wasn't actually as bad as it looked. A bleeder, for sure, but nothing we couldn't handle. He's gonna need a little blood, but Doc says he'll be back on his feet in a few days.”

My shoulders shook as I choked back sobs. The relief was dizzying and a little nauseating. I hugged my middle tighter, shaking my head like I couldn't quite believe it. Riley came to sit on my other side, rubbing my back while I attempted to pull myself together. After a few minutes, she nudged me lightly.

“Come on. Let's get you cleaned up and you can go see him. I left him with Allie because I figured you'd rather hear the news from an actual person in medicine, but her attempts at caring for people can be a little much.”

Quinn snickered, shaking her head. “I'll help Sam. You go make sure she doesn't accidentally hurt him while trying to take care of him.”

I looked up, shocked out of my turmoil enough to speak. “Is he okay with her?”

Riley looked like she was holding back a grin, shrugging a shoulder. “He'll be fine. She's just a little enthusiastic and can

overdo it. Whenever I got sick, she mothered me to the point that she got sick, too. Knowing her, she'll try so hard to make sure he's comfortable that she'll accidentally make it worse. Take your time and clean up. I'll watch out for him."

I did a speed run of a shower, mostly to get the blood off my skin. Clink had left me some clothes to wear, which was kind. It didn't make up for what happened, but then again, I really didn't know what happened. I wasn't sure I wanted to know. It didn't feel like it mattered. It wasn't safe for me and my friend to be around him, and that wasn't going to change any time soon.

By the time I finished getting dressed, my anxiety was at an all-time high. I nearly tripped over myself, shoving my shoes back on my feet, and Quinn had to hold my hand to keep me from toppling over. Once I was at least presentable, I hurried into the hall, pausing only long enough for Quinn to show me the way since I didn't actually see where they brought Tyson. She led me down another hall and towards the back to a small room on the right-hand side. Riley and Allie were talking quietly inside, and when I poked my head in, I almost started crying again when I saw Tyson's eyes open.

He smiled, holding out his hand. "Hey. You okay?"

Letting out a laugh that was a little more hysterical than I would've liked, I stumbled forward, taking his hand and clinging to it as I sat beside him on the edge of the bed.

"Me? You were the one who was stabbed!"

He shrugged. "Wasn't the first time I've run into someone's unhappy dealer. It won't be the last."

Riley's eyebrows flew up. "Hold on. What dealer?"

Tyson frowned, looking between the women. "I apologize. I thought since he brought me here that you were a part of his support system. I shouldn't have said anything."

"Blame the blood loss." Clink stood just inside the door, his posture tense even as he leaned casually against the wall. "They'd have found out in a little while anyway. I just told the crew."

Tyson still looked apologetic. “Still, it wasn’t my place to say anything. I’m sorry about that. How are you? I know those conversations are never easy.”

Clink shook his head, shutting down again instead of answering. Tyson didn’t seem bothered by it, he’d dealt with this kind of thing dozens of times, but I felt like I deserved answers after everything that happened. I clutched Tyson’s hand tightly, glaring at Clink.

“How did this happen? You what? Brought Tyson with you to meet your dealer and he got pissed?”

He made a face. “Hammer isn’t my dealer. He’s an asshole who’s looking to cause trouble for our crew.”

“You talked to Hammer?” Riley’s voice had gone quiet and when I glanced over my shoulder at her, her face had gone pale. Her friends moved to stand beside her, rubbing her arms to calm her.

“Yeah. I’m sure Croy will tell you—”

I cut him off, my free hand slicing through the air to silence him. “No. You dragged my friend into the middle of your issues. I want answers. Who was that and why did he hurt Tyson?”

“Sammy, you can’t—” Tyson was trying to talk me off a ledge, but I just watched him bleeding out on the back seat of my truck because of a guy I’d slept with the night before. I wanted answers.

“No, Tyson. He owes us answers.”

Clink sighed, nodding his head slowly. “Alright. I’ll talk. But you gotta stop bitching at me and let me get through it. Deal?”

I wanted to punch him, but Tyson’s grip on my hand tightened, keeping me in my spot. I could only afford a quick nod for Clink, not trusting myself to actually speak. I’d probably say something hurtful, and he’d lash out and not actually tell me anything.

Clink got comfortable on the floor against the wall, his knees drawn up in what I recognized as a defensive gesture. He was protecting himself. I wanted to feel guilty that I made him feel that way, but Tyson's tight grip on my hand stopped me. Tyson was the most important person in my life, and he almost got killed because of something I asked him to do.

“One thing you gotta know, I've been using since I was a teen. Young and stupid, easily swayed by so-called friends. I've gotten clean and broken that streak more times than I can count. Every time I think I'm pulling out and get my head on straight, the universe likes to slap me down and watch me suffer.”

The look on his face almost spoke more volume than the actual words. I could see the pain there, the disappointment in himself, the exhaustion.

“It was easier after I joined the crew, since Croy didn't allow us to partake. He says it's bad for business. I wasn't perfect, but I had a brother watching my back, and I was clean for the longest I'd ever gone. I figured I got it handled. But then that asshole had to up and die on me, and I spiraled. I hadn't gone back to full-blown using yet. I felt like a dick if I dumped all the hard work he put in on me, but I was drinking and fuckin' around nightly to numb myself out. And when I got exposed on a job, I broke. Went back to using. It did its job, made me feel good, blocked the pain of losing the one brother who knew what was up with me and had my back.”

It was all so familiar. Those stories often are. I didn't think it was possible to get clean cold turkey and stay that way. Everyone fails at least once.

“What's that got to do with Tyson?” As much as I sympathized with Clink, it still didn't explain what happened.

He shot me a look, lifting his eyebrows. “I'm gettin' there, honey. But there are three people behind you who need the whole story.”

I'd completely forgotten that Riley, Quinn, and Allie were still in the room. They were all staring at Clink with tears in their eyes. They had a personal stake in all of this. They were

his friends, and hearing his story was harder on them than it was on me.

He rested his arms on his knees, his hands dangling between them. He looked so relaxed, like he wasn't baring his soul to the people who were important to him. It made me worry he wasn't actually taking this seriously, but Tyson squeezed my hands and when I looked over at him, he gave me a significant look. A look I'd seen him give family members so many times before. Don't rush the process or put your expectations on other people. They would deal with things their own way, not my way, just like they couldn't expect me to heal from my own issues in any other way but what worked for me.

"Anyway. When I was leaving this morning, Tyson pulled up to give me a ride. I assume that was your doing." He raised his eyebrows. When I nodded, he sighed. "Yeah, figured as much. I wasn't lookin' to score, by the way. And I was a little pissed that you automatically went there."

"That's normal," Tyson interrupted. "She didn't listen to your needs because she was trying to help. You didn't see hers because you were defensive."

Clink made a face. "Whatever. While Tyson was driving me back here, I noticed Hammer's bike out in the open."

"Who's Hammer?" I asked. He said already that Hammer wasn't his dealer, but I knew he got the text from his dealer last night. I didn't fully believe him when he said he wasn't.

"Hammer used to be in the crew. He got kicked out for being a shady motherfucker, and he's been screwing with us since. He likes to hide like a little bitch and pick at us instead of coming at us like a real man," he growled.

"A little over a year ago, he attacked me at my work as a warning to Croy. He was going to do more, but Croy came to check on me and spooked him before he had the chance." Riley's voice was tremulous, the normally badass woman I knew now quiet and hesitant. When I looked at her, she was clinging to Quinn and Allie, and her eyes were glued to Clink.

“What did he want?”

Clink sighed. “Me. He’s lookin’ to poach. I doubt I’ll be the only one he approaches, but he knows I’m good at what I do, and he wanted to make me an offer.” His gaze swung back to me. “Somehow, he figured out I was trying to get sober. He offered me a cut of the product as well as the profits. He was lookin’ to tempt me into leaving my brotherhood.”

CHAPTER 25

SAM

It made me sick to my stomach to think that there were people out there who cared so little about another person's sobriety that they'd tempt them with drugs to control them. Tears burned my vision, and I looked at Clink, really looked at him. He struggled with staying sober, but he was trying. To be offered that kind of deal would've been hell on his sobriety.

"And you said no. That's why he attacked Tyson. Right?"

He shook his head slowly. "No. I didn't say anything."

Disappointment hit me hard, and I tore my gaze away from him, frowning at my hands, still clutching Tyson's tightly.

"I'm sorry, Sam. I know you wanted me to say no. Hell, I wanted to say no. But he handed me a dime and my brain shut down. I could only think about one thing. Get the hit. I was in the bathroom arguing with myself about it when I heard Tyson shout."

I looked up with a frown. "You didn't fall off the wagon?"

"Nah. Didn't have the time. I ran outside, found Tyson on the ground, and got busy."

My brows furrowed. It wasn't the answer I wanted, not by a long shot, but it was better than him saying he had accepted the offer. He said he was arguing with himself. I wasn't sure what I'd do if I was in his place. I'd like to believe I'd throw it out and walk away, but I wasn't an addict. Clink had barely been sober a week. That kind of temptation was something most people wouldn't be able to walk away from, not at that point in their journey.

“Did Hammer say he was going to hurt Tyson?” Riley asked, bringing my attention back to the room.

Clink snorted. “Hammer doesn’t say shit if he doesn’t want to. I’m guessin’ here because I don’t know how that asshole thinks, but I’m assuming Tyson was a warning disguised as a gift. If I pitched a fit, he’d probably say somethin’ like it was to help me, getting Tyson off my back. But I saw it for what it was. He was sayin’ if I betrayed his deal, he’d go for someone more important than my sponsor.” When Clink glanced at me, I sucked in a breath.

“Me?”

He nodded. “That’s why I picked you up. I don’t know if Hammer knows about you, but I’m not takin’ any chances, honey. Hammer’s targeting me, and I won’t have that blow back onto you. You stay here, do your job, and we’ll watch your back until he’s dealt with.”

His story was overwhelming, and I wasn’t sure what to think. Yesterday, things were so simple. I liked him, enjoyed spending time with him, and he was sweet. He offered to be in a relationship with me, even though that probably wasn’t normal for guys like him, and I let my walls down a little with him. But now, I had to think about things like rival bikers who would hurt people to prove their point, Tyson being in danger for helping Clink, and me not being safe in my own home because I slept with Clink one time. I couldn’t think straight, and I didn’t know what to say.

At one point, the other girls filed out of the room, giving us privacy. Clink left too, shooting a pain filled look at me before slipping out the door. It left me alone with Tyson, and he squeezed my hands to get my attention.

“What’s on your mind?”

I shook my head, but Tyson had never allowed me to hide my thoughts from him. He’d pester me until I spoke up and cleared the air. He tipped his head, watching me with firm patience and kindness like he always did. A tear slipped over my cheek, but I dashed it away quickly.

“I don’t know what to think.”

He pursed his lips, nodding. “I get that. It’s a lot, especially coming from someone you care about.”

“I don’t—” I couldn’t finish that sentence. I wanted to say I don’t care about Clink, but that would be a lie. I sighed heavily.

“I should’ve known better than to open up to someone. It always bites me in the ass.”

He huffed out a laugh, and when I looked up at him, his smile was soft. “I feel like I should be offended.” When I shot him a dry look, he shook his head with a grin. “Sammy, there’s nothing wrong with letting people in. You can’t live your life alone. Is it possible that you’ll make mistakes and trust the wrong people? Yeah. But there’s also a chance that you’ll make some genuine connections, and that’s just as important as protecting yourself. You need more than just me.”

“So you think I trusted the wrong person?”

Sighing, he lifted his eyebrows, an almost exasperated look on his face. “You’re focusing on only half of what I said. I can’t tell you if trusting Clink was the wrong choice. I don’t know him that well. But what little I do know isn’t all bad.”

My brow furrowed. “Like what?”

“Like instead of taking the drugs and walking away from me, he got help. He was fuming before he went inside. He didn’t want anything to do with me, but he still got me help instead of walking away. He’s also loyal to his friends. He didn’t take a deal, even though the guy offered him exactly what he wanted. And he cares enough about you that he refused to leave without you. Yes, he’s an addict, and he’s got a long way to go to get sober. And yes, he’s part of a very dangerous club, but that doesn’t automatically make him a bad person.”

My brows drew together tightly. “But I trusted the wrong guy, and you got hurt because of it. You never would’ve been there if I didn’t call you. I shouldn’t have gotten you involved. I shouldn’t have gotten involved with someone in an MC.”

He tipped his head back and forth, a thoughtful look on his face. “Yes, and no. I’m a firm believer in fate. Had you not called, Clink would’ve gotten high and maybe ended up in a deal with the devil. Instead, he’s here, and he finally came clean to the people he calls family about his drug use. Now he’s got an entire building full of people watching out for him. You did that. Honestly, if he didn’t care, he wouldn’t have gotten in the car with me at all. He only agreed because I told him it’d make you sad if he didn’t.”

My chest tightened, and I fought back a grimace. I didn’t want to hear stuff like that. It would only make this harder.

“I’m not saying you have to be in a relationship with him. I agree that there are red flags that would make me pause. But it’s entirely up to you. You need to decide if the connection you feel with Clink is worth facing your own demons, as well as his. Putting your walls back up isn’t going to do you any good. You deserve to make some connections in your life. More than just me. And we both know your connections with ‘the right kind of people’ didn’t always work out for you.”

I fiddled with the edge of the bedspread, running through it in my head. I didn’t really know what to decide. I liked Clink, and up until this morning, I was interested in spending more time with him. But that was before Tyson almost got killed. I couldn’t lose the one person who was important to me. And it wasn’t like Clink and I were so deep that I couldn’t walk away. It’d make me sad, but it wouldn’t wreck me completely. I’d get over it in time.

A knock at the door pulled me from my thoughts, and a man swept into the room who I didn’t know. He didn’t pay any attention to me, speaking to Tyson instead.

“Right. I got the blood, which should help. Are you still feeling nauseous and dizzy?”

I shot a wide eyed look at Tyson, who pursed his lips to hide his sheepish expression.

“Tyson!”

He winced. “What? It’s not like I was going to turn him away while he was baring his soul. I’m his sponsor.”

My mouth fell open. “You’re hurt! You should be resting, not playing therapist!”

The man I assumed was the doctor raised an eyebrow. “She’s right. You need to rest. The blood will help. Water and rest will get you back on your feet. Since you’ll be staying here a few days anyway, it’s a good idea to take some time off and relax.”

I tipped my head with a frown. “He has to stay a few days? He can’t rest at home?”

The doctor frowned back at me. “Neither of you are leaving. Hammer already targeted this one.” He gestured at Tyson. “And Croy told me you were Clink’s claim, which puts you at risk. You’ll stay here until the threat passes.”

When Clink mentioned they’d watch our back, I thought that meant that they’d check in every once in a while. I didn’t think he was going to keep us here. And I had no idea what it meant about being Clink’s claim. When I looked at Tyson, he was frowning, too.

“I can’t stay here. I’m a sponsor. People rely on me.”

The doctor sighed heavily, like this argument wasn’t a new one, and he was tired of talking about it. He gave Tyson a flat look. “Unless you want those people to be targeted too, you’ll stay put. Talk to them over the phone and send in someone else to replace you. Your life is at stake here. I swear, no one seems to get that.” He set up the bag of blood with Tyson’s IV and left, muttering to himself, leaving me and Tyson to contemplate what he just said.

Turning to Tyson, I bit my lip. “Still think it was a good idea to get involved with a biker?”

He rolled his eyes. “Stop looking for excuses. You need to really think about what you want, not use every damn excuse in the book to decide for you. He didn’t mean for this to happen, and you know it.”

I shot him a dirty look. “You’re grouchy when you’re injured.”

He laughed, flinching and holding his side with the movement. “You’re a shit. Go away and let me rest.”

When I hesitated, his face softened, and he pulled me in for a hug. “I’m alright. I promise. Go see your fella and talk. You need to clear the air. I’ll be here when you’re through. Okay?”

Nodding quickly, I squeezed his shoulders and stepped back, waving a hand toward his phone on the nightstand.

“Text me if you need anything. I guess I’ll be downstairs, since I’m not allowed to leave.”

His mouth twisted like he was holding back a smirk and he waved me off. “Go. And Sam?”

I paused with my hand on the doorknob, looking over my shoulder at him. “Yeah?”

He smiled softly. “Thank you for being here. It means a lot.”

I smiled back before giving him the space to get some rest. Tyson and I were each other’s family. I’d always be there when he needed me. Just like he’d always be there for me. He couldn’t replace my parents, they were precious to me, but he was the surrogate father I needed when I lost them, and he never failed to show up.

Sucking in a shaky breath, I headed towards the stairs. Maybe Tyson was right. I needed to be a little more open to letting people in. Because with him being the only person I could rely on, I was setting myself up for heartache. If I lost him, I’d have no one. And it would break me.

CHAPTER 26

CLINK

After coming clean to the crew and to Sam, I was feeling raw and exposed, and it pissed me off. I headed for my room, hoping to find some remnants or leftovers that Sam and Reaper might've missed, just to clear my head. There wasn't any. They made sure of that, and in a frustrated rage, I tossed my room upside down. That's how Brewer found me, surrounded by my own chaos, sitting on the floor with my head in my hands and my elbows resting on my knees.

“Did a tornado pass through here?”

“Fuck off, man,” I mumbled.

He stepped into the room, dropping to sit beside me. “Yeah, I'm not gonna do that. You look like shit. I take it you were hopin' for a hit?”

I didn't even bother to look up at him. He knew the truth without me saying it. Hell, the whole damn crew knew it now. Who knew turning down Hammer's offer would've tossed my life this severely?

“You ever feel like Mass was gunnin' for an officer position?”

That came out of nowhere. With a frown, I sat up, leaning against my bed frame. “What?”

Brewer lifted his shoulder, the stoic mask hiding any actual emotions. “Just sayin'. He was doin' a lot of shit in the background, stayin' on everyone's good side, bein' your sponsor. Kinda feels like he was makin' a play we didn't know about.”

I snorted. “Nah. Mass wasn’t like that. He didn’t want to lead. He was just a good brother. Besides, can you imagine him in charge? He’d get his ass handed to him in a blink of an eye. He was too relaxed.”

A ghost of a smile crossed his face. “Yeah. He was a fuckin’ knucklehead, that’s for sure.” He sighed, rolling his head to look at me. “Kinda feels like a front, though. A knucklehead doesn’t become someone’s sponsor, doesn’t watch out for his crew, and sacrifice his life to protect the women. It doesn’t match.”

Drawing in a breath, I let it out slowly. “I don’t think it was a front. I think he did it on purpose. He acted like a shithead to ease tension, help settle the crew. Hell, he even got Croy to crack a smile now and then. Not a play for power, but more a play to make things a little easier.”

Brewer hummed his acknowledgement. We didn’t really talk much about Mass after he died. Mass and I had been close, and it killed me when we lost him. Sometimes it bugged me how hush hush people were about him. Like they wanted to bury him and everything about him under the rug so we didn’t have to think about him anymore. Talking to Brewer about him felt good.

I blinked, and my brow furrowed. “Holy shit. Are you doing the therapy thing right now?”

When Brewer’s mouth twisted, hiding his smirk, I shoved his shoulder. “Fuck off with that shit, man. I don’t need a therapist.”

He finally chuckled, lifting a shoulder. “Could’ve fooled me. You looked like a dejected puppy when I came in here.”

I rolled my eyes. “Where’d you learn that shit anyway? You got some secret therapist degree we don’t know about?”

Shaking his head, he pushed to his feet. “Nah. Used to be a bartender though, before I started prospecting. People like to talk when they’re down. Helps clear the air or whatever.” He offered me a hand, helping me to my feet. “I know you wanted to keep this shit to yourself, but don’t avoid going downstairs.

No one's judging you for having a relapse. Meeting with Hammer by yourself? That was stupid. People might talk shit about that. But not about the relapse."

I growled, shoving my hands into my pocket. "I was gonna call. He said I was a little bitch callin' my daddy. I took offense."

Brewer scoffed. "He can't fuckin' talk when he's the one hiding like a pussy and trying to poach members. Don't listen to assholes not worth your time."

With a hand on my shoulder, he led me downstairs to join the crew. I was tense, waiting for someone to say shit, but other than a few suspicious looks, no one said anything. Chase handed me a beer and a pool cue without a word and I joined him for a game until a certain someone came downstairs. I handed my shit to Brewer and shoved my hands into my pockets, approaching with caution. With the way she was glaring at me upstairs, I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't want anything to do with me.

She looked wary, her hand fluttering by her side anxiously. "Can we talk?"

Nodding, I tipped my head towards the backyard. Still within sight of the crew, but with enough space to give us privacy. Didn't need an audience while she ripped me a new one.

She was still wearing my clothes, and it took work not to let it get to me. She stopped in the corner of the yard, spinning around to face me, a determined look on her face. I held my breath, watching her warily, until she stunned the shit out of me.

"I still like you."

My mouth fell open, but she kept going, her words coming out faster and faster, like she was trying to get it out all at once.

"I shouldn't. It's not safe, and being with you nearly got Tyson killed. But everyone keeps saying I need to make connections and start living. And you promised you'd have my

back, and I trusted you. I'm mad at you for what happened, but at least you were honest. Tyson's right, if I don't start trusting other people, then I'm making things worse, because if I lose him, I'll be all alone and it'll break me worse than when my family kicked me out, and the pastor tried to coerce me so I didn't even have the church and—"

Trying to pull out everything she was saying was making my head spin. I put my hands up, trying to get her to chill out.

"Hold on, hold on. Ease up on me, honey. I'm only a week sober. What are you saying?"

She bit her lip, frowning at the ground. "I'm... I'm saying that people make mistakes. And Tyson trusts you didn't mean for it to happen, and I trust his judgment. So... If you still want to spend time together—"

Exhilaration hit me smack in the chest, knocking me speechless for a minute. I wanted to rush her, pull her into my arms, and kiss her stupid, but I could still see the wariness in her face. I edged closer, forcing her chin up, so that she looked me in the eye.

"Are you doin' this because Tyson told you to? Because I don't need a pity fuck and—"

Her fire came back, and she glared at me, crossing her arms definitely. "No, you jerk! Tyson said I need to think about it and decide for myself, and I liked you and no one gave me the benefit of the doubt when shit went sideways in my life, so I thought I'd offer you the courtesy I never got. I'm seriously regretting it now—"

Yeah, fuck waiting around. I grabbed her, yanking her into my arms, and slammed my lips against hers. She made a startled noise, but she sank into it all the same, her arms looping around my neck as I gathered her closer. No one else gave me the benefit of the doubt. That I had good intentions when I went into that diner. I heard the grumbles. I knew what they were thinking. They thought I was going traitor and the only reason I pussied out was because someone got hurt. No one was gonna believe me that I was never gonna take the deal. No one but Sam.

What started off as rough and a little desperate melted into something significantly hotter. I walked her backwards, pressing her up against the side of the clubhouse. I remembered every curve of her from the other night, and I wanted more. She was better than any drug, especially wearing my clothes. It turned me the fuck on, and when I hauled her off her feet so that I could grind my erection against her sweet pussy, the thin material of my sweats didn't do shit to hide the feel of her ass in my hands.

“Clink, it's broad daylight, man! No one wants to see all that!” someone shouted.

When I moved to lean away from her, to give whoever was interrupting us a piece of my mind, Sam's arms tightened against my neck and she sucked on my tongue. A groan ripped out of me and I could barely summon the brain function to lift my middle finger in the speaker's direction before giving my full attention back to her. The fact that we weren't being discreet only made it hotter, and I slipped one hand under Sam's shirt, palming her tit without a fucking care.

“Clink! Get your ass in here!” Croy barked.

Fuck. That was an order I couldn't ignore, especially not after the shit that happened this morning. Regretfully, I pulled away from Sam, feeling the loss when she released me and settled on her feet again. She looked fucking delicious with her lips all swollen and her eyes half lidded and dazed the fuck out. I rested my forehead against hers, seriously considering ignoring Croy in favor of spending more time with Sam.

“I gotta work,” I murmured, even though I hadn't fully stepped away from her yet. I couldn't. I needed more like I needed a hit. She didn't seem any more eager to let me walk away, her hands fisting my cut, keeping me close.

“We weren't done talking.”

I smirked. “We weren't doin' much talking, honey.” Not that I was complaining. Talking shit out wasn't something I was yearning for. I liked how we handled it just fine.

She rolled her eyes, finally looking a little less lust drunk, which was annoying. “We still have to talk. You kind of glossed over me and Tyson having to stay here.”

Pressing my lips together, I nodded slowly. “Yeah, I guess that’s true. I’ll talk to you about it when I get back. It’s not all bad, I promise. Especially since you’ll be sleeping in my bed tonight.”

“Someone’s presumptuous,” she replied with a smirk. God damn, she couldn’t be more perfect. I pulled her closer, nipping at her lip.

“Honey, I haven’t even gotten started with you. I’m gonna make you scream so loud, the whole MC will hear you.

Maybe it was wishful thinking that I saw her pupils blow out at the thought. Sam didn’t strike me as the type to be into kink, but then again, she didn’t strike me as an electrician either. She was too hot for that.

“Dammit, Clink!”

I smirked. “Gotta go, or I’m gonna get my ass handed to me. Stay inside. I’m tryin’ to keep you safe, and you wandering around is gonna cause trouble for me.”

She put the back of her hand on her forehead, doing a fake swoon. “My hero. Go, before that terrifying man murders you. I’m going to check on Tyson.”

I followed her inside, swatting her ass as she walked away. She flipped me off, but she had a smile on her face as she walked back upstairs. Letting out a breath, I smiled to myself. Damn, she was perfect.

When I walked into Croy’s office, the rest of the officers were already there. I closed the door behind me, my eyebrows drawing together at the dark looks on their faces.

“What’s going on?”

Croy pointed to the chair in front of him, a deep scowl on his face. I sat, apprehensive, my stomach twisting in knots.

“I swear, Croy, I was never gonna take the deal. I—”

He locked eyes with me, leveling me with a glare. “Prove it.”

Confused, I looked around. “What do you mean? How?”

“We need to know where he’s at. So you’re going undercover. Prove that your club means somethin’ to you. Go find out where that bastard is hiding.”

CHAPTER 27

SAM

I don't know what came over me. I went downstairs, fully intending to tell Clink I wasn't going to see him anymore. It was dangerous to trust someone like him, and Tyson was already hurt. But I saw the dejected look on his face, like he was waiting for me to cast him aside, and my arguments died on my tongue. I knew that face. It was one I'd made countless times before, wishing people would forgive me, to believe that I never meant for anything bad to happen, but knowing they wouldn't. I couldn't do that to Clink. He might have a dangerous life, but he didn't do anything on purpose to hurt me or Tyson. And he made me feel safe enough to open up around him. That was rare for me, and I didn't want to discount that.

The make-out session in the backyard wasn't in the plan, either. But he kissed me like he was desperate, like he needed to hear that someone was in his corner, and I kind of fell into it. It wasn't fair that he was such a good kisser. I definitely lost brain function whenever he kissed me.

After checking on Tyson, who was asleep, I made my way back downstairs. I didn't really know what to do with myself. I usually spent my weekends at the community center, keeping busy helping teens who were a lot like I was, suffering and alone, with no one to trust. I wasn't Tyson. I wasn't great with getting them to open up, but I was familiar and they trusted me enough not to judge them to come back and hang out instead of causing trouble on the streets. We provided them a safe space to just be teens, and I brought snacks when I could afford it.

Clink wasn't downstairs that I could see, but Riley, Quinn, and Allie were. Allie was sitting on a stool at the island while Quinn and Riley made lunch. When Riley noticed me hovering by the stairs, she waved me over with a smile.

"Hey. How's my patient doing?"

Sitting next to Allie, I shrugged. "He's okay. He's sleeping right now. Thank you for helping him. I really appreciate what you did."

She offered me a bottle of water. "It's kind of my job. I work at one of the smaller hospitals in the city, but me and Doc are on call for the MC."

My brow furrowed. "Are you called here a lot? Is it that dangerous?"

She pursed her lips, looking considerate. "Not as often as you think. Maybe once every few months we'll get called here for something intense, but it's usually because someone was drunk and stupid, or had an accident on their bike. I don't know how many road rashes I've had to deal with."

"Or cuts from broken bottles," Allie added.

Riley rolled her eyes. "That too. Men are stupid."

We all snickered and some of the awkwardness drifted away. I still didn't know what I was going to do, but that would have to wait until I could talk to Clink again. He said he'd explain why we were being kept here, and I doubted he'd have any more reasons to lie to me. He kind of put it all out there when he told us his story.

"So, is Tyson your dad or something?" Allie asked, stealing a chip off Quinn's plate.

I shook my head. "No. He's a friend."

"Pretty big age gap for just a friend. Is there something going on there?"

When I made a face, she snickered.

"No way. Tyson's like twice my age." I bit my lip, trying to figure out how to explain it. "No, Tyson is... He's like

family, I guess. When my own family kicked me out, he found me living on the streets and took me in. He's like a surrogate parent, a therapist, and a friend, all rolled into one."

Quinn handed me a plate with a sandwich and chips on it, frowning at me. "They kicked you out? Why?"

I wanted to play it off, wave it away and deny them, but Tyson's words flashed through my head. Make more connections. Taking a deep breath, I forced the words past my throat.

"They blame me for my parents dying. My sister especially told the entire church that it was my fault. I think she only meant to kick me out for a night or two, to punish me or whatever. But I went to church, hoping for someplace to stay, and the pastor tried coercing me into having sex with him. When I told people, my sister lost her ever loving shit and told everyone I was a liar and that I probably came on to him. She called me all kinds of names, and refused to let me come home, so I left. Lived a few months on the street until Tyson finally convinced me to come stay with him for a while. We've been friends ever since. There's no romance there. He calls me his family and I feel the same way. His family kicked him out when he was using, so he knew where I was coming from. We get each other."

"Well, it's good that you have someone," Riley replied.

Allie made a face. "Wait. Why do they blame you for your parents' dying?"

My heart ached whenever I talked about it, and I played idly with the food on my plate instead of actually eating it.

"Because it was my fault. Instead of being at home like I was supposed to, I was out with friends, drinking and smoking pot way too young. It didn't mix well, and I had a bad trip and called my parents to come get me. They got killed in a head-on collision on the way. They never would've been out there if it wasn't for me." No matter how many times Tyson told me it wasn't my fault, the guilt was always there. I tried for so long to argue against them, to say I wasn't the cause, but no one

ever believed me. You hear it long enough, you start to believe it.

“Whoever told you that shit was your fault was fucking reaching. You’re not responsible for that,” Clink growled behind me. I spun around, taking in his furious scowl, his fists clenched at his sides. He stalked up to me, wrapping his arms around me before I could blink.

I shook my head, blinking back tears. “I am, though. If I’d gone home like I was supposed to, they wouldn’t have had to come get me. If I wasn’t drinking or smoking way under age, I would’ve been able to get home on my own. It was—”

“A fucking accident,” he snapped. “Shit happens. It’s not like you were hoping for them to get hurt. You called your people when you were on a bad trip. That’s what you’re fucking supposed to do. The rest is out of your control. Don’t put that shit on yourself.”

The girls all nodded like they agreed with him and my chin trembled with the effort to hold back tears. No one ever agreed with me outright. Not my family, not the church, not the therapist I tried to talk to. They all said I was at least partly to blame, because I was the reason my parents were on the road that night. After so long hearing it, I started to believe it myself. Only Tyson ever said I wasn’t. One person wasn’t enough to combat dozens of people saying it was my fault. But now there was an entire group of them telling me I was wrong, that it wasn’t my fault, and I couldn’t cope. Big tears spilled down my cheeks and when Clink pulled me closer, I buried my face against his chest, choking back sobs.

“Who the fuck made the electrician cry?”

“Shut up, Knox. She’s going through something,” Riley snapped. “Where’s Croy? I thought you were in a meeting.”

“Meetings done. He’s in his office. Baby, you make one of those for me?”

I heard Allie scoff. “I didn’t even make mine. Quinn made it for me. Make your own sandwich.”

While they argued with each other, Clink stroked my hair, giving me the time to process. It still felt off, like I couldn't quite believe that people would be on my side, but I wanted to believe it. More than anything, I wanted to.

When Clink finally made me look at him with a knuckle under my chin, I scrubbed my face with my hands to banish the tears away. He didn't look annoyed or weirded out by my crying all over him. He just looked worried.

“You okay, honey?”

Nodding, I did my best to muster up a smile. “I'm okay. Thank you for saying that.”

“It's the fuckin' truth. Anyone who says otherwise is on something.”

When I raised my eyebrow at him, he smirked. “I'm sober, so you know I'm tellin' the truth.”

I huffed out a laugh and didn't argue. I was done fighting with people about it. If this group believed I wasn't at fault, I was going to lean into it and enjoy it as long as possible. Tyson would be proud. I wrapped my arms around Clink's middle, sucking in a shaky breath when he hugged me tightly.

“I need your keys, honey. I'm gonna go with Brewer and pick you up a few things. I might be gone for a while and I wanna make sure you're set up here.”

Frowning, I pulled away enough to look up at him. “Where are you going?”

“Can't tell you that. It's club business.”

My frown deepened, but Riley interrupted before I could question him more. “You'll get used to that. There are some things they can't tell you. It's not because they can't trust you. It's more to keep us safe. If the cops or any rivals come at us asking questions, we don't know anything and we have no reason to lie to them.”

It made sense, but it also made me a little uneasy. That meant Clink was going to do something dangerous or illegal.

Or both. And after everything that's happened, it made me nervous.

Like he could see my anxiety in my expression, he used his knuckle to guide my face back to him again and raised his eyebrows.

“Don't stress out, honey. You've got plenty to do around here to keep you busy while I'm gone. Brewer and Chase are gonna take you to work to pick up the shit you need to start on the wiring. You can do your work and stay out of trouble, and by the time you finish, this bullshit should all be through.”

Riley's indignant noise drew my attention. “Hold on. She gets to leave and work, and I don't? How's that fair?”

“She's gonna be workin' here, baby. It ain't the same and you know it. Stop bitchin'. You got your own shit to do,” Croy drawled as he approached. When Riley spun around, seething at him, he didn't even acknowledge it, pulling her against him and fisting her hair roughly as he dipped his head and kissed her. When he pulled back, she looked a little less defiant, and more like I did when Clink and I were outside. Dazed and a little lust drunk. She blinked a few times, scowling at Croy.

“I don't like it when you do that.”

He smirked. “Liar.”

She pressed her lips together, her eyes narrowed, but she seemed to shock everyone when she shrugged and wrapped her arms around his neck. “What kind of stuff do I need to do?”

A pleased look overtook his face, and he tipped his head towards the stairs. “Let's talk upstairs.”

After she left, I noticed Quinn and Allie's confused looks and frowned. “What is it?”

Even Clink was frowning. “The First Lady never backs down without a fight. And Prez was askin' for it. She should be screaming at him right now.”

“She probably will be screaming in a minute,” Knox snorted.

Allie elbowed him with a scowl. “Shut up. What stuff is Croy going to ask her to do?”

He studied her for a second before raising an eyebrow. “You wanna know, you gotta come upstairs with me.”

Just as defiant as Riley, she crossed her arms. But Quinn was being led away by Reaper and Allie gave in eventually, leaving me and Clink alone. When I turned back to face him, he looked bemused, shaking his head slowly.

“Who knew to get Allie to behave, all she needed was a claim.”

“What is that? The doctor called me your claim before, and I don’t know what that means.”

A slow grin passed over his face, and he drew me in closer. “Nothin’ you need to be worrying about.”

Before I could complain about his non-answer, he swept me into another kiss like the one outside. It was rough and a little desperate, and I couldn’t get enough. One hand fisted my hair, tipping my head back, while the other trailed down my neck, sending a shiver up my spine. I felt his smirk against my lips and, in punishment, I bit his bottom lip hard enough to make him groan before sucking it into my mouth. When he finally pulled away, we were both panting, and he’d dragged me to the edge of the stool so that his erection was pressed up against my center.

“I thought you didn’t have much experience,” he murmured.

I lifted a shoulder. “I read a lot. Sometimes I have nothing better to do.”

He grinned. “Now we really do have to have a conversation. I need to know what else you read about that gets you hot.”

CHAPTER 28

CLINK

After leaving Croy's office, I was in a foul mood. To prove myself to my brotherhood, Croy wanted me to accept Hammer's deal so we could finally get a location on him. While I knew it was a smart plan, I still hated it. Even pretending at betraying my brothers ate at my insides. And Croy wasn't giving me any option. I screwed up by not coming clean about my drug use earlier and finding myself on Hammer's radar. I needed to prove my loyalty.

The only consolation I had was that Croy agreed to put Sam on lock down. Since her work was here anyway, he didn't see the problem with keeping her here, even though I hadn't officially claimed her yet. And Tyson would stay here too, mostly because Hammer already tried to kill him once, and we didn't want him being used against me.

Hammer told me to meet him at the club if I accepted. I knew there'd be some hoops to jump through, and Croy already told me to sell the lie if I had to. I wasn't looking forward to telling Sam that I'd probably be doing drugs during this little operation. She needed me to be honest with her, though. Her family had already betrayed her. I wasn't going to screw with her trust by hiding it from her.

I'd sought her out to talk to her when I overheard her sharing her story with the girls. I'd heard parts of it before, but it still pissed me off when she said she felt like it was her fault her folks died. Who the hell blames a teen for their parents getting into an accident coming to pick them up? We do some messed up shit around here, but we're not that messed up.

After spending time with her, I was feeling a lot better. She soothed something in me and I wanted to take her upstairs and see just how relaxed I could get, but my room was a fucking stye right about now and I only had so long before I needed to go to the club to meet Hammer.

Putting out my hand, I raised my eyebrows. “Keys. And I’m takin’ your truck so we can do it all in one trip.”

She scowled at me, crossing her arms. “Can I trust you with my truck? You’re already reckless enough to ride around without a helmet.”

“I got us here, didn’t I?” I pointed out.

She rolled her eyes. “Doesn’t count. It was an emergency, and I wasn’t watching your driving. Why can’t I come with? It’s my stuff.”

Letting out a heavy sigh, I pulled her closer, resting my chin on top of her head. “Because. The asshole who hurt Tyson wouldn’t hesitate to do the same to you. Or worse. He threatened to share Riley with his entire crew when he tried to take her last time. I don’t want you anywhere near the guy. He’s dangerous, honey, and I need to keep you safe.”

After so long dealing with women like Riley and Allie, I expected a fight. I was bracing myself for it, ready to argue with her, so it surprised me when she relented so quickly.

“Alright. I trust you. Just don’t hurt my truck. It’s my baby. It took me months to get enough money for it.”

Leaning back to look her in the face, I grinned. “Deal. Keys?”

“You left them on the dresser in your room. I saw them when I changed.”

Right. I forgot about that. I was the last person to drive it. And then I went ahead and trashed my room.

Sam saw me grimace and tipped her head with a frown. “What is it?”

I ran my fingers through my hair, shooting her a pained expression. “I may have lost my temper earlier and trashed my

room. Gotta minute to help me find ‘em?”

After Sam helped me clean up the mess I made, I went to the city with Brewer and Reaper to pick up Sam’s stuff. Brewer drove Sam’s truck, since I didn’t want to drive back and forth after we were through. After packing up her stuff and stopping at Tyson’s place for some shit for him, Brewer went back while Reaper stayed behind. He was glaring at the world around him, his posture tight. Out of everyone, he seemed the most unhappy about this plan, and even argued against it to Croy.

“I’m not gonna betray the crew, Reap.”

His eyes snapped to mine, and he regarded me for a second before shaking his head. “Didn’t think you would. I just don’t like this. You’re supposed to be getting sober. I’ve got no doubt that Hammer will make you prove yourself to him.”

He wasn’t the only one who thought that, but I lifted a shoulder. “I’ll do what I have to. We need to end this asshole, and we don’t want to play his game again. Not after what happened last time. I’ll go in, get him to trust me, and find his little hole so we can finally deal with him.”

He still didn’t look happy about it, but I wasn’t really expecting him to be down for it. Reaper was like me. Our brotherhood came first, no matter what, and if our roles were switched, I would’ve been pissed too. I squeezed his shoulder, leveling him with a look.

“I’ve got this. Trust me.”

He shot me a dirty look. “Last time you said that, you were trying to get rid of me to go get high.”

I winced. “Shut up. I’m not doing this so I can get high. I’m trying to make up for the shit I did. So let me do this and prove myself.”

Convincing Reaper everything was going to be fine was impossible, but eventually he let it go and headed back to the

MC. Meanwhile, the sun was going down and the club would open soon. I grabbed some fast food to kill time and headed to the club a little after it opened.

Hammer wasn't there when I arrived, which wasn't a surprise. It was still early. I ordered a beer and commandeered a table closer to the back to wait, playing on my phone until he decided to show up. Texting Sam kept me sane, and I smiled at the picture she sent me of her and Tyson playing cards with the old ladies. I was about to get up and get a fresh drink when Hammer joined me, a smug look on his face.

“Surprised to see you here.”

I raised an eyebrow at him. “You invited me.”

A slow smirk crossed his face. “True. Kinda pegged you as a little bitch, though. You've always been on your knees for Croy.”

Making an irritated sound, I sat back with my arms crossed. “You invite me here to insult me or what?”

He chuckled, relaxing into his seat. A cocktail waitress appeared with two whiskeys, and Hammer slapped her ass as she walked away. She didn't look happy about it, but she kept her mouth shut, storming back to the bar. When Hammer handed me a glass, I lifted it in thanks before tossing it back. He was trying to butter me up because it was nice whiskey, but each friendly gesture just made my hackles go up more. I kept waiting for him to lay it all out there, but he seemed content to drag it out.

“So, how's the sobriety going? You like my little gift?” he drawled, a shit-eating grin on his face.

My lip twitched against a scowl, but I played it off by making an irritated sound. “Not really. Croy's being a huge dick about it and now wants me to find a new sponsor. You keep attackin' 'em and you're just causing more trouble for me.”

He snorted, taking a drink and regarding me before shrugging. “I was doin' you a favor. Asshole was doin' that

kumbaya shit, trying to convince me to give up the trade. Squealed like a woman when I stuck him, too.”

I forced out a laugh, even as my leg started to bounce. I thought this would be easier. I was playing a game and doing a damn good job of it, since Hammer seemed none the wiser. But listening to him boast about hurting Sam’s friend pissed me off, and I wanted to shoot him in the face right then and be done with it.

Hammer’s gaze dropped to my leg, and I stretched out to hide my fidgeting. He raised an eyebrow, and I held my breath, thinking I’d given myself away already, but instead of losing it, he smirked.

“Looks like you could use a hit.”

I knew it was coming. I was expecting it, but it still smacked me in the gut. When I was with Sam, I could distract myself for the most part. Being offered a hit, knowing that I wasn’t going to get kicked out of my crew if I said yes, was impossible to resist. Hammer tossed me a baggie and, after testing it, I laid out a line and took a hit. All my anxiety disappeared and an easy grin passed over my face as it settled into my system.

“Fuck. That’s good.”

Hammer chuckled. “No shit. It’s ours. Got my hands on some in California.”

“So I heard. What do you need from me?”

The drugs took away my filter, left me feeling confident and giddy, and fucking horny. I wanted to get this meeting done so I could go find Sam before it wore off. One night with her wasn’t enough, and several times already today she’d teased me. I’d gotten a taste of her mouth, and now I wanted to feel those lips wrapped around my cock.

Hammer snapped his fingers in front of my face, drawing my attention. I couldn’t help the stupid grin I flashed at him, my energy off the charts.

“What?”

He laughed, shaking his head. “Been a while since you got the good stuff, hasn’t it?”

I nodded, my eyes darting around the room. Maybe I should text Sam and invite her out. She seemed into it when we were fooling around outside. I could convince her to join me in the bathroom.

“Been a while, in general. A week, I guess. Couldn’t enjoy the stuff from this morning. Stupid fuckin’ sponsor got in the way.”

Hammer looked amused, watching me turn into a bundle of drugged out energy. It hit harder after a week without. I probably should’ve done a line at home so I wasn’t tweaking so hard during this meeting, but I couldn’t find it in me to care. Especially when Hammer offered me more.

After I’d done another line, I pulled out my phone to text Sam. Hammer snatched it from me, his amused look finally disappearing.

“Who the fuck do you think you’re calling?”

I didn’t even hesitate, which was fucking stupid, and I’d regret opening my big mouth later. “My girl. She’s hot as fuck. Wanna make sure she waits up for me. She’s a screamer.”

That made him bark out a laugh, shaking his head. “Man, stop thinkin’ with your fuckin’ dick for a minute. We’re in a meeting.” He tossed me back my phone, and I reluctantly shoved it into my pocket. I’d message Sam later. Hopefully, she’d still be up.

When a big dude in a Border Reavers cut walked up to us, my first instinct was to pull out my piece. I reached for it, but he didn’t look in my direction, leaning to whisper something to Hammer. Hammer’s eyes narrowed and shifted to me as he waved the guy off.

“My friend tells me you were escorted into the city. You go cryin’ to daddy?”

Scrunching up my face, I shot him a confused look. “Huh?”

He pulled out his piece, holding it low so the crowd around us didn't notice. If I wasn't high off my ass, I might've been apprehensive. But as messed up as I was, I could only raise my eyebrows at him.

“Thought you needed my help.”

He made an irritated noise. “Not if you're gonna stab me in the back. Why was Reaper in the city, Clink?”

I rolled my eyes, spinning a lie effortlessly. “Lookin' for you. A prospect saw you and Croy's been sending out sweeps like last time. I went with him to throw him off and told him I'd do another sweep so he could go home to his ol' lady. Man's fuckin' pussy whipped.”

Hammer looked suspicious, but I felt like I could conquer the world. I laced my fingers behind my head, leaning back, my expression relaxed. I didn't even feel like I was acting at this point. I was just enjoying myself.

“Prove it. Tell me what happened to my man inside.”

My brow furrowed. “Who? Wrecker? Fucker got handsy with Reaper's girl and got a bullet between the eyes for it. Why?”

He watched me, squinting his eyes like he was trying to read my thoughts. That'd be a neat trick, but I doubted it. I could barely keep up with my thoughts right now. Most of them seemed stuck on Sam, though. I was rocking a semi just thinking about her and knowing she was home waiting for me was a novelty.

“You gonna spit out what you want with me? I gotta better things to be doing right now.” Like Sam's fine ass.

He made a face. “You fuckin' a dude now?”

I hadn't realized I'd said that last part out loud. I was really digging myself into a hole right now and I needed to shut the hell up about her. Hammer didn't need details on my girl.

“Nah. Girl Sam. Surprised the hell out of me too when she showed up.”

He grunted, no longer interested in the conversation, which was good. He pulled out a cigarette, lighting up in the middle of the club. My knee started bouncing again, this time because I wanted to get back to Sam, but Hammer waved my hand at the baggie on the table between us.

“Take another hit and let’s get down to business.”

Like I’d say no to that. I took the hit and shuddered when tingles spread through my body. No better feeling than the high.

“So what’s the plan? You got a clubhouse? ‘Cause I need a bigger room. I’m not sharing with no one.”

The amused look came back, and he leaned back in his seat again. “We’ll get to that later. For now, I want you to stay with the Devil’s Disciples.”

My brow furrowed, and I leaned forward, tipping my head. “Thought you wanted me to join you? Croy’s gonna make me get a sponsor if I stick around there.”

He waved me off. “I’ll send you back with some. I can’t just have you join. You need to prove yourself. So go back to the MC and get me what I need. I want another batch of the product. Full pallet this time. I’ve got a buyer who’s hungry for more.”

I whistled low. “Full pallet, huh? Big ask. Big ask. What do I get in return?”

He shook his head with a grin. “Maybe Croy’s got a point about not letting people get high when there’s work to be done. I already told you that. You get to join me. Then you’ll get a cut of the product on top of your pay.”

“And a bigger room.” I raised my eyebrows significantly.

Hammer laughed. “You motherfucker. Fine. A bigger room. Just get me what I need.”

Pursing my lips, I nodded. “Okay, cool. Gimme a day or two. I need to move some shit around to hide a double order. Wrecker was fucking stupid, thinking he could do it without me. No one moves money better than me.”

A smug look took over Hammer's face as he nodded in agreement. "I told him to get you involved, but he said you were too loyal. Looks like he was wrong."

Instead of responding, I stood and stretched, jerking my thumb towards the door. "I'm out. Gotta get back. Maybe if Sam's asleep, I can wake her up the fun way. You got my number?"

His face fell, and he looked annoyed, snapping his fingers again to catch my attention. "Can I trust you to get this done? You're not gonna start squealin', are ya?"

I laughed, shoving my hands in my pockets. "No fuckin' way. I'm no snitch. Lemme get some action and then I'll get right on it. You'll have my cut ready when I come back, right?"

He rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah. I'll have your cut. Fuck off already."

With a mock salute, I sauntered off, eager to get home to Sam. This went better than I thought, and now I had the high to carry me all the way home. I barely got a taste of her before. I was gonna spend the rest of the night making Sam scream.

CHAPTER 29

CLINK

I was still riding high when I pulled up to the clubhouse. Eager to get to Sam. I barely remembered to put my bike on the stand before I was jogging around front. But before I could get inside, Reaper and Croy waylaid me. I beamed at them, lacing my fingers behind my head with a cocky grin.

“I’m in.”

Reaper scowled. “And high off your ass.”

I shrugged, but I couldn’t stop smiling. When it came to jobs, this was one of the better ones. Getting high with a purpose was fun.

Croy made an irritated noise. “My office. Now. I wanna know what happened.”

Side stepping the demon duo, I jerked my thumb towards the clubhouse. “I’m just gonna check on Sam real quick and—”

Reaper grabbed me by the back of my cut before I could walk away. “Like hell you are. You’re not going anywhere near her while you’re high. Sleep that shit off first.”

Dropping my weight, I slipped out of my cut and shirt, cackling when I got free. He was standing there holding my clothes like an idiot, and I dodged past him to get inside. I made it about two feet in the door before someone tapped me on the shoulder. I frowned, looking around, and Croy clocked me across the jaw, sending me sprawling. That fucker can punch and it left me disoriented on the floor until he and Reaper hauled me up, dragging me to his office.

Croy dragged a chair away from his desk, putting it up against the wall farthest from the door and Reaper forced me into it, throwing my shirt and cut in my face. Together, they stood over me, keeping me from leaving.

“Tell me what happened with Hammer.”

I scowled. They were ruining my high. “I said I’m in. Why you gotta be such an asshole? I just wanna see my girl and—”

“No. You don’t go near her while you’re high,” Reaper snapped. “Answer the damn question.”

With a frustrated growl, I sat back, crossing my arms over my chest. “This is bullshit. I did exactly what you said to do, and he fell for it hook, line, and sinker. All I gotta do is get him some product, and I’ll know where he’s hiding. I haven’t felt this good in ages, and I wanna see Sam.”

Croy rolled his eyes. “This is why I don’t let you idiots partake. Can’t get shit done without you bitchin’ at me for pussy or a hit. Fuckin’ focus, asshole. How much?”

“A pallet. I got two days. He said he’d have my cut when I’m through.”

Reaper smacked the back of my head, and I flinched and shrank away from him with a scowl. “What the fuck? What was that for?”

“You’re not getting a cut, you idiot. You’re doing the job so we can figure out where he’s hiding. Remember? You’re not playing for both sides.”

Rolling my eyes, I sat up. “I fuckin’ know that, man. You couldn’t pay me to leave my brotherhood. Or did my stint in the slammer not prove that shit?”

My high was wearing off and my knee started bouncing again. Assholes were ruining a good time.

Croy looked at Reaper, ignoring me completely, shoving me back in my seat when I tried to leave. “How are we gonna make it look like he snuck it out?”

Reaper scowled, crossing his arms. “No fucking clue. I don’t sit around planning ways to steal our product.”

“No. But you know who does? Our resident hacker. He might have a plan in mind,” I pointed out. Tapping the side of my head, I raised my eyebrows at the two of them. “See? Drugs help me think. You should consider getting rid of that stupid rule.”

Croy made an irritated sound. “Reaper, knock his ass out. I’m done dealing with him. We’ll tell him the plan when he’s not tweaking off his ass.”

I stupidly thought he was joking, so I didn’t see it coming when Reaper’s fist came flying. He clocked me in the jaw so hard the chair tipped over and I was out of it before I felt myself hit the ground.

My brain was sluggish when I woke up. It was always like this waking up after a high. Everything felt slow, dull, and lifeless. It’d take a few days being clean before I started to feel normal again. I groaned, my whole body aching, and my jaw throbbed something fierce from where Reaper hit me. Fucking asshole.

“You should’ve called me.”

Tyson’s voice was somewhere behind me, but I didn’t want to move. I wanted to go back to sleep until I felt human again. That, or have another hit.

“Sam’s going to be disappointed when she finds out.”

That snapped me awake, and I opened my eyes to look around. I was on the floor of the guest room. Someone had tossed a pillow and blanket down there for me, but it explained some of the body aches. Sleeping on the floor was doing me no favors while coming down from a high. I rolled onto my back, rubbing my jaw to ease the ache.

Tyson was sitting up in bed, watching me with a disappointed frown. I scowled, pushing myself up.

“It’s not what it looks like. I had to.”

He didn't look convinced, and it was more than a little annoying that I cared. But I didn't want him to go squealing to Sam. Reaper was right to keep me from her last night. I didn't want to bring her into my mess. I never got around to telling her what I'd need to do for the job, and I didn't want to break her trust.

"I mean it. I needed to get close to someone for a job."

He sighed, twisting to sit on the edge of the bed, and rested his elbows on his knees, leveling me with a look. "If you're serious about your sobriety, Clink, then this might not be the place for you. People who cared about you getting clean wouldn't ask you to do jobs like that."

Not this shit again. "Look, I know you're all about that shit, but you don't understand the half of it. And it's fuckin' club business, so butt out."

All the times Tyson has talked to me before, he looked patient and he didn't judge. But for the first time, he seemed annoyed, a dark look overtaking his face. "The shit you get up to may not be my business, but Sam is. She's a good person, and I'm not going to stand around and watch her waste her life on a loser who can't stay clean. She deserves better than someone who's gonna leave her."

Now I knew this asshole had a death wish. I pushed to my feet, glaring down at him. "I'm not goin' anywhere, so back the fuck off. She's mine."

He stood, looking less like a patient sponsor and more like a pissed off boyfriend. Sam said there wasn't anything between them, but that might've just been on her end. Looked to me like Tyson was taking exception to me claiming Sam, and I was starting to think it wasn't just about the drugs.

"You say that she's yours, but who do you think she'll listen to if I say you're no good for her? We've been through it together, and she trusts my judgment. And I'm not going to pretend you're something you're not and watch her suffer for it."

I wasn't the biggest guy on the crew, nowhere near as big as Croy, but that didn't make me weak. I stepped up to Tyson, gripping his shirt in my fist, and let him see the truth in my eyes. If he kept pushing, I'd end him and call it an accident. Sam would be none the wiser.

A flash of her face crossed my mind, making me hesitate. She might not know who did it, but she'd be fucking devastated. She cared about Tyson, and she told me losing him would wreck her. As much as I hated him, I couldn't take away what little support system she had left. With a frustrated snarl, I shoved him and stalked away. I paced the small space, gripping my hair roughly. I wanted to walk away, but I didn't trust Tyson not to tell Sam to ditch me the minute I did. And I didn't know what to say to him to get him to back off.

Spinning back to face him, I pointed at him roughly. "Look, I don't give a shit what you think, and I could take or leave your relationship with Sam. But I'm not gonna upset her by kicking your ass. So do me a favor and stay the fuck outta my way." Grumbling, I headed for the door. "Don't know who decided it was a good idea to shove me in here with you. It's fuckin' club business."

"You did."

Glancing over my shoulder, I shot him a confused look. "What?"

He raised his eyebrows at me. "You did. You showed up in the middle of the night asking to crash on the floor. You said you didn't want Sam to know."

I didn't remember doing that, but it made sense. I told Sam to stay in my room, and after the initial high had passed, I would've been clear enough not to want her to see me like that. The high was fun, but it wasn't worth losing her over.

"Whatever."

Tyson shook his head. "No. Not whatever. You want me on your side, you tell me why breaking your sobriety was necessary."

Grinding my teeth, I glowered at him. “That’s club business.”

He didn’t say anything, just raised an eyebrow at me. He wasn’t going to back down about this. There was even the potential that he’d start squealing to the pigs if he got it in his head that we were dangerous. We were, but we hid it well enough. The pigs would take a witness statement as fact and cause trouble for us.

“Fine, asshole. But you tell anyone and I’ll end you.” I waited for him to acknowledge me with a nod before continuing. “The guy who stuck you is an old rival. He’s caused a lot of trouble. Stealing, poaching buyers, the works. He’s attacked a few of the girls, too. Last time he was in town, one of our own got killed. When you saw us talkin’ at the diner, he wasn’t just offering me drugs. He was trying to get me to switch sides and join his crew. He’s an idiot. Everyone knows my brotherhood is my family, but we decided to lean into it. The asshole is good at hiding, and we need to figure out where the hell he is. So Prez decided I should take his offer and get his location so we can finally handle him. I’m doin’ it to keep Sam safe. If he finds out about her, he’ll hurt her.”

“Shit.” Tyson sat heavily on the bed, rubbing his face roughly. “She wasn’t wrong when she said she trusted the wrong guy.”

That hurt, especially since Sam was the one who said it, but I didn’t let it show. She wasn’t wrong. If she’d steered clear of me, she wouldn’t be on Hammer’s radar for being connected to me.

“I’m gonna watch out for her, Tyson. Even if I gotta get high to do it. Once we find this fucker, he’ll stop being a problem for her and she’ll be safe.”

An annoyed look crossed his face. “Sure, because you’d say no to getting high. Did you volunteer for this job?”

I rolled my eyes. “No, asshole. I didn’t. He approached me, remember? I don’t know who told him I was using, or that I was trying to get clean. I’ll figure that out later. Right now, I need to know you’ll keep Sam out of this.”

He looked pensive, his eyes moving back and forth. I didn't want to have to kill him, but if he threatened my crew and what I had with Sam, I wouldn't hold back. I wasn't going to let him cause problems for us.

With a frustrated sigh, he stood and glared at me. "Fine. I'll accept that you did it for a good reason. But if you want me to have your back with Sam, you need to promise me that after you deal with this guy, you'll get help. I know a good outpatient program. You said you had to do it for the job. Once he's gone, that excuse is out. You get clean and you treat her right. She's lost enough people in her life. I'm not letting her get close to you just so you can overdose and force her to lose more."

After this job was done, I had to get clean anyway. Croy wasn't going to let me keep using. And since everyone already knew, I didn't have to lie about going to get help. Didn't mean I liked him pushing me around. With an irritated glare, I thrust my hand out at him.

"Deal."

CHAPTER 30

SAM

Clink warned me he'd be gone for a while, so I wasn't expecting him to join me in bed. That didn't mean I wasn't disappointed. He was flirtatious and his kisses made my knees weak, and I wanted more. I was hoping he'd at least be back to sleep at night between whatever he was doing for work. I tried not to think about that part. I knew it wasn't legal, but Clink was sweeter to me than any of my family ever was, and they were the epitome of church going good guys. Being a criminal didn't automatically make him a bad person.

Clink said that a few people would go with me to work to pick up the stuff I needed for the job. I'd given Russel an order list and it should be there by now. I got dressed, figuring I'd check in on Tyson before heading downstairs to see when I'd be able to head into work. I knocked on Tyson's door, pushing inside and coming up short when I saw Clink standing there, shaking Tyson's hand.

“Oh. I thought you were working?”

There had been a dark look on his face when I came in, but Clink wiped it away and smiled at me, releasing Tyson and reaching for me instead.

“Job got pushed a few days. You look hot.”

Scrunching my nose, I glanced down at my outfit. I was wearing jeans and a company long sleeved polo. It wasn't a sexy outfit in the slightest.

“Uh... Thanks? Why are you in here?”

He raised an eyebrow, and I could tell he was going to say something cocky and probably stupid, but Tyson interrupted him before he had a chance.

“He had a slip. Came to see me and I convinced him to crash on the floor.”

Clink’s eyes bugged out, and he spun around with a snarl. “What the fuck? Why would you—”

Tyson shot him a dirty look. “Because you said you didn’t want to lie to her. She knows users have slips, she’s been volunteering with me for years. You were smart to come to me instead of trying to stay with her. She knows that.”

True. And while it sucked that Clink had a relapse, it wasn’t something I wasn’t expecting. Getting sober was hard, and relapses happened. Especially in the first few months.

“He’s right, Clink. I’m not mad at you. You came to Tyson, and that’s a step in the right direction.” I stepped closer, putting my hand on his chest. He still looked pissed that Tyson told me, but there was a layer of embarrassment underneath it he couldn’t quite hide when he was so angry. I tipped my head to grab his attention. “Thank you for thinking about me and staying in here to keep me safe. You can tell me if you’re worried, though. I could’ve sat up with you until you fell asleep.”

Clink’s face softened, and he drew me closer, resting his hands on the sides of my neck and stroking my chin with his thumbs. “You’re awesome, you know that?”

“Remember that when I’m refusing to let you go get another fix. You have to start from scratch again, and it’s going to suck.”

He snorted. “You’re telling me.”

“Did you bring any home with you?” Tyson interrupted.

Clink frowned, patting his pockets. “I, uh... I think I gave it to Reaper. Maybe. I don’t remember. He knocked me out when I wouldn’t shut up.”

I covered my mouth to muffle my snicker, but since I was so close to Clink, he heard it anyway. He gave me a mock glare, pulling me up against him.

“My pain funny to you? You should kiss it better.”

I rolled my eyes. “Not in front of Tyson. Besides, I need to get to work. You said Brewer and Chase were going to come with me?”

He nodded. “Yeah, but I’ll go. It’ll be a nice distraction.”

That didn’t sound like a bad idea. Keeping him distracted was key in the first few days. When I glanced at Tyson, he nodded once. He thought it was a good idea, too. “I’ll come too.”

Making a face, I shook my head. “No way. You’re supposed to be resting.”

“I’m fine, Sam. I’m not going to be doing any heavy lifting. I’ll just be around for Clink, since he’s no doubt gonna have urges. I’ll watch him so you can focus on picking up what you need for the job.”

Clink didn’t look happy about that, but Tyson had a point. I didn’t want to forget anything. It was a long drive to go back and forth, and with the extra security, it’d be a pain in the butt to get another escort for something simple that I forgot. Still...

“Are you sure? You should really be resting...” I scrutinized him for any signs that he might be in pain. He gave me an exasperated look, and I threw up my hands. “Shut up!”

With a chuckle, he jerked his chin towards the door. “Come on, Sammy. Let’s get going. I’ll make sure to sit down when I need to. A walk is healthy anyway.”

Sighing heavily, I relented. “Fine. But no helping. You’re coming with to help Clink, not me.”

We all trooped out together, with Tyson riding in the truck with me, and the other three following on their bikes. I was apprehensive at first, but the trip was uneventful and we showed up at my work with no issues. I pulled around back so I could load up my truck and smiled when I saw Russel

waiting for me. He smiled back, but his face fell when the guys showed up behind me, and apprehension took over.

“Sammy? Everything alright?”

I bobbed my head, waving my hand at the guys. “They’re here to help. Did you get the stuff I needed for the job?”

He still looked uneasy. Clink loped up to us, flashing Russel one of his mischievous grins. “Sup, man?”

“Uh... Hi. Yeah, I got your request. Most of the stuff we had already, and the rest arrived this morning.” Russel’s eyes darted between me and Clink, who clapped his shoulder with a laugh.

“Relax, man. We’re not gonna hurt you. We’re here to help Sammy. No woman should be doin’ the heavy lifting.”

I rolled my eyes and elbowed him hard enough to make him grunt, but he kept grinning like an idiot, and it was hard to hide my smile.

“You’re really annoying. I’ve been working by myself for years. I don’t need your help.”

He tossed his arm around my shoulders, dragging me against him. “That right? You’re too badass to accept our help?”

His playfulness seemed to settle Russel a little, and he smirked. “She wouldn’t even let me help her while she was still in training. She’d demand I let her try on her own before I could step in and give her a hand. She’s a stubborn one.”

I scowled, crossing my arms. “I don’t need help.”

“You’re getting it anyway, so stop bitchin’ and put us to work. We gotta get back,” Brewer grumbled behind us. When I lifted my middle finger to him, he smirked, clearly not as grouchy as he sounded.

Russel shook his head. “And here I was, worried about you being around them. You got ‘em all on a leash or somethin’?”

Brewer and Chase made sounds of protest, but Clink leaned into me, that grin still spread across his face. “Nah. Just

me. The rest of ‘em know not to touch what’s mine.”

Russel’s eyebrows jumped up, but I was too busy blushing. I’d never had anyone outwardly claim me like that, and I was a cross between embarrassed and elated. I liked that he wasn’t embarrassed to be seen with me like my family probably would be.

While the guys loaded up everything I needed into the back of my truck, I went over the list one more time with Russel. He grabbed a few things that I wasn’t sure I needed, but other than that, I felt like I was pretty set on supplies.

“You sure you don’t need help?”

I waved him off. “I’ve done wire changes before. This is a bigger job, but I can handle it.”

He sighed, leaning against the front of my truck. “Of course you can. I trust you. I still think you’ll need help though and—”

“Don’t worry about that. We’ve got guys who will help her out. She won’t be doin’ it alone,” Brewer commented as he loaded up the last box of wires.

Russel looked surprised, his eyes wide. “Oh? You got qualified people?”

Brewer snorted. “No. But we got plenty of idle hands whose jobs are to follow directions. She’ll be fine. Let’s get going. I’ve got shit to do.”

Nodding, I headed to the driver’s side of my truck. Tyson kept his promise and relaxed in the truck while we loaded up, and he was half asleep when I joined him. Clink didn’t stray far from my side, so Tyson didn’t have any reason to worry. Russel followed me, leaning on my open window with a frown.

“Alright. Remember to make sure the power’s out and that they don’t do any stupid shit like use their teeth to strip wires. Rookies are all the same, too eager to get shit done to do it right the first time.”

When I raised an eyebrow, he rolled his eyes. “Remind me to tell you about Angelo’s first week. Call me if you need anything, or you wanna talk through any complicated rewiring, yeah?”

“Yep. I’ll call. See you later, Russel.”

He patted my door and waved me off and I wiggled my fingers at him as I pulled out of the lot.

Since the ride in was so easy, I figured the same would happen on the way back. I still drove cautiously. Tyson looked uncomfortable, and I didn’t want to hit any bumps and put him through more pain. We were just hitting the long stretch of road between the city and the town where the MC was when someone pulled out in front of me on a large motorcycle. I slammed on my breaks, sucking in a sharp breath, and I heard Tyson grunt as we both got choked by the seatbelts. Luckily, we hadn’t picked up speed yet, so I didn’t hit anyone, but it was a close call.

When I locked eyes on the guy who’d pulled out in front of me, a slow smirk crossed his face. The guys, who were behind me, started shouting at the man and he flashed me a dangerous grin before taking off, heading in the opposite direction. The look he gave me felt almost ominous, and I shivered and swallowed hard.

“You okay?”

Tyson gripped my shoulder for a second. I wasn’t sure he saw what I did, but I didn’t want to stress him out. I shook off the unsettled feeling and forced a small smile.

“Yeah. That was close.”

He looked disgruntled, watching as two of the guys split off to follow whoever had pulled in front of me. “Let’s get moving before someone else stupid cuts you off.”

CHAPTER 31

SAM

Clink was avoiding me. Ever since that guy cut me off on the road, he's been keeping his distance from me. He followed us back to the MC and introduced me to a few of the guys who would be helping me, then he took off. Since then, he was barely around and he wouldn't look in my direction whenever he was back. It hurt my feelings, and I threw myself into my work to stop myself from thinking about it.

“Yo! Electrician!”

I rolled my eyes. Some of the guys were polite enough, but a few of them avoided saying my name and called me electrician instead. It was annoying, and I refused to answer them after the first few times I'd told them to use my name.

“Can she hear me up there?”

“Who knows? Go up there and ask her yourself.”

“Fuck that. It's hot as fuck up there.”

I didn't know who was talking, nor did I care. I was in a crawl space between the top floor and the roof, feeding some wires through to the main floor. Drop ceilings were convenient for wiring, but lacked decent ventilation, so yeah, it was hot.

“What the fuck are you two idiots doing? Don't you have shit you're supposed to be doing right now?”

That voice I recognized. Chase was nice. He was the main person to help me, ordering around the prospects to give me a hand, and helping me guide wires between rooms. I'd be happy about his help if he wasn't doing the job Clink said he'd do. I was getting resentful.

“Hey, Sam?”

Without moving from my spot, I growled at him. “What?”

I heard noise from him climbing the ladder before he poked his head into the crawlspace. “Holy shit, it’s hot up here. How can you stand it?”

“You get used to it. Did you need something?”

“Yeah. Think we’ll be able to turn the power on? We’re throwing a party tonight and we need to get set up.”

Looking over my shoulder at him, I frowned. “A party? It’s Wednesday.”

He flashed me a grin. “Yeah, we don’t really give a shit. We just wanna have some fun. So, power?”

“Should be fine. Let me just finish up a few things.” I turned the power back on after I was done every evening anyway. But since they probably had to set things up for their party, I finished early so that they could have the power back on.

I was just climbing back down the ladder when Riley came down the hallway. She waved at me, coming to join me as I brushed myself off. A few prospects were already waiting to move the ladder and my tools out of the way for the night. I’d complain if they didn’t put everything back in the mornings.

“Hey! Did you hear about the party?”

Nodding, I brushed the dust off my jeans. “Yeah, I’ll turn the power back on. Just give me a minute.”

“No rush. I was just asking because I was wondering if you wanted to hang out. You’ve been working like crazy. You deserve a break.”

I bit my lip, and my gaze dragged towards the stairs. “Is Clink going to be there?”

Riley’s eyebrows drew down. “Um... probably. Why?”

Despite my attempt to mask it, Riley must’ve seen the dejected look on my face. She looped her arm through mine, tugging me towards my room. “Come on. We’ll talk.”

I let her lead me away, mostly because I was lonely. Tyson was a great friend, but I didn't really feel comfortable talking about boy problems with him. He already seemed guarded here. He'd also been quiet since the near miss on the road. The only thing he'd been doing outside of working on my laptop was making phone calls to the people he sponsors to check in on them. I didn't want to upset him. A small part of me hoped Riley had some insight on what I did to upset Clink enough to drive him away, but I also didn't want to know. What if he just didn't like me anymore?

The room was empty when we went in, like usual. Clink said he wanted me to stay with him, but he was never here, so it didn't feel like I was. Other than his clothes in the drawers, there was no sign of him.

Riley sat on the bed, pulling me with her, and raised her eyebrows. "Okay. Spill. What's got you in a funk?"

I dropped my gaze to my hands, fidgeting. "I don't know."

It was a lie, and she didn't fall for it. She put her hand on my shoulder, tipping her head to catch my eyeline. "You can talk to me, Sam. I know these guys can get obnoxious, but they're not all bad. Did someone say something to you or—"

When I shook my head, she frowned. "Then what's wrong? You look really unhappy."

Heaving out a sigh, I lifted my shoulders helplessly. "Clink's been avoiding me. I don't know what I did, and I haven't really dated in years, so I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do about it. I thought about apologizing, but I don't think I should apologize for something when I don't know what I'm apologizing for. And he doesn't stay in the same room as me long enough for me to ask."

The confusion on her face only grew the longer I spoke. When I finished, she pulled out her phone, sending out a text message. She noticed me frowning at her and shrugged.

"Playing games is stupid. He needs to be a man and tell you what's bugging him. Just give it a minute. I'm pretty sure he was outside."

My mouth fell open. I didn't want her to force him to talk to me. That wasn't going to help. If he was avoiding me like this, he probably didn't want to see me. Forcing him would only make things worse.

“Riley, I don't think—”

The door flew open and Clink rushed in, his eyes wild as he took in the room. He was breathing heavily, like he ran here, and he looked freaked out. He stepped up to me, looking me over, before shooting Riley a confused look.

“What happened? You said she was hurt.”

Riley nodded. “I did. You're hurting her feelings by ignoring her. Is there a reason you're avoiding her?”

“You told him I was hurt?” I demanded.

She lifted a shoulder again, not even a little apologetic for scaring the hell out of Clink, or lying to him. Even when he started seething, she just looked bored, lifting her eyebrow with an expectant look.

Clink scowled at her. “That's fucked up. I thought she was bleeding or something. Want me to do that to you? Tell you Croy was hurt on a job so you can show up when I want you to?”

Her look was droll, and she pushed to her feet. “Try it and I'll tell Croy you're purposely trying to upset me. I wonder how he'd feel about it.”

Clink made an irritated noise, glaring at her. “Go away, Riley.”

“Only if she wants me to.” She looked at me, her face softening a little. “Do you want me to stay?”

Biting my lip, I glanced at Clink and shook my head. It wasn't like I was afraid of him or anything. The only reason I'd want her to stay was if he decided not to talk to me once she left. But if he did that, I wasn't going to chase him, either. I'd move my stuff into Tyson's room and sleep on the floor until we could go back home before I went begging for Clink's attention.

Riley patted my shoulder before she left the room, shouting over her shoulder that she'd see me downstairs for the party. My eyes dropped again to my hands, waiting for Clink to leave, but he just sat beside me, a heavy sigh escaping him.

"I'm sorry."

"What for?"

His knuckle went under my chin, guiding my face up off my hands and back to him. A pained expression passed over his face. "You're right. I was avoiding you. After Hammer saw you..." He grimaced. "I don't like you being on his radar. I thought it was better if I kept my distance."

"That was Hammer? He doesn't live here though... Does he?"

"Nah. He wouldn't set foot in here unless he was lookin' to die. But he figured out shit about me somehow. He's gotta be getting his information from somewhere. I don't like the thought of accusing my brothers, but we've had a mole once already. I was trying to protect you."

A part of me understood where he was coming from, but the rest of me was still really hurt. He was the one who asked for a relationship and the hot and cold was jarring. "Look, Clink. You don't have to do this. I get it. I'm not like the women I saw at the last party you guys had. You don't have to make up excuses to stop seeing me. I'll just stay with Tyson until we can leave and—"

Before I could blink, I found myself flat on my back on the bed with Clink lying on top of me. Now he looked pissed, his lip lifted in a snarl as he trapped my wrists above my head to keep me in place. Once he was satisfied that I wasn't going to fight back, he leaned closer, his nose almost touching mine.

"You're mine, Sammy. You need to get that in your head. I don't give a shit about the other women. I want you."

I shook my head, not willing to believe him. Not after the past few days of absolutely nothing. "Don't, Clink. You don't have to lie—"

His mouth crashed down on mine, silencing my protests. I tried to turn my head away, to stop myself from completely losing myself like I normally did, but he shifted my wrists into one hand so he could use the other to grab my chin, moving me back where he wanted me. When I didn't immediately open up for him, he bit my bottom lip just hard enough to make me gasp, and tangled his tongue with mine.

It was almost embarrassing just how quickly I gave in. He knew just what to do to get me to surrender. I moaned, arching up against him when he ground his hips against mine. It wasn't until he started trailing kisses down my neck that my head cleared enough for me to think.

“Clink...”

He shifted back, a determined look on his face when his eyes met mine. “You're mine, Sam. I'm not prince charming, and I'm no good at relationships, but that doesn't change the fact that I want you. Only you. Even covered in dirt and sweat from work, you're still the hottest thing in the building.”

I looked down, horror stricken when I realized he was right. I was a mess. I hadn't had a chance to clean up after I finished working. Since it was so hot upstairs, I was in a tank top instead of my normal long sleeve, the green fabric now almost all brown from streaks of dirt. And when I tugged my wrists free and touched my hair, I realized it'd fallen partially out of the French braid I'd put it in and was in complete disarray.

“Oh god.”

Clink chuckled, shaking his head. “I told you. You're stunning. No matter what you're wearing.”

I melted a little at his words, though I was still self-conscious. Nudging him, I sat up, pulling out the rest of the braid so I could smooth out my hair. “I need to get changed. Riley invited me to hang out with her at the party.”

A wicked grin crossed his face, and he tugged me up against his side. “Need a hand? I can wash your back.”

I crossed my arms defiantly, shooting him a dirty look. “After ignoring me for days? No way.”

His face fell, and he grimaced. “I’m sorry. I was just worried about you.”

Leaning into him, I sighed. “I get that. But maybe next time talk to me about it. I would’ve understood. Probably.”

That made him snort, and the miserable look on his face faded away. He pulled me closer, sipping at my lips until I melted against him. When he pulled back, I swayed into him, still floored by my reaction to him.

“Okay. I accept my punishment. When you feel like I’ve learned my lesson, come hang out with me. I missed this.”

Clink was a smooth talker. I’d give him that. I was already halfway to forgiving him and it’d been only like ten minutes. Determined not to give in to him too quickly, I gave him a sharp nod and pushed to my feet. As I gathered my things for a shower, he watched me with a frown.

“You sure you can’t start my punishment afterwards? I know I could use a hand on those hard to reach places,” he wheedled.

Laughing, I shut the bathroom door to stop myself from giving in. “Go away, Clink!”

He chuckled, and I heard the bedroom door close as he left. Leaning against the bathroom door, I bit my lip to stop the huge grin on my face. For the first time in days, I was in a good mood.

I spent half the night pretending to ignore Clink. I knew he was playing along, because whenever I glanced his way, he smirked and shot me a heated look that made my knees weak. He was trying to seduce me into coming to join him and it was fun to make him wait, even if I was squirming every time he looked at me like that. It wasn’t until a familiar blonde sat next to him that my resolve wavered.

She was the same blonde from the first night I came here, the one who kept trying to get Clink to go upstairs with her. Green filled my vision, and I turned away with a scowl.

“You okay?”

Riley was standing beside me with a drink in her hand, talking to one of the guys, but she turned her attention to me when she saw me scowl.

I tried shaking my head, but her gaze shifted over my shoulder and a dark look passed over her face. “Sam—”

“I saw. I don’t want to talk about it.”

She crossed her arms, irritation written on her face. “Has he claimed you?”

Biting my lip, I frowned at her. “I don’t know what that means.”

“Has he said you’re his? These guys are basically a bunch of cavemen, so they use simple words because they’re idiots,” she replied, lifting her eyebrows expectantly. My face flushed, and I nodded slowly. He called me his earlier today, but I wasn’t sure it meant anything outside of the fact that we were seeing each other. Riley seemed to think it was a bigger deal, though. She nodded once, her lips pressed into a thin line.

“Then Chrissie is overstepping. I can get her to back off, but she won’t really stop until you stand up for yourself. She’s a huge bitch and likes to try and claim anything with a pulse.”

When I glanced over my shoulder at Clink, Chrissie was hugging his arm, her giant boobs almost falling out of her dress as she pouted at him. He flashed her an irritated look, but she didn’t back off. It didn’t look like he appreciated her attention, which soothed something in me. I looked back at Riley.

“So what do I do?”

“Claim him back. Show her he’s yours. That’s what I did, anyway. She stormed off after I threw myself at Croy and he chose me over her.”

Embarrassment flooded me, and I glanced over my shoulder again. I wasn't a shy person in general, but I hadn't been in many relationships, and none serious enough to need to make a statement about it. But when Clink tried to push Chrissie off his arm and she squeezed him tighter, I saw red. Without another word to Riley, I made my way over to where Clink and Chrissie were sitting. Instead of yelling at her, I chose to be more obvious about it, dropping myself into Clink's lap. I shot Chrissie a dirty look and turned to Clink with a smirk.

“Punishment over.”

That's all the warning I gave him before I grabbed his vest and pulled him closer, fusing my lips to his.

CHAPTER 32

SAM

Luckily, Clink took the bait. One arm wrapped around my middle, the other resting on my neck as his tongue slipped past my lips to duel with mine. Heat flooded my system, and I sank into it, almost forgetting my purpose until Chrissie tugged on Clink's arm.

“Clink! We were talking first!”

He ignored her, which only spurred me on. She could complain all she wanted. He was mine and I don't share.

Since she wouldn't take the hint, I shifted my position until I was straddling him. I'd picked out the only dress I owned, since last time I felt seriously underdressed. I felt Clink's grin as his hands slid up my thighs to rest on my ass under the dress. He pulled me closer until the ridge of his erection was right against the apex of my thighs.

Chrissie wasn't backing down without a fight, letting out a frustrated noise. “Fine. We can all go upstairs, but you know I don't do the whole woman thing. We can take turns and—”

I tuned her out, running my fingers through Clink's hair. What started off as a bid to get her to back off was swiftly turning into something way hotter. Clink's grip on my butt was tight, and he seemed to want to eliminate any space between us. It pressed the seam of his zipper against my clit and I couldn't help rolling my hips to get more friction. Clink groaned, his hips lifting to encourage me, and I slowly fell into a rhythm, rocking against him.

In the few relationships I'd had when I was younger, I wasn't really the adventurous type. The fact that we were in

the middle of the crowded living room should've been embarrassing. Instead, I felt like my skin was on fire and all my focus was zeroed in on Clink, like we were the only two people in the room. It was thrilling, especially when his lips dragged from my mouth to whisper in my ear.

“You’re playing with fire, honey. I wanna be inside you so bad, I might just forget where we are.”

Biting my lip, I ground my hips against his, loving the growl that escaped him as he thrust up to meet me. My lower half was throbbing, and I was pretty sure my panties were so soaked that I was going to leave a mess on Clink’s jeans. And still I couldn’t stop. It felt too good, and I hadn’t been with him since that first night at my apartment.

I was getting close when his grip shifted, and he pushed to his feet without warning. I wrapped my arms and legs around him automatically, surprised, and he flashed me a wicked grin as he made his way toward the door, coming up short when someone grabbed his arm.

Chrissie looked pissed, her long manicured fingers gripping Clink’s bicep harshly. “Clink, this isn’t funny anymore. She’s a nobody and she’ll be gone soon. I don’t like playing games. Can’t we just—”

“She’s my ol’ lady, Chrissie. Not you. Fuck off. You’re ruinin’ a good time.”

Her mouth fell open, and she ripped her hand away from him, a furious snarl on her face. “You can’t be serious! She’s an electrician! I’m so much hotter than her!”

I rolled my eyes. “And so much more pathetic. At least I’m not so pitiful that I’d cling to a guy who was obviously in the middle of something with someone else. Can’t take a hint?”

She bared her teeth at me, clenching her fists. “Shut the fuck up! You don’t know shit about their life. You’ll drop him the minute you realize, and I won’t be waiting for him when you do.” She flashed a dirty look at Clink. “You go with her, we’re through. You can find some other skank to suck your tiny ass dick.”

I snorted. “Did she just refer to herself as a skank?”

Clink, who had been glaring at Chrissie, turned to me with a smirk. “Sounded like it. Come on, honey. Let’s take a walk.”

He said that, but he didn’t set me down, so I just wrapped my arms tighter around his neck, nibbling on his bottom lip as he went out the front door. I didn’t know where he was bringing me, and I honestly didn’t care. I enjoyed Chrissie’s furious shriek until the door shut and we went outside.

Clink walked us around the side of the building to where we spoke on the first night. He pressed my back up against the wall, dragging his mouth along my neck, nipping every so often and making me shiver.

“You have no idea how bad I wanted to take you right there in front of everyone. To show them you’re mine.”

Biting my lip to muffle a moan, I tipped my head to give him more room. “So why didn’t you?”

He stiffened, his hips pressing tighter against mine, feeling more like a reaction than an outright choice. “Didn’t think you’d be into that.”

Neither did I, but in the heat of the moment, I might’ve seriously considered it. Clink made me lose my head and our little grinding session left me so hot I couldn’t think straight. My core clenched, and I wriggled as much as my position would allow, seeking more friction.

Clink pressed tighter against me, growling against my neck. “Fuck, Sammy. I want you so fuckin’ bad right now.”

My breaths came out in pants and I clung to his shoulders tightly, too eager to feel embarrassed. It was dark out, and the side of the clubhouse where we were was pretty well hidden. I didn’t have it in me to stop him.

“Clink, please...”

“Fuck.”

He set me on my feet, moving with urgency as he tossed his wallet at me so that I could get the condom while he struggled to free his erection. In our haste, I dropped his wallet

after pulling out the condom, and it swung on the chain at our knees. Clink didn't pay any attention to it, ripping the condom open with his teeth and rolling it on while he attacked my neck. I melted against him, helping him roll it on, my heartbeat pounding in my ears. This was the craziest thing I'd done, I think ever, and by the time Clink picked me back up and I wrapped my legs around his hips again, I was so wet it was embarrassing.

There was no way Clink didn't notice, since he didn't bother pulling off my panties, only tugging them aside to give him access. He didn't mention it, and I didn't have time to comment before he was pushing inside me, both of us groaning as he slid to the hilt in one swift movement.

“Holy fuck... We need to get you on birth control, honey. You're so tight and wet, I wanna feel you without the rubber.”

I could only moan in response, clinging to his shoulders as he bucked into me. It was fast and rough, and just as good as I remembered from the first time. He focused on the angles that made me scream, and despite my effort to bite my lip and muffle it, I couldn't stop the noises from escaping me. The louder I got, the more wild Clink seemed to get. In the limited light of the moon, I saw his jaw drop, a rough groan ripping through him.

“Fuck, yes. Keep goin', honey. Say my name.”

I moaned, his name little more than a whisper as I edged closer to release. I felt my body tighten around him, pleasure coiling in my belly. So close.

It was when he reached between us and pressed his thumb against my clit, rubbing roughly, that I lost it completely.

“Eric!”

“Oh, fuck!”

He seemed surprised at me using his real name, but I couldn't figure out if it was a good or bad thing before I exploded, coming so hard I saw stars. My core clenched rhythmically, and I squeezed my eyes shut at the ecstasy pulsing through my system. Clink let out a shout, pounding so

roughly into me I knew I'd feel it in the morning. I couldn't summon the will to care, especially when he groaned and slumped against me, his weight keeping me pinned against the wall.

As we both fought to regain our breath, I buried my face against his shoulder. Once the initial lust fog wore off, I realized we were out in the open and anyone could walk around the building and see us. I felt like I should be embarrassed, but a thrill shot through me at the thought and I tightened around him by accident.

He groaned, pressing tighter against me. "Shit. Whatever you're thinking about right now, please tell me we're gonna try it later."

"I'm thinking about what we just did," I snickered. "So I guess we can do it again later."

He lifted his head, his grin barely visible in the limited light. "Or right now. I could go another round."

I bit my lip and scrunched my nose to hide my giddy grin, leaning my forehead against his. I'd just tangled my tongue with his when someone came around the side of the building, barking at Clink.

"Oye, dumbass! Stop fuckin' around! We got shit to do!"

Clink pulled back, letting out a heavy sigh. "Motherfucker. I'm a little fuckin' busy!" he growled.

"Tough shit. You got a job to do."

I recognized Knox's voice, but luckily, he didn't stick around. The embarrassment that I'd pushed aside when we started came flooding back and I let my legs fall so Clink could put me back on my feet. He looked irritated, tying off the condom and tossing it into a nearby trashcan before grabbing my hand and dragging me to him.

"We'll pick this up later."

Pouting, I readjusted my clothes. "How long will you be gone?"

"I dunno when I'll be back, but I'll try and make it quick."

He didn't seem willing to give me any details, and I remembered Riley saying the guys were really closed off about their business. Not because he didn't trust me, only because he wanted to keep me safe. I didn't argue about it, letting him lead me back inside with an arm around my shoulders.

Chrissie was gone from what I could tell when we got back inside, and when Clink steered me over to where Allie and Riley were talking, I felt my face flush at their knowing grins. Clink kissed the side of my head, nudging me closer.

"I'll be back later. Stay with the ol' ladies. You're hot as fuck and I don't want any of the guys here sniffing around my claim."

I made a face, elbowing him. "Don't be gross. And hurry up. I'm tired of sleeping alone."

He grinned and winked at me, walking backwards until he almost ran into somebody and got shoved in response. He laughed, spinning around and heading back outside, and I turned my attention to Riley and Allie.

"So..."

Riley's grin was wicked. "When I said make a claim, I didn't think you'd take it that far. It worked, though, so kudos. With the way she was screaming before Croy threw her out, it sounds like she won't come back."

Allie scoffed. "If she doesn't, I'm buying you a present. I can't fucking stand Chrissie."

Since neither of them teased me or judged me for going outside with Clink, I let out a slow breath. "Glad I could help?"

Riley laughed, linking arms with me. "Come on, you little badass. Let's go get a drink."

CHAPTER 33

CLINK

I'd completely forgotten that I had a job tonight. The party was Neo's idea, a cover to let me get out unnoticed and load up the product for Hammer. Croy knew all about it and was playing oblivious, sticking to his office or at the party where people could see him. We still thought there was a mole inside, so we were cautious about playing it up for the crowd. Since Neo had done this shit with Hammer before, he was the only one coming with me to load up the goods.

"You nervous?"

I shot him a confused look before giving my attention back to the road. We were in Nevada's truck since we needed the bed to haul the product. He was none too pleased about it, but he was the only one who had a truck except Sam and there wasn't a chance in hell I was moving product in her vehicle.

"No. Why?"

He shrugged, turning his attention toward the window. Neo's fall from grace was a bit of a sore spot. He betrayed his brotherhood, but he did it for his family. He had two little brothers who were being threatened. That didn't make it much better, but I suddenly understood his fear.

"Don't sweat it, man. If Hammer asks why you were with me, I'll tell him I'm threatening you, same as Wrecker did. He's not gonna check to see if I'm right."

He grimaced. "No, but he might send people to do it for you or something. They're just kids, Clink. If I could, I'd send them as far away as possible, but their old man won't leave town."

“Since you’re doing what I told you to do, there’s no reason for him to send someone to handle your family. And this will be over soon. Once I get a location on his hideout, we’ll go in. Croy’s not gonna wait around this time. We don’t wanna risk him sneaking off again.”

With a small nod, he slumped a little in his seat, going back to staring out the window. I left him to it, not really in the mood to play therapist. I had my own shit to worry about. The potential to get high was strongest tonight, and while a big part of me wanted to give in and enjoy it while I could, I also wanted to go home to Sam. I didn’t want to spend the night on the floor with Tyson again. If I could figure out a way to pass on the hits and keep myself clean, I could keep my promise to Sam and join her after I got back. It’d be hell on earth, turning down a guaranteed high, but she was worth it.

When we got to the site where we were hiding the product, I turned off the lights, sneaking past the guards. It was Chase and Nevada who were playing pretend guard duty tonight, they knew I was coming, and knew to pretend they hadn’t seen me pull through into the garage of the rundown house. The product was hidden in a bunch of moving boxes along one wall, and I checked the contents before Neo and I loaded it up.

I was twitching by the third box. It was right fucking there, and I couldn’t get out of my head about testing it to make sure it was the good stuff, so Hammer wouldn’t get suspicious. I had to step back, pulling out my phone and dialing Brewer when it got too hard.

“What’s wrong?” he asked immediately.

Neo flashed me a concerned look. We weren’t supposed to make any calls right now, but my skin was crawling and my anxiety was through the roof, and all I could think about was taking a hit to chill out.

When I didn’t immediately respond, Brewer spoke again. “You don’t need it. Have a drink with the man. Make up some bullshit about your old lady not puttin’ out unless you stay clean. You don’t need to get high to pull this shit off.”

I grimaced. “I feel like I need it.”

He made an irritated sound. “Hold on. Don’t hang up the phone.”

I heard his movement, the noise of the party in the background as he headed upstairs. He knocked on someone’s door and when I heard Tyson in the background, I resisted the urge to roll my eyes.

“He wants a hit. What the fuck do I say to keep him clean?”

He wasn’t talking to me, he was talking to Tyson. I heard him pass off the phone, and I chewed on my thumbnail, waiting for Tyson to berate me. He didn’t.

“How bad is it?”

I huffed out a breath. “On a scale of one to ten? Seven billion.”

He hummed. “It’s day three sober. That’ll happen. But if you get past day three, it’ll be easier. You just need to get through today.”

In a normal sense, that’d probably be enough. But I had to deal directly with the product today and that made this that much harder.

“Give me a reason not to. Because I can’t think of one right now.”

“Sam.”

I squeezed my eyes shut. One word tipped the balance, pushing me closer to staying clean. I needed to do this for her. This job would protect her, and me staying sober would prove that she could rely on me. I claimed her in front of the crew today, but she didn’t know what that meant. If I wanted to keep her, I needed to prove I could do this.

“If I break...”

“You won’t. You can’t think like that or you’re already giving yourself permission to cave. You need to retrain your brain. Tell yourself over and over that you won’t until you’re done with whatever it is that’s triggering you. I’m assuming I don’t want to know.”

I snorted. “No shit.”

He didn’t complain, instead telling me to put him on speaker. “I don’t need to know what you’re doing. Just keep me on the line until you can’t anymore.”

I didn’t see a problem doing that, since he couldn’t see what we were doing. All he’d hear was us moving boxes, and while he could assume what was in them, he couldn’t be sure. I put him on speaker, setting the phone on one of the boxes as I moved it to the truck bed.

Tyson kept me talking, and any time I paused for too long, he reminded me what I was staying sober for. He told me stories about him finding Sam on the streets and the work she put in to build herself back up. Talking about her helped, and when we finally finished up and climbed back in the truck, I no longer felt like I was going to break.

“Thanks man. I’ve got it from here.”

“I believe in you, Clink. You can stay clean if you put your mind to it.”

I made a face at the bullshit therapy talk, but he helped me so I didn’t bitch at him for it.

“I gotta go. Watch out for Sam for me.”

When he hesitated, I frowned, glancing at the screen as I pulled out of the garage again.

“What is it?”

“I’m... not comfortable being down there. I’m on my own recovery journey, and while I’ve got a few years under my belt, I still get urges now and then. Being around it wouldn’t be a good idea for me.”

“You don’t need to worry about that. We don’t have shit at the clubhouse. Too obvious and the pigs love to do random sweeps when they manage to get their hands on bullshit warrants. Go downstairs and enjoy yourself. Sam doesn’t like drinking either. I don’t know why, but she’ll watch your back.”

He sighed. “She doesn’t drink because she was drinking the night her parents died, and she’s convinced if she does

again, someone else she cares about will get hurt. She's overcautious, and no matter how many times I remind her she wasn't at fault, she doesn't seem to get it."

"Yeah, well... We'll work on it when I get back. Go sit with her downstairs. We're not as bad as you think."

Tyson chuckled and relented. "Alright, fine. I'll go check on Sam. Take care of yourself, Clink. She cares about you and I don't want her losing any more people in her life. Stay clean for her."

"I'll give it all I've got." I couldn't promise that I'd stay clean, because loading the product was the easy part. I still had to meet with Hammer, and I didn't doubt for a second that he would offer me a hit once I showed up. I just had to be strong enough to turn him down.

Neo stayed behind at the site. He'd get a ride back from one of the guys. I needed help to load the shit up, but I wasn't going to bring him face to face with Hammer. No need to get him on Hammer's radar as well. I sent off a text saying I got the stuff, and Hammer sent back an address for me to meet him at.

The joint was in the industrial area of the city. Lots of warehouses lined up in a gated area, most of them abandoned and covered in graffiti. I slowed the truck down, scanning the area, until someone stepped outside the one on the end and lifted a hand. When I pulled up, Hammer was waiting for me, lighting a cigarette as I climbed out of the truck. He blew out a puff of smoke, lifting his chin in greeting.

"You got it?"

I nodded, shoving my hands into my pockets. Tipping my head towards the back, I led the way to the truck bed, popping open one of the moving boxes and stepping back so he could check the product. He peered into the box, grunting in what I assumed was approval before he let out a shrill whistle. A few guys came out of the warehouse and me and Hammer stepped back to let them unload it.

Hammer glanced at me, his eyes narrowed. “You take your cut yet?”

I pursed my lips, considering my answer. I wanted to say yes because maybe then he wouldn’t push me for a hit, but I didn’t want him to think I was skimming. Hammer was a piece of shit, and he’d kill me without question now that he had his batch. I shook my head, glaring at the boxes as Hammer’s crew passed by.

“Nah. You didn’t tell me what percent I was getting. Besides, my girl lost her shit on me the other night. If I want a fuck, I can’t touch the shit.” It didn’t take much effort to put a growl in my tone. As much as I wanted to stay clean for Sam, I still wished I could have it all, and my annoyance wasn’t fake.

Hammer snorted. “So drop her. I got plenty of sweetbutts for the lot of us. They’ll keep you happy.”

My lip twitched as I fought back a scowl. I didn’t want to brag about Sam. That would bring too much attention her way, so instead I bobbed my head. “Yeah, maybe. You got my room ready? Don’t wanna listen to her bitchin’ if I can avoid it.”

He tossed his cigarette butt onto the ground, grinding it out with his boot as he blew out another puff of smoke. “Not yet.”

I flashed him an irritated look. “Why the fuck not?”

Now that he wasn’t looking to woo me, he was less charming than last time. He flashed me a dark look. “Keep it up, and you won’t get shit. I’m not movin’ you yet because I want someone on the inside. I need to know Croy’s whereabouts if I’m gonna take him down.”

“Meanwhile, I gotta stay fuckin’ sober and deal with Croy’s bullshit? That wasn’t part of the deal, man. I’m sick of his shit and—”

Without a hint of warning, Hammer slammed his fist into my gut. It knocked the wind out of me and I sank to my knees, gasping. He leaned close, fisting my hair to force me to look up at him.

“I ain’t Croy. My people don’t talk to me like that. You want your cut, you do what I fuckin’ say. You go back to the clubhouse and make up some bullshit about why you were out. I’ll contact you when I need another batch. We clear?”

My glare was probably not very convincing since I was still trying to breathe right. Fucker liked to rule with an iron fist, and if I wasn’t already doublecrossing him, I’d be planning on it now.

“Clear,” I gritted out, catching myself when he tossed me away roughly. I shoved to my feet, silently fuming, but Hammer stopped me when I reached the driver’s side door.

“Betray me and I’ll come for your girl, Clink. I don’t give a shit if you’re through with her or not. Some of my guys like it when they fight. I’ll pass her around and fucking enjoy it while I do. You took my offer. You work for me now. Get your ass back to Croy and play pretend like a good boy.”

He didn’t wait for me to leave, wandering off into the warehouse. I waited for him to duck out of sight before stalking around the truck. Before I left him behind, Neo left me a tracker, just in case. I snuck over to where Hammer’s bike was sitting on the edge of the parking lot, slipping the tracker under the engine. It was magnetic, it would hide there undetected if he got away. Not that we were going to let him. I got into the truck, dialing Croy before I even got down the block.

“You find ‘im?”

“I got him. He’s in a warehouse in the industry section. Last one on the end in the back.”

“We’re on our way. Stay out of sight.”

Not a fucking problem. Hammer threatened my woman. He was going to fucking pay. I stopped a few blocks away at a gas station, filling up the truck to waste time. As soon as my brotherhood was here, we were finally going to nail this asshole. And I was going to seriously enjoy it when we did.

CHAPTER 34

CLINK

I knew it'd take a minute for the crew to show up. They couldn't leave the clubhouse while I was making the drop, in case there was a mole on the inside giving info. It was a thirty-minute drive from the clubhouse to Hammer's location, and it fucking crawled. I stayed in the parking lot of the gas station, playing with my phone, and checked in with Sam. And Tyson, which was a little annoying, but at least I could say I didn't get high. Hammer didn't even offer. Too busy throwing his weight around like the massive fucking dick he was.

Sam: I'm really bad at poker 😊

I snorted, shooting her a reply.

Clink: Want me to teach you?

Sam: Riley says you're even worse than me ☹️

Clink: She's lying

Sam: Prove it. Play strip poker with me ☹️😏

A slow grin passed over my face. If I didn't know her better, I'd say she was drinking. Since she wasn't into that, I guessed

the little adventure outside earlier helped her relax. That shit was fucking hot, and I hadn't expected her to go for it. I thought we'd fool around a little before I dragged her upstairs. Now that I knew she was more adventurous than I thought, I had so many plans. I wasn't going to take her on the couch, even though her grinding on my lap got me so close it was embarrassing. As hot as it was, I didn't want anyone to see her assets. She was mine, and I wasn't interested in sharing any part of her. Nah, the side of the building suited me just fine. Dark enough that no one could see her, but close enough that they probably all heard her and could walk in at any time. I liked the thrill, and I was definitely going to take her back there again.

Clink: It's a date, honey. When I win, I'm gonna make you scream so good

Sam: Doesn't that mean I win? 😊

I chuckled, but before I could reply to her, a familiar rumble of engines made me look up. The crew was here. I sent a quick text to Sam, letting her know I'd talk to her later before shoving my phone in my pocket and starting the truck. Croy didn't stop to chat. He just waited for me to pull into the street and followed behind me to the warehouse.

Hammer's bike was still there, and a grin overtook my face. Time to get wrecked, asshole.

There were four doors to the warehouse. Two garage doors in front, one door on the side, and one in back. We pulled up along the side with no doors, somehow going unnoticed by Hammer's crew even though one of the garage doors was open. After spreading out the crew, Croy went straight through the front door. We swarmed them on all sides, but the crew in

the warehouse was pretty light. I never got to do a count on how many Hammer had in his little crew, since Hammer wasn't willing to bring me to his clubhouse. The product was still there, but it felt too easy. Looking around, I frowned.

“Where is he?”

Brewer shook his head, confused. “You said he was here, right?”

I waved my hand at the door, where we could clearly still see Hammer's bike. “He was just fucking here! And his bike is still here!”

With a furious bellow, Croy grabbed a beer bottle someone had left off a nearby table, tossing it against the wall. “Where the fuck is he?”

Something about this just didn't seem right. I saw Hammer. There's not a chance he could've gotten out of here and driven away. The entrance to the spot was within view of the gas station. I wasn't that distracted that I could've missed him. Even if I didn't see him, I would've heard a car or bike drive by.

“Let's move the product. No point wasting that shit,” Bear suggested.

I was closest, and with a heavy sigh, I moved to the pallet they'd stacked the product on. Assholes didn't even bother to hide it. If the pigs showed up...

My spine stiffened, and I froze. If the pigs showed up, it'd be right fucking there, along with a bunch of bodies. I whipped my head around, taking in the room. Three quarters of the fucking crew were in this room.

“It's a fucking trap.”

Reaper didn't hesitate, shoving Croy towards the door. “Leave it! Move, move, move!”

We scattered, booking it towards the open garage door. I was waiting to hear the sirens, the shouts of the fucking pigs. I only slowed when I noticed Hammer's bike was still here.

That shit would be traced back to him. Why would he leave it behind?

The gate to the warehouse district slammed closed, and one of the guys I'd seen with Hammer flashed us a wild grin. They were trapping us in here. For the pigs? Or what?

The sirens started blaring down the street, making us fucking sitting ducks. It just felt wrong, though. Something didn't make sense to me, and I looked around warily. Where the fuck is he?

"There's probably another exit. Farther down. Let's move!" Reaper snapped.

He went for his bike, and I followed him outside, glancing over my shoulder with a frown. That's when I saw the blinking light underneath the pallet sitting in the warehouse. Horror smacked me in the gut. No fucking way.

"Get down!" I shouted just as the fucking pallet exploded.

Everyone dropped to the ground, but the few guys who hadn't exited the building yet were tossed on their ass. It wasn't the only fucking bomb, though. I saw him farther down by another warehouse, smoking a cigarette like he didn't have a care in the world. He lifted something in his hand and flashed me a wicked grin. Fuck.

Reaper was getting to his feet, heading for his bike, when I figured it out. I raced for him and tackled him to the ground just as another blast took out the fucking bikes and Nevada's truck. I didn't feel the first one, the walls from the warehouse blocked most of it and I was already outside, but the second one I fucking felt since we were so damn close.

If we'd been any closer, or getting on our bikes, we would've been killed. We got lucky that we were on the ground, heads covered, and the damage was limited. Heat blasted over me, making me wince. I felt shit hitting me, cutting my arms and hands more than anything else. The blast itself tossed a few of the bikes, and it was sheer dumb luck that none of them landed on anybody. My ears were ringing, and I couldn't hear shit. It was Reaper's grip on my cut,

yanking me to my feet, that got me moving. He shoved me away from the smoking building and the remnants of our bikes. People were stumbling, leaning on each other, as we tried to get away.

And because a fucking explosion wasn't enough for Hammer, a few more guys were waiting for us by the second gate. I didn't see him anywhere, but we didn't have any time to search the area. Croy and Reaper were already firing, but it took me a second to pull out my piece and respond. I felt like someone scrambled my brain and my vision was fucked. My aim was complete shit, and Reaper had to shove me out of the way when one of them aimed for me.

The sirens were getting fucking obnoxious, and my head was screaming at me. We took out the guys blocking the way and ran, not stopping until we were blocks away in a shitty run down area with plenty of abandoned houses. Croy picked one at random, breaking the front door down, and we piled inside, a few guys being dragged either from being shot or from the damn shrapnel. Reaper shoved me forward, dumping my ass on the ground in the living room while he moved to the front window to act as lookout.

“What the fuck just happened?” Brewer growled.

“It was a trap. Should've thought of that,” Croy snarled, pacing the room. “That fucking asshole figured we'd come for him.”

I shook my head slowly, the pressure in my head making my stomach turn. “Sorry, man. I didn't know—”

“Shut the fuck up, Clink. You didn't do shit but what I told you to do.”

True, but I probably should've been more cautious. Maybe had him bring me inside or something. I would've seen it before the product got on there. My stomach turned over again, and I leaned to the side, heaving up what little food I had in my system.

“What the fuck is wrong with him?” Croy demanded.

Reaper stepped away from the window, moving to kneel on my other side. He forced my head up, his brows drawn together as he looked me over. “Probably has a concussion. Idiot threw himself on top of me when the second blast went off.” He sounded pissed, but he was the closest to the bikes. I doubted he would’ve survived.

Pushing his hand away from where he gripped my face, I scowled at him. “I’m fucking fine. My head just hurts. We calling the rest of the crew?”

Reaper ignored my efforts to push him away. It wasn’t like I was trying that hard. I felt sluggish and exhausted, which only pissed me off more. He took out his phone, using the flashlight to check my eyes, growling at me when I kept trying to bat him away.

“Stop fuckin’ moving.”

“Go fuck yourself. I’m fine. We need to get back. He’s gonna go after the clubhouse, and the girls—”

“Are fine. I moved ‘em when we left. They’re at Allie’s place. Well guarded. Split the guys between there and the clubhouse. Figured Hammer would try shit like last time.” Croy paced away again, his phone pressed to his ear. From what I could tell, he was calling Nevada. We could still hear sirens in the distance, so we were fucking trapped here. Reaper did some fancy first aid shit he learned in the military with a few of the guys who were injured, but otherwise, we didn’t move for hours. Couldn’t risk the guys leaving the clubhouse with Hammer fucking about, and we couldn’t leave the girls unguarded.

Every time I started to fall asleep, Reaper would shove me awake again. It irritated me and I yelled at him plenty, but he ignored me, punching me in the shoulder when I tried to lie down. Asshole.

The sun was coming up by the time we figured out how to get back home. Nevada had to rent a damn van to fit us all, and Reaper wouldn’t move anyone until the doc looked at us. I had a bad concussion from being so damn close to the blast, plus plenty of cuts and bruises. He said it was lucky I didn’t

get anything worse. Don't think it was possible to be more lucky than I was last night. I might need to buy a lottery ticket, because surviving that shit with just a fucking headache was like divine intervention.

They dropped everyone healthy enough off at the clubhouse. A couple had some injuries that the doc wanted images for, so they were brought to the hospital. Reaper wanted me to go, but I refused. It was a damn headache. I would be fine. I wasn't a fucking pussy.

Surprisingly, the clubhouse was untouched. There were three guys, plus a few prospects, watching over it when we left, and they said nothing happened last night. That didn't make any fucking sense to me. Why would Hammer go to all that trouble just to wait? He had the perfect opening to take out the remaining crew and take the clubhouse if he wanted it. What was he waiting for?

CHAPTER 35

SAM

I wasn't really sure what happened last night. Clink went out for something club related, and a few hours later, Croy was demanding we move to Allie's house. A few guys went with us, but the rest all took off without a word. If Clink was aware of what was going on, he didn't sound like it. He was texting me, being playful and flirtatious like always, until he said he had to go to work and he'd talk to me later. I kept waiting for him to show up, but he stopped responding to my messages and no one seemed to want to tell me what was going on.

Since there wasn't a ton of room, Allie's house was only a two bedroom, I slept on one of the couches. Tyson took the guest room, Allie and Quinn shared the master, and Riley was on the other couch, though she didn't do much sleeping. She spent most of the night in the kitchen with Nevada, murmuring low with him. I didn't get a ton of sleep either. I woke up a lot, but I didn't complain. Whatever was happening, it was big enough to move us. Hopefully, it meant that we weren't going to be trapped in the clubhouse much longer.

I gave up on getting sleep a little after the sun came up. Nevada was gone, but Riley was still awake, her fingers moving rapidly over her phone as she sat at the kitchen table. When I sat down next to her, she forced a small smile, but she barely looked up at me and her attention immediately went back to her phone.

"Is everything okay?"

She pursed her lips, fighting back a scowl. "I'm trying to find out."

Nodding, I left her to it. Other than sending out another text to check on Clink, I didn't know what to do with myself, so I made some coffee instead. The few guys who were here with us all looked grateful when I passed out mugs, and Riley's smile was a little less tense when I put hers down next to her. I was just taking a sip of my own when Riley let out a heavy sigh.

"Okay. They're back at the clubhouse."

Chase, who was standing by the front window, glanced over his shoulder at her. "Any casualties?"

My heart stuttered in my chest, but Riley shook her head. "Doesn't look like it. I'm going to need a ride, though. There were injuries and Doc went with the worst to the hospital."

"Okay. Lemme clear it with Prez quick and we'll get moving," Chase agreed.

"Can I help?" I didn't know anything about first aid, but it was better than sitting around waiting for something to happen.

Riley considered me for a second before shrugging. "Probably. Croy wants you guys to wait here, but once I figure out what's going on, I'll ask him to have you guys sent over to help. If there are a lot of injuries, I could probably use a hand."

It was better than nothing. As badly as I wanted to get there, I knew no one was going to ignore Croy's orders and bring me along if I asked. The only person he allowed to leave was Riley. I sat impatiently, explaining what I knew when the others woke up since Riley was already gone.

I was getting anxious when Allie lost her temper. She wanted to go help too and wasn't a fan of sitting around. She stormed towards the door, ignoring the prospect who was guarding it, and came up short when she yanked it open and Knox was on the other side. He turned around, raising an eyebrow at her.

"Where do you think you're going?"

She opened her mouth like she was going to argue, but after pausing for a second, she stepped forward, wrapping her

arms around his middle. Jealousy swept through me and I turned my face away. I wanted to see Clink, to make sure he was okay. But no one was letting us go anywhere.

“Relax, baby. I’m fine. Wasn’t even there. Croy had me guarding the clubhouse.”

I could hear the frown in her voice as she spoke to him. “Then why are you here?”

He snorted. “Because he knew you’d cause trouble when you didn’t get your way. You can’t go back yet. Not until Prez clears it.”

I looked up just in time to see her shove him away with a scowl. “Who says I wanna go back? Asshole.” She slammed the door shut before he could answer, storming away. When the door opened again, Knox looked pissed, and he narrowed his eyes on the prospect standing near the kitchen.

“Watch the fucking door.”

He went without question and took Knox’s place while Knox headed after Allie. I shot Quinn a wide-eyed look, and she snickered, shaking her head.

“It’s okay. She’s upset and doesn’t like to show it. She was worried about him. How are you? Doing okay?”

I let out a breath, lifting my shoulders. “I guess. I just wish Clink would answer my messages. Riley said people were hurt, but she didn’t say who and she said she’d call if we could come and help, but that was hours ago.”

“He’s okay. They would’ve said something otherwise. Let me call Riley, see where we’re at. She could’ve just gotten busy and forgot.” She pulled out her phone, heading to the kitchen while she made the phone call.

Tyson rubbed my shoulder reassuringly. “I’m sure he’s fine.”

We could finally go back to the clubhouse in the afternoon. Everyone who wasn’t on a bike piled into my truck and we went straight back. Quinn was just as eager as I was to get back, though Reaper at least answered her when she called.

Clink still wasn't answering, and I feared the worst when we arrived. I scrambled out of the truck, darting inside, and found Clink sitting on the couch with an ice pack on his forehead.

"Clink?"

He shifted, lifting the ice pack enough to peek out at me. When his slow smile overtook his face, relief slammed into me like a tidal wave and I nearly dropped to my knees.

"Hey, you. Was wondering when you'd get here."

I moved to his side, taking in all the bumps, the cuts held together with butterfly tape, the scrapes along his arms. He looked like hell, and he flinched and shut his eyes when he kept the ice pack off too long.

"You're gorgeous, but I'm gonna rest a bit. Got knocked around, and my head is killing me."

"That's because you've got a concussion. You need to be resting, not sitting down here taking up space," Riley demanded as she marched up to us, handing Clink a bottle of water.

Clink didn't even remove the ice pack to look at her when he spoke. "But then I wouldn't get to hear you bitching at the crew. It's hilarious. Makes me feel better."

Riley scowled, and I rolled my eyes. "I'll take him upstairs. Is there anything I should watch out for?"

She shook her head. "Not really. I'll check in on him every now and then to make sure nothing is getting worse, but there's not a lot you can do for a concussion but wait it out and rest. No sex, though. That'll only make things worse."

That wasn't a problem for me. I was too worried about him to want that, but Clink scowled, finally letting the ice pack drop into his lap. "That's fucked. If she wants to make me feel better, then I—"

Pushing to my feet, I pulled Clink with me. "I'll let you know if his pain gets worse. I need to keep the room dark, right?"

We both ignored Clink's complaints, going over the basics of concussion care. I knew some of it from watching tv and reading books, and Riley filled in the rest. Once I felt confident I could take care of Clink, I dragged him upstairs to rest. He complained the whole way there until he dropped onto the bed and flinched.

"Ouch."

"That's what you get. Stop complaining. You need to rest."

He grumbled, kicking off his boots while I closed the curtains to darken the room. I helped him get undressed, because it didn't seem comfortable to sleep in jeans and a leather vest, smacking his hands when he tried to grab my clothes too.

"Nope. No sex for you. Consider it a punishment for not answering me this morning." I tucked the blankets around him, swallowing hard. My voice lowered automatically, and I tried not to wince at the tremble in it. "I was really worried about you."

He grimaced, grabbing my hand and tugging me closer. "I know. I'm sorry. Believe it or not, I fully intended to text you back. But I landed on my phone last night and broke the damn thing."

"Can you tell me what happened?"

It didn't really surprise me when he shook his head, but he tugged on my hands until I crawled into bed next to him, curling up against his side. "C'mere. No funny business. I just wanna hold you."

Once we were comfortable cuddled together in the darkened room, I let out a sigh. Things had been stressful and being here with him settled me. My anxiety had been through the roof, worried when we were moved that Clink was doing something dangerous and wouldn't come home.

This was why I didn't want to get close to people. I was afraid to lose him. Clink's life wasn't safe, and there was no telling how many times I'd have to go through this with him. I wasn't sure how I felt about it. I didn't want to stop seeing

him, he made me happy and pushed me to really enjoy my life. He was supportive and sweet, and I loved spending time with him. But that only made it scarier. He tore through all my walls like they were made of paper, and now I couldn't imagine life without him. I let myself get too attached too quickly. And I wasn't sure how to handle it.

CHAPTER 36

SAM

Things went back to normal after whatever happened with the crew. No one would tell me the details, and I stopped fishing for Clink to clue me in. He always answered the same way, with a smirk to hide the muscle twitch in his jaw to show how pissed he was with how things turned out. Whatever happened, it didn't go their way, and the crew was busy trying to deal with it.

I went back to work on the clubhouse, though I could only turn off certain sections of the house instead of the whole thing. Croy said he needed to keep one of their guys online monitoring stuff, so I worked around it the best I could. I was working on Clink's room when someone knocked on the door. I looked up over the edge of the bed, smiling at Tyson.

"Hey."

"Hey, yourself. How's it going in here?"

I pursed my lips, nodding as I turned back to the outlet I was rewiring. "Pretty good. I should have this group of rooms done by the end of the day. What are you up to?"

"I've gotta go out."

When I looked over my shoulder at him, surprised, he gave me a small smile. "I know. But one of my people just called. They've had a relapse. They need me. I talked to Croy about it. He's sending me with a prospect and I'll probably stay a few nights, just to make sure they're alright. I just wanted to let you know so you wouldn't worry."

When I made a face, he chuckled. “Yeah, I know. You’re gonna worry, just like I do. I guess we’re switching roles today. I’ll check in often, and I promise I’ll call if I think anything weird is going on. You stay here and get your work done, and I’ll see you later.”

After everything that’s happened, it made me nervous to let Tyson go out, but I trusted him to stay safe and I knew him being a sponsor was important. I did my best to hide my expression as I gave him a hug and waved him out. And he kept his promise, texting me every few hours on the first night to make sure I knew he was okay.

The second day he was gone was pretty much the same. He sent me texts to let me know everything was okay, and I kept myself busy working so I didn’t worry so much. I was just finishing up in Brewer’s room when I got a new text from Tyson.

Tyson: I need your help

Frowning, I texted him back immediately.

Sam: What’s wrong?

Tyson: I had a relapse. I need you.

My heart started racing and my eyebrows shot up. Tyson was seven years sober. While he still had cravings every now and then, it was rare and he never slipped. In the entire time I’d known him, he’d been clean and never got close to having a relapse. It didn’t make any sense. I tried calling him but he wouldn’t answer the phone, only texting me saying he couldn’t talk and he needed my help, because he wanted to use again.

I wasn't Tyson's sponsor. I'd never met her, she moved a few years ago to be closer to her children, but she and Tyson still kept in touch and talked at least once a week. I'd never done any sponsor type things for him because he said that wasn't our relationship and he liked to keep that separate. He'd never asked me for help like this before, and I was really worried that he was asking for me now.

Sam: Where are you?

Tyson: At your place

Don't tell anyone

I don't want anyone to know

My brow furrowed. I found it really unlikely that I'd get out of here without telling anybody, but I could understand why Tyson didn't want to share. It was probably really upsetting for him to break a seven-year streak. Biting my lip, I considered texting Clink for help, but he was busy with the crew and he said he wouldn't be back until after dinner. I didn't think Tyson could wait that long, so I sent him a text that I was on my way and tucked my phone back in my pocket, heading downstairs to see who I could talk to about this.

The house was pretty quiet when I got downstairs. None of the old ladies were around. I knew Riley was still helping some of the guys who got hurt, but I didn't know where Quinn or Allie were. And none of the guys I knew were close by. The only one who was in the kitchen, washing the dishes, was the prospect who I'd punched in the face that one time.

I grimaced as I approached him. We hadn't been in the same room since that day, but I wasn't surprised at the side eye he cast me. I wasn't any more comfortable talking to him than he was with me, but I didn't know where anyone was.

"Have you seen Clink?"

He cast me a look, his lip going up. “Not supposed to be talkin’ to you.”

More than one person had mentioned that the prospects weren’t supposed to talk to us, but I’ve talked to a few when they were helping me with the wiring. Not him, though. He was avoiding me and until now, it suited me just fine.

“I know. I’m sorry. I just... I need a ride. To work. I, uh... lost my drill bit. I need another one.”

It was a plausible answer, and he seemed to believe me, but he didn’t look like he wanted to help me. He looked around, a deep frown on his face. “You gotta wait until they get back.”

Tyson said he couldn’t wait or I would’ve been happy to listen. But he needed me, and I wasn’t sure when anyone was going to be back.

“Listen, that’s... that’s not going to work for me. I need that bit so I can get my work done. I’m not going to get on Croy’s bad side by sitting on my hands all day. And my work closes eventually. I need to get there before they do or I’ll have to wait longer to get any work done.”

He scoffed, crossing his arms. “And I ain’t gettin’ into trouble by giving you a ride. I’m not supposed to talk to you. I got shit to do. You wanna get into trouble, go by yourself. I ain’t your keeper.”

My eyebrows jumped up. I thought if I tried to leave that someone would stop me. It never occurred to me that staying here had been a suggestion. The prospect turned his back on me, clearly done being seen talking to me. I took a few steps back, wondering if he was going to change his mind, but I made it all the way to the front door without him saying anything. Shrugging, I stepped outside, heading for my truck. There were a few guys standing around outside, but I kept my chin up, moving with a purpose. If I looked busy, they wouldn’t stop me.

One of them approached right after I shut my door. He knocked on the window, a confused look on his face. “Where

do you think you're going?"

"I lost a tool. I'm going to pop into work quick to grab another one. It shouldn't take long."

He shook his head slowly. "You're not supposed to go anywhere."

I sighed. "I'm not a prisoner. You're welcome to join me, but I really need to go. If I don't hurry, they'll close up the shop and I'll be shit out of luck."

He looked like he wanted to argue, but I gave him an exasperated look and he grimaced. "Yeah, alright. I'll go with you. We gotta make this quick, though. Pretty sure Clink will kick my ass if he knows I brought his old lady out."

As he climbed into the passenger seat, I bit my lip. I'd need some kind of excuse to ditch him once I got to work. Maybe I could slip out the back while he wasn't paying attention. My apartment wasn't far from my work. I could take a few alleys to get there and find Tyson. Hopefully, I'd be able to convince him to come back with me.

The guy who joined me spent most of the ride on his phone, a deep frown on his face. He didn't seem interested in talking and I wasn't going to push him. I was too busy running through the plan in my head. My palms were sweating and I couldn't stop chewing on my bottom lip. I'd never done anything so outright deceitful since I snuck out to go to that party when I was in high school. I didn't like it and I considered more than once turning around and heading back. Only Tyson's desperate messages kept me moving forward, and I pulled up at work not long later.

"Okay, it should just be a few minutes. You can wait here. I'll be right back."

I didn't wait around for him to answer me, jumping out of the truck and hustling inside. My stomach was churning from the nerves and I flashed a smile at Brian, who was manning

the front desk. He looked confused, but I just waved at him, ducking through the back hallway into the stockroom, making a beeline for the back door. I kept expecting the guy to pop up and stop me, but I got up and over the fence in the back without any issues.

My heart was pounding as I snuck through the alleys towards home. I wasn't sure why Tyson would want to go back to my apartment instead of his, but maybe it was closer. I'd ask when I saw him.

I finally breathed a sigh of relief when I stepped out onto the street that my apartment was on. No one but Clink knew where I lived, so the guy who came with me probably wouldn't be able to find me. I would go get Tyson, head back, and tell him I took a phone call or something and met Tyson around back to explain why I took so long.

Tyson had a key to my place, so I wasn't surprised he wasn't out front. I made my way to the front door, glad there wasn't a lock, so he didn't have to come out to meet me. My keys were still in the truck. My hand wrapped around the handle, and I just barely had time to register the hot metal against my skin when something hit me in the back of my head. Pain flashed down my neck and my vision collapsed inward as I crumpled to the ground. The last thing I thought before I lost consciousness was that I'm an idiot.

CHAPTER 37

SAM

Someone slapping me was what woke me up. I hit the ground hard, the pain white hot on my cheek. I forced my eyes open and scrambled away from the men looming over me. I didn't recognize any of them. They were all grinning at me, lecherous looks in their eyes, and my panic skyrocketed. I didn't stop moving until my back was up against the wall. I was hyperventilating, but none of them seemed to care as they crowded closer.

When one of them reached for me, I dropped until I was almost lying on the floor, kicking my leg out to keep him at a distance. He laughed, grabbing my leg and dragging me closer, while another used the distraction to grab a fistful of my hair and pull hard enough for me to cry out.

"Enough. I told you to wait. None of you touches her before me."

The voice that spoke was rough, gritty, and sent a spike of fear down my spine. The men released me and I scrambled away again, my eyes locked on the man who approached. I recognized him. He was the one who I almost hit with my truck, the one who gave me that foreboding feeling when he grinned at me. Hammer.

He had a grizzly beard and a long ponytail that trailed down his back. The scar that slashed across his eye was off-putting, as was the sneer on his face. He had on a vest, just like Clink and his crew did, but his had a patch on it like Croy's that said president on it. He was tall and wide, with a gut, and stains on his clothes that looked a little too much like blood.

Tears welled in my eyes as the terrifying man came closer, squatting in front of me with an evil grin.

“Clink told me about you. I warned him what would happen if he crossed me. Guess you weren’t worth stayin’ in line.” He reached for me, trailing a finger down my cheek and swiping up the tear that had escaped me. He stuck it in his mouth, sneering at me. “I love it when they cry.”

The guys behind him chuckled, like it was entertaining for them to watch this man scare the hell out of me. I couldn’t look away from him, too afraid of what he’d do if I didn’t give him my full attention.

“We’re gonna enjoy the hell out of you. I’ll send videos to Clink, make sure he knows he’s responsible. If he’d done as he was told, none of this would be happening to you. I want you to know that. He decided you weren’t worth the effort.”

My chest tightened and my vision blurred as tears spilled freely. What was the point in hiding them? I knew I shouldn’t have gotten involved with Clink. He didn’t ever hide how dangerous his life was. And now they were going to kill me because of whatever happened between Clink and them.

A part of me thought maybe if I just lied there and took it, it wouldn’t hurt as much. But seeing the evil look on this guy’s face, he was going to make it hurt as much as possible to punish Clink. I knew I couldn’t just wait around for someone to save me. I had to save myself, just like I’d always done. I protected myself from the pastor, from my family who hated me, from the people on the streets who wanted to hurt me. I wasn’t a fighter, I wouldn’t be able to fight my way out of this, but I wasn’t just going to sit here and do nothing.

When Hammer reached for me, I screamed, ducking away and plastering myself to the floor. “No! Please! I’m not with him! I’m not!”

Someone snorted behind Hammer, and when I looked up, a familiar and really annoying face appeared out of the darkness. Chrissie crossed her arms, glaring down at me.

“Sure looked like you were with him when you basically started fucking him in the middle of the living room.”

Hammer’s grin turned smug and his eyebrows lifted. “That right? You’re a dirty little whore, aren’t you? I bet you’ll get off on this.”

He grabbed my arm, hauling me to my feet. No matter how much I struggled, it was like it had no effect on him. I dug my heels in to no effect, and he tossed me onto a stained mattress on the floor a few feet away. I was up and crawling away in an instant, but he grabbed my ankle, yanking me back down before I could get away.

“No, no! I’m not with him! I’m an electrician! Please!”

He scoffed, one hand fisting my hair and yanking my head back so hard that I was worried he’d snap my neck.

“Bullshit. Women can’t do that kind of shit.”

I couldn’t shake my head with the way he was holding me, and my voice shook as I desperately tried to get him to release me. “I can! I was rewiring the clubhouse for the Devil’s Disciples! That’s why I was there! Please! I can prove it!”

He shoved my head against the mattress, making an irritated noise. “You’re just tryin’ to waste time. I ain’t fallin’ for that shit.”

I couldn’t breathe right, so I forced my face to the side, almost screaming to get him to listen. “I won’t! I won’t waste time! Let me prove it! Please!”

He shifted backwards, but his hand against my head never eased, keeping me pinned against the mattress. “That true?”

Chrissie scoffed. “That’s what they hired her for, yeah. That doesn’t mean she isn’t Clink’s. He called her his ol’ lady.”

Hammer’s hand fisted my hair tighter, to the point where it felt like he was going to tear it all out. I gritted my teeth against the whimper that was caught in my throat, tears spilling down my face.

“I-I don’t know what that means! I swear, I was just there for a job!”

The sound of heels on hardwood stalked closer, and I could see Chrissie glaring down at me out of the corner of my eye. “You’re a lying bitch! Explain the shit in the living room, then!”

“We were just messing around! It wasn’t serious! You were there for the same thing!”

She seethed, her fists clenched at her side. “And you stole him from me, you stupid bitch! You’ll get what you deserve!”

Choking on a sob, I squeezed my eyes shut. “I’m just an electrician! Please!”

“We seriously fuckin’ put this shit together because of a jealous sweetbutt?” a voice spoke behind us.

Chrissie whirled around, glaring at whoever spoke. “Shut up! I’ve been giving you information for weeks! I deserve a—”

“You don’t deserve shit, bitch, except this right here.”

“Enough. Chrissie, stop bitchin’ and tell the truth. Is she any good?”

Chrissie scowled. “How the hell should I know? I’m not around while she’s working.”

Hammer was on his feet in an instant, and before I could push myself up, Chrissie was on the floor. Hammer had backhanded her, and her lip was bleeding. She didn’t cry, but she didn’t have the opportunity before Hammer grabbed her hair, yanking her face closer to his.

“I’ve had enough of your shit. Yell at me again and I’ll stop bein’ so nice to you.”

She’d been so combative that I thought she’d keep fighting, but her mood changed on a dime and she stuck her lip out in a pout. “You haven’t been nice to me in days. How else was I gonna react when you’re so eager to fuck someone else?” When Hammer rolled his eyes, she reached for him, running her hand along his zipper. “You know what I want, baby. I got jealous.”

I felt like there was no way he'd fall for her obvious manipulation, but he huffed out a chuckle, shaking his head. "How the fuck was Croy dumb enough to let you walk away? Always so willing to spread your legs. He's a fuckin' idiot."

When he yanked her closer, shoving his tongue down her throat violently, she moaned, rubbing him through his jeans and fisting his shirt. When Hammer released her, dumping her onto her butt, she flashed him a sultry look, waving her hand in my direction.

"Let her prove it or whatever. I'm sure I can show you a better time."

If I didn't know she was doing it for survival, I'd have been shocked that she was helping me. She was doing the exact opposite of me, offering herself willingly to get Hammer to go easy on her. His aggressiveness gentled just enough that when he pulled her to her feet, it no longer looked painful. He slapped her ass, tipping his head towards the stairs.

"Fine. Get your ass where you belong. I'm gonna make sure she's not bullshittin' me, then you're gettin' on your knees."

Chrissie shot me a dirty look as she sauntered past me, putting a sway in her hips as she moved to the bottom of the stairs. She paused, giving Hammer another pout, and purred at him. "Don't take too long. I'd hate to have to start without you."

That made Hammer smirk, and he waved her off. When his attention turned back to me, I scrambled away from him, until I was off the dirty mattress and pressed into the corner of the room. His eyes narrowed, and he scowled.

"You're lucky I'm tired of dealin' with the bullshit electricity around here and there's pussy upstairs to keep them happy." He gestured to the group of guys behind him, who looked irritated at the entire exchange. "You get ten minutes. Prove that you're legit or else."

I didn't want to move. I wanted to stay hidden in that corner until it was over. But I knew what would happen if I

didn't. My eyes darted around, zeroing in on the flickering light in the kitchen on the opposite side of the room. I could fix that quickly to prove myself and hopefully that'd buy me more time.

The tools they had were extremely limited, and they wouldn't let me turn off the power to more than one room. Hammer got irritated when I couldn't find the right switch to turn off the power to the kitchen, none of them were marked on the fuse box in the hallway. He choked me, snarling that I better not be lying to him, until I found the right switch and he released me. I'd been so close to passing out from the lack of oxygen that my legs gave out, and I collapsed to the floor. I had to force myself to my feet, scurrying to the kitchen so that I could get to work.

Fixing the light took only a few minutes. I had to strip the wire with my teeth, which Russel would have been really pissed about, but I was pretty sure he'd forgive me in this situation. Once I bypassed the part of the wire that looked like rats had chewed it on, I wrapped it in electrical tape and basically launched myself off the counter to flick the fuse back on. The light turned on and I held my breath for a few seconds, but it stayed steady, no flickering, and I let out a slow breath.

Hammer didn't look happy when I showed him. He made an irritated noise, turning his back on me as he waved to the rest of the house. "Fine. Make yourself useful. But if I catch you slacking, you won't like what we do to you. Clear?"

I nodded once. I could do that. I'd keep working until I passed out if I had to. Anything to keep myself safe.

CHAPTER 38

CLINK

The bullshit concussion left me out of commission for two days. Any time I tried to get up to do something, Sam and Riley would bitch at me until I laid back down. It was a fucking headache. I could handle myself, but Croy listened to Riley and told me to fuck off until she cleared me to get out of bed. It wasn't until I could move around without flinching that Riley backed the hell off and let me get to work.

The crew was fucking busy since our failed attempt at putting Hammer down. The pigs showed up, since our bikes had plates on them and shit that tied the explosion back to us, but they didn't have any proof that we were there. Croy spun some bullshit about our bikes being parked there for maintenance, and he started demanding that the pigs do their jobs and find out who screwed him over. It left them confused as hell when we were playing the victims, since it was normally us causing the trouble, but it got them off our backs for the time being.

Most of the bikes were destroyed, and we couldn't go back and get them anyway, since it was a crime scene. That meant the guys were going in groups to buy new ones, and it pissed me the fuck off. A biker was nothing without his bike. Some of the guys had the same one since they started riding. It hurt like hell for them to replace it. Once I got my hands on Hammer, he was going to pay.

Between all that, and searching for Hammer, we also had our regular shit to do. We lost an entire batch thanks to Hammer's fuckery, and we had to get more before buyers

started bitching. Since we were already on the pigs' radar, it had to be done carefully, which was a huge pain in the ass.

That meant once I got back to work, I had to hit the ground running. I was busy as hell and didn't even have time to text Sam while I was gone. She didn't mention it, but I knew it bugged her. Wasn't much I could do about it while we were dealing with Hammer, but I planned on making it up to her by bringing her food and spending time alone in my room tonight. Chicks loved that shit, especially if I set it up like some kind of picnic or something.

Sam had been working late too, keeping herself busy when I was gone, but I was surprised she wasn't in our room when I got back. It was past dinner already, though, so I figured she'd be downstairs eating with the old ladies. I took a minute to set up the picnic, knowing she'd eat that shit up, and headed downstairs to look for her when I was through. Riley and Quinn were in the kitchen, talking as they ate. No Sam, though. I frowned, interrupting them when I walked up.

“You guys seen Sam?”

Riley twisted in her seat, her brows drawing together. “No. I thought she was upstairs working.”

Well, fuck. If she was still working this late, I had a lot more groveling to do than I thought. I knew she wasn't with Tyson. He had to go the other night to deal with someone who'd relapsed. Which meant Sam was overworking herself to keep occupied, and I was the asshole who wasn't around to take care of her.

I jogged back upstairs, looking around for her, but I couldn't fucking find her. A sense of apprehension washed over me and I went back downstairs, searching the club and the backyard before coming back to the kitchen. Riley looked worried when I came back.

“What's wrong?”

“I can't fucking find her.”

Something wasn't right, and the apprehension only got worse the longer I didn't see her. I went for the front door,

dread filling my gut, and my stomach dropped when I noticed her truck wasn't out front like it was supposed to be.

“What the fuck?”

Pulling out my phone, I dialed her immediately, but she didn't answer. It went straight to voicemail. There's no way she would've just run off. She's not that stupid. I tried again and again, but she never picked up. Fisting my hand in my hair, I looked around helplessly. I didn't know what to do or where to fucking start. The panic was overwhelming. Either she left because she decided I wasn't worth the effort, or she was taken. Either way, she was in danger.

Darting back inside, I went straight to Croy's office. His head whipped up, and he looked furious when I didn't knock, but I ignored him, the panic making me reckless.

“Sam's missing.”

His expression darkened, and he shoved to his feet. “Since when?”

“No fucking clue. She's not in the clubhouse and her truck is gone. I just got back recently. Riley and Quinn haven't seen her.”

Thankfully, he didn't even hesitate. He stormed around his desk, calling a club meeting, and barked at anyone who didn't move fast enough. The crew crowded into church before I could blink and everyone was silent as the grave when Croy spoke up.

“Clink's ol' lady is missing. Who was the last person to see her?”

No one had any answers and my anxiety kicked up a notch, my knee jiggling restlessly.

“Seriously? Not one fucking person saw her today?” I demanded. I was close to losing it, and everyone had stupid looks on their faces. How the hell could an entire crew not notice her? She was fucking perfect.

“We should ask the prospects,” Brewer commented. When we looked at him, he was frowning. “At one point today, it

was just them, wasn't it? When we went to move the product.”

Shit. I hadn't realized that. What if they let her get taken while we were gone? Or they were too dumb not to let her leave.

“Get them in here,” Croy growled.

Reaper disappeared from the room and came back a few minutes later with the prospects trailing behind him. One was missing, though.

“Where's Gabe?”

They looked nervous and none of them wanted to say shit to get another in trouble. In any normal circumstance, that would be the right move. We valued loyalty, and if they were snitching on each other, they weren't trustworthy to the crew. But right now, they were the only ones who might know where Sam was. I stood, pulling out my piece and advancing menacingly.

“You assholes better start talking. Sam's missing and you fuckers were supposed to be watching the joint.”

Colin, the same little shit who got his ass kicked for touching Sam, made a face. “She ain't missing. She left. Spouted some bullshit about needing a tool and took off.”

“And you fucking let her?” I snarled.

Colin made an irritated noise, crossing his arms over his chest defensively. “I already got my ass handed to me once for touching her. What was I supposed to do? Knock her ass out?”

I was on him before he could finish his sentence, tackling his ass with my gun pressed under his chin. He froze, his eyes wide and fearful as I hissed, “Touch her and you're dead.”

Like a smart prospect, he didn't fucking move. Not until Croy spoke, demanding I let him up so we could question him without him pissing himself. He was shoved into a chair and I prowled behind him, wanting to kill this asshole for not saying anything sooner. If he would've called, I would've come back to talk to her.

“How long?” Croy snapped.

Colin lifted his shoulder. “Few hours. She had to go to her work or whatever. No idea where that shit is, so I didn’t know how long it would take.”

It was thirty minutes to her work. If she was actually just going to grab a tool, she should’ve been back within ninety minutes. There’s no way it would’ve taken longer than that.

“Be more specific, you piece of shit!” I bellowed. “How long?”

He flinched, ducking his head when I shouted in his ear. “Fuck, man! I don’t know! After lunch? I was busy washing the dishes! I didn’t look for a clock!”

“Why not call Gabe?” Gunner murmured. When I swung to look at him, he grimaced. “He went with her. Didn’t want her to go by herself.”

Reaper was already dialing the phone by the time he finished his sentence. He waited for a minute before Gabe answered.

“Where is she?”

I didn’t hear Gabe’s reply, but Reaper’s face darkened. “How long has it been since you’ve seen her?” He paused, listening again, before snarling, “We’re on our way. Don’t fucking move.”

When he hung up, he locked eyes with me. “She snuck off after they got to her work. He’s been looking for her, but he said she disappeared.”

My stomach dropped. She ran off. In the fucking city. Where Hammer was probably hiding. Of all the stupid, reckless shit she could’ve done...

Meeting up with Gabe did absolutely no good. Her truck was still at her work. We had no clue which way she went or where she was headed. I checked her apartment, found her phone smashed on the sidewalk, but she wasn’t inside. It did make

me think she was taken, though. She wouldn't have just smashed the thing and ran without a vehicle or any of her shit.

Tyson didn't answer his phone either, but the prospect who was with him did. Neither of them had heard from her, but Tyson's phone was missing, which he hadn't noticed before.

"When did you last talk to her?"

"Earlier in the afternoon. We text a lot to check in. She was fine, working, the last we messaged each other. I don't know where the hell my phone went. Things got busy here when my sponsee's family showed up."

I didn't really give a shit, but before I could say anything, Reaper snapped his fingers to get my attention. I hung up on Tyson after telling him I'd keep him updated and moved closer to Reaper.

"What is it?"

"It's Lewis. He wants to know what happened with the tracker he gave you."

I frowned. "I put it on Hammer's bike, but he left it at the warehouse when he tried to blow us up. Why?"

A dark grin crossed his face. "Because it's fucking moving."

Drawing in a deep breath, I let it out slowly. That was a good thing. It meant we knew which way Hammer was going, but with how long Sam had been gone, I was terrified of what I'd find when I got there. Hammer had been clear about what he'd do to her if I crossed him.

Hold on, Sam. I'm coming.

CHAPTER 39

SAM

They left me alone to work for the most part, thanks to Chrissie. I knew she only did it for her own benefit, but I couldn't help being grateful. I could hear her fake moans and screams coming from upstairs. She was a lot braver than I was, doing that with them willingly, so they wouldn't hurt her. I kept my head down, patching wires around the house as best I could. There were two guys watching me, making sure I did what I was supposed to be doing. An ever present threat of what I had to look forward to if I stopped for even a minute.

I didn't have my phone on me, so I had no idea how much time had passed. Hours, at the very least. The sun had gone down at one point, and I was forced to work in the dark, the only light coming in from the kitchen after I'd fixed it in there. I didn't complain, nor was I willing to ask for any help. As long as my mouth was shut and I stayed out of sight, they didn't pay attention to me. I was going to keep it that way for as long as possible.

I'd finished up the living room outlets, checking them with a lamp to make sure they worked, when Hammer came back downstairs. His eyes narrowed on me and I ducked my head, hoping Chrissie satisfied him enough for him to leave me alone. He dropped himself into a chair, pulling out a cigarette. I could feel his eyes on me as I moved from outlet to outlet, stopping when one didn't work like I'd hoped.

"Didn't figure a woman knew anything useful," he murmured. I didn't know if he was talking to me or not, and I was too afraid to look at him to find out. I checked the wires again, grimacing when I noticed another chewed part further

up. If I had to guess, there were rats in the walls. The only reason I wasn't panicking completely was because there was something even more terrifying waiting for me if I didn't deal with it. My hands shook as I put the outlet back on. I'd come back to that later, since I'd need to cut into the wall to reach that specific point. The house we were in was run down and falling apart, but I seriously doubted Hammer would be okay with me cutting holes into the walls.

"Look at me when I'm talkin' to you," he growled.

Jerking around, I looked in his direction. I couldn't make myself look him in the eye, but he didn't say anything about me staring at his chin. He stood, blowing a puff of smoke into my face when he stopped in front of me. I choked on it, my eyes watering, but I held back my cough. He grabbed my face, forcing me to look up, and grinned when I made eye contact for only a second before my gaze skittered away.

"You're smart. Croy's ol' lady wasn't smart enough to keep her eyes down. Got herself into trouble because of it. You're not like her, are you?"

His thumb trailed along my chin, and I had to fight to keep myself from shivering in repulsion. Tears welled in my eyes, and I desperately held them back, remembering what he said earlier about liking when women cried.

His chuckle made my hair on the back of my neck and my arms stand on end. I held my breath when he leaned closer, but he pushed my face away when I tried to pull back. I trembled, desperately wishing I could back away from him, but with the wall against my back, I had nowhere to go.

"You did good work in here. Everything else but this one is working, right?"

He tipped his head towards the outlet. I nodded quickly, averting my gaze. "I-I'd need d-different tools to f-fix it. I-I thought I'd c-come back to it."

"Such a good girl." He took a step back. I wanted to look at him, try and gauge what he was thinking, but I was too terrified to look up until he spoke again.

“Looks like you earned a reward. Clink never did take his cut, after all. We’ll give it to you instead.”

My eyebrows drew together, and I looked up hesitantly. Hammer smirked and snapped his fingers, and the two guys who’d been watching me all evening lunged towards me. I screamed and tried to run, but they grabbed me before I could make it a few feet away. They didn’t bring me to the mattress again, instead carrying me to the kitchen while I kicked and screamed. One of them forced me down on top of the table and pinned me with his weight while the other grabbed my arm, holding it still across the tabletop. When Hammer stepped closer with a needle in his hand, I shook my head helplessly.

“No! No! Please!”

He grinned at me. “I always keep my word. I promised Clink his cut of the product. Since you’re his ol’ lady, you can take it for ‘im. Be a good girl and hold still. I promise, you’ll like this.”

He jabbed the needle into my arm, and I watched in horror as he pushed the plunger. The drugs hit me instantly, my heart racing out of control as the world around me went blurry. It felt like I was on a ship, the room dipping and moving. I couldn’t hear much over my heavy breathing and the pounding of my heart in my ears, but I did hear Hammer’s chuckle.

“Once that sets in, she’ll be begging for it. Leave her be. You can have her once she comes to you. Fucker will lose his goddamn mind watching the videos of her begging for more.”

They laughed, and I felt the weight on my back disappear. I couldn’t stay upright on my own and black was slowly overtaking my vision. I dropped onto the floor, smacking my head on the peeling linoleum.

I didn’t know how long I laid there. Long enough to annoy Hammer. He came back with a second dose, telling me I could either get up and put out, or die. I would’ve chosen the latter if I managed to stay conscious. But after he pushed in that second dose, everything went black, and I passed out again. All I could hope was that I didn’t wake back up.

CLINK

Reaper knew I wasn't going to wait around for the crew to show up. Most of them were in the city, looking for Sam, but they weren't near us. He told Neo to update the crew and hung up, following me out of the parking lot to the location Neo gave us.

Guilt, fear, worry all ate at me as we tore through the city. The only reason I didn't panic was because fury was at the top of the fucking list. This piece of shit was dying tonight for touching my girl. No more fucking around. I was done playing his game. He fucked with the wrong person and tonight I was going in, guns blazing.

My jaw hurt from clenching it so tight, especially since the location that Neo sent us was close to the abandoned joint we hid in after Hammer's last attack. He was only a few blocks away, still hiding like a fucking coward. We pulled off a couple blocks away, not wanting to give away our approach with the noise of our engines.

Reaper was the expert in stealth and shit, but it wasn't his old lady that had been taken. I wasn't going to tip toe along and give them more time to hurt her. Instead, I went straight through the fucking front door, my gun already poised and ready. The two near the kitchen hit the ground before the door had time to rebound from the force of it flying open.

I heard shouts coming from the second floor, so we headed that way first, shooting anyone wearing a cut. Reaper had my back, taking out a few more who had been in another room behind me. I heard female screams and my heart lodged in my throat, worried it was Sam who was screaming like that. I kicked the first door open, shooting the asshole looking for his piece, but the woman naked in the bed wasn't Sam. I ignored her, swinging around, and came up short at a muzzle pressed against my forehead.

“Should've never double crossed me,” Hammer snarled.

His finger twitched, but before he could take me out, Reaper tackled him. I moved, taking out the guys who appeared out of the other rooms while Reaper wrestled Hammer's gun from him. Once I knew there wasn't anymore, I moved to help him, smashing my gun against Hammer's temple. It knocked his ass out and I left Reaper to deal with him while I searched the rooms. The one Hammer had been in was empty, but the other two had more women in them. All naked, all in tears. I didn't know if they were sweetbutts who were fucking terrified or if they were also forced to be here and I didn't have time to find out. None of them were Sam.

"Where the fuck is she?" I bellowed.

"Check downstairs," Reaper grunted as he tied Hammer's hands behind his back. "His bedroom window is open. She could've booked it when he was distracted."

I bounded back down the stairs and raced for the door, but a flash of familiar clothing in the kitchen made me skid to a stop. Sam was on the floor in the kitchen, her face pale and her skin clammy. She was laying in a puddle of vomit and her breathing was shallow.

"Sam? Sam! Wake up, baby!"

Pulling her into my lap, I patted her face frantically. She didn't even flinch, and her lips looked like they were turning blue.

"Reaper!" I shouted.

He came barreling down the stairs at mach speed, only slowing when he kneeled down beside me. I shot him a terrified look, screaming at him.

"She won't wake up!"

He scanned her, doing a double take on her arm. When he lifted it, I saw the bloody prick marks. I felt like I couldn't breathe.

"He fucking dosed her! That motherfucker!"

I wanted to kill him, to tear him limb from limb, but I couldn't move away from Sam. With the way she was

breathing, the asshole had given her too much, and she was overdosing. My stomach turned over, and I dry heaved off to the side while Reaper pulled out his phone.

“We need the doc. Yes, we got him. He drugged her, and she’s out cold.”

Doc might work at a hospital in the city, but he was at the club right now, checking on the guys who’d been hurt in the explosion. I had no clue how long Sam had been like this, but it was too long to wait.

“Gimme your phone.”

Mine was still fucked, and I hadn’t gotten it replaced. Maybe if I had, I would’ve known Sam was leaving. She could’ve tried to message me and I would’ve missed it because of my stupid broken phone.

When Reaper didn’t automatically respond, I snatched it from him, hanging up and dialing again. There was only one person nearby who might have what we needed to help Sam.

The prospect picked up, and I barked at him before he could even speak. “Give the phone to Tyson!”

“Shit. Okay, okay.”

He handed off the phone. Tyson must’ve known it was important, because he didn’t waste any time. “What does she need?”

“Narcan.”

CHAPTER 40

CLINK

The time it took for Tyson to get to us was less than ten minutes, but it felt like hours. I could only count the breaths Sam took, praying each time she did that she'd take another one. She didn't deserve this. It was my fucking fault. I should've done better, should've explained better that she couldn't leave, not even to go to her work. I still didn't know why she left, but I didn't care. She wasn't at fault for living her life. It was my fault for not protecting her better. For not taking out Hammer the dozens of times I had the shot. He deserved to suffer, yeah, but I should've shot him in the face in the diner without hesitation.

Croy and the crew showed up with Tyson in tow, and he took Reaper's place, dosing Sam with the narcan. His face was strained and pale as we waited for it to kick in. When she took a deeper breath, a flicker of hope lit in my chest and I stared at her, willing her eyes to open.

"Come on, baby. Wake up."

Her brows furrowed slightly, and it took a few minutes, but her eyes opened and beautiful hazel depths locked on me.

"Clink?"

Relief flooded my system, and I pulled her against me, rocking slowly. "Jesus fucking christ. I thought I'd lost you."

"What... What happened?"

I drew back, pushing her hair out of her face as I studied her. "You don't remember?"

When she shook her head, Tyson nodded. “That’s normal. She’ll be a little out of it for a while. We need to get her to a hospital, get her checked over.” She turned to look at him and he smiled softly. “How you doing, sweetheart?”

Her frown deepened, and she looked confused. “What’s going on?”

Shaking my head, I pulled her farther into my lap. I felt like I needed to hold all of her at once. She didn’t argue, resting her head against my chest, but I could feel her confusion. Part of me didn’t want her to remember. Looking around the joint, she’d obviously been through some shit. I didn’t miss the mattress on the floor. She was fully dressed, which gave me hope that Hammer didn’t touch her, but I had no way of knowing for sure. And if he did, I didn’t want her to remember it.

Knox hotwired a car so we could bring Sam to the hospital. I wasn’t gonna be able to get her onto my bike right now. She said she felt weak, and I had to carry her out to the car. Her arms around my neck were loose, like she couldn’t put in enough energy to hold on to me securely. I slid into the back and Tyson joined us, putting Sam’s feet in his lap. He talked low to her, keeping her calm when I couldn’t say much. I didn’t know what the hell to say to her. And after seeing her lying on the floor like that, my tongue felt like lead in my mouth.

Sam getting hurt was my fault. I put her on Hammer’s radar. I knew right then that I could never touch drugs again. My weakness nearly got Sam killed, and if she ever forgave me, I’d need to make sure I’d never have any bullshit that people could use against me again. I needed to get clean. For her.

Riley met us at the hospital and it made me feel better when they brought Sam back for a thorough exam that Riley would be with her. Tyson said it was necessary to get the whole picture, but Sam looked terrified and it put me on edge. He had to lead me to the waiting room with a hand on my shoulder to get me to walk away from her.

Once we were alone, I noticed the dark look on his face. I grimaced, running my fingers through my hair. “I’m sorry. This is my fault and—”

“No, it’s not. It’s mine.”

When I shot him a confused look, he pulled out his phone, handing it to me. “I told you my phone was missing, remember? I found it with Gunner’s help. The guy who I was helping, who said he had a relapse? Apparently, he works for Hammer. He stole it from me and sent Sam messages when I was out grabbing him something to eat. I found them after I found my phone hiding in his nightstand.”

I scrolled through the messages, my lip lifted into a snarl. “Tell me he didn’t get away.”

A muscle jumped in Tyson’s jaw, and he scowled. “He didn’t. After I pummeled his ass into the ground, Gunner called a few people and they took him away. I don’t know where, but they promised me he’d be dealt with.”

Since I wasn’t about to tell him where they took the guy, I handed him back his phone and nodded. “He will be. And it’s not your fault. They used you to get to her because they wanted to get back at me. You were a pawn. Don’t blame yourself.”

He sighed. “Yeah, maybe, but she never would’ve left the clubhouse if it wasn’t for me. I should’ve paid more attention. We check in every few hours. I should’ve realized my phone was missing. I should’ve figured it out sooner.”

“You made a mistake. That doesn’t mean you’re at fault.”

He raised an eyebrow at me. “I could say the same thing about you.” When I scowled, he shook his head. “Listen. I’m not gonna say you didn’t have a part in this. We all did, in part, including Sam. She knew better than to leave on her own. She did it anyway. But we’re human. No one meant for this to happen. And if we’re busy blaming ourselves and pushing her away, she’s going to take on the brunt of the blame on herself and she’s done enough of that in her life. We gotta agree to let

it pass and just be grateful that she's alive, and she's going to be okay."

Running my hand through my head, I grimaced. "Yeah, maybe. But I can't just walk away and let things be. I've got to make amends for what I did. It's part of the program, isn't it? Making amends for the shit that happened because of my problem?"

Something like pride lit on Tyson's face. "Yeah. You're saying you're gonna get sober? For real this time?"

Blowing out a heavy breath, I let my gaze drift to the hallway where I knew Sam was. "Yeah. I'll have to talk to Croy, figure out how I can do my shit without touching the product, but Reap sent Quinn's mom to some place nearby. After I know Sam's okay, I'll have him send me the info."

Tyson gripped my shoulder, a genuine smile on his face. "Good for you. I'm proud of you. Making that choice isn't an easy one, and I know in your life it's especially difficult."

I shrugged, crossing my arms. "There's no telling if Sam'll forgive me, but she's worth it."

His eyes softened, and he patted my back. "She'll forgive you. Trust me."

Riley came out a little while later. She said they were keeping Sam overnight for observation, but she was doing okay. She was rattled and freaked out, but luckily the rape kit came back negative. The relief from that was so intense, I nearly dropped to my knees. Tyson had to keep me on my feet. I'd never been so choked up in my life, but this was the second time tonight that something nearly reduced me to tears.

"Can I see her?"

She smiled softly. "In a few minutes, yeah. They're just moving her to a room. I'll show you back once she's settled."

She went back to help them move Sam, but she kept her promise and came back to get us a few minutes later. She led us upstairs and to a room at the end, knocking quietly as she poked her head in.

“Hey. You’ve got visitors.”

When I stepped into the room and saw Sam in that bed, her face still pale and fearful, I had to fight back another wave of guilt. I wasn’t going to put that shit on her. I forced myself to smile, moving to sit on the edge of her bed.

“How you feelin’, honey?”

She lifted a shoulder, biting her lip. “A little better, I guess. I—” Her gaze shifted and locked on Tyson, and she frowned. “Are you okay?”

He tipped his head. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, you said you had a relapse. I’m sorry, I tried to get there to help you, but—”

The guilt I recognized flashed across his face and he sat down on her other side, taking her hand. “That wasn’t me, sweetheart. My phone was stolen while I was busy. They used it to lure you out.”

“Oh.” Her gaze dropped to her lap, and I knew she was blaming herself. Tyson could see it too, because he squeezed her hand gently.

“Hey. You’re not at fault here. And I can’t tell you how much I appreciate the fact that you came to help me. I couldn’t ask for a better friend.”

Her frown deepened, and when she looked up at him, she looked disappointed. “We’re not friends, Tyson. We’re family. You know I’ll always be there for you.”

His smile grew, and he leaned to hug her tightly. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

I gave them a minute, keeping my mouth shut, but when Tyson pulled back and Sam looked at me, I grimaced. I needed to apologize, but how the hell do you apologize for all the shit that’d happened.

“I’m sorry, Clink.”

I whipped my head up and scowled. “Don’t start. You didn’t do shit. This wasn’t your fault.”

When she flashed me a dirty look, my head jerked back, surprised.

“It’s not yours either. You told me to stay put and if I did as you’d asked, or at least called you, this never would’ve happened. I... I shouldn’t have run off. I was scared for Tyson and—”

“There’s nothing wrong with that. Or going to help him. This whole situation is fucked, and I know I’m partially to blame, whether you want to admit that or not.” Tyson nudged me, reminding me of the conversation we had earlier. If we kept playing the blame game, Sam would never let herself off the hook. I took a deep breath, letting it out slowly.

“We can do this all night, but I don’t think it’ll do us any good. How about instead we have a fresh start?” I thrust my hand out at her. “Hey, I’m Eric. I’m an addict in recovery and my friends think I’m a shithead. I think you’re hot as fuck and I’d really like to take you to dinner. Or something.”

She burst into giggles and the noise was the sweetest thing I’d ever heard. All the pain and fear, all the anxiety and fury, it was all set aside because of her. She made me feel better and I couldn’t stop myself from leaning in to capture the sound with my lips.

She melted against me, bypassing my hand to clutch my cut instead. When she drew back, resting her forehead against mine, she smiled brightly at me. “Hi. I’m Sam. I’ve got trust issues and my biological family is made up of assholes. I think you’re cute, and I’d love to go to dinner. I’m starving.”

Like she was listening in, Riley pushed into the room with a tray of hospital food, a smile on her face. “You two are so cute. I’m not allowed to bring food for the family, but I did sneak a few extra jello cups in there.”

We spent the rest of the night hanging out with Sam, making sure she was okay. She was in good spirits, but I could

see the anxiety flash across her face every time Tyson or I got up, even if we didn't go far. I didn't mention it, and neither did Tyson, but when visiting hours were over, we straight up refused to leave. I climbed into bed with Sam and Tyson took the chair nearby, moving it close enough so that he could hold her hand. Doc looked pissed, but Riley just shook her head and nudged him out the door. We weren't going anywhere, and she knew it.

After she fell asleep, I stared at the ceiling for a while. Sam said something earlier that kept crossing my mind. Yeah, I had some serious shit to deal with, but I wasn't alone. She had her own fucked up past and her own baggage. We both had shit we needed to overcome. It might've been a little selfish, but it made me feel better that I wasn't the only one who needed work. At least together, I knew we could do damn near anything.

CHAPTER 41

CLINK

It took some convincing after Sam got settled back at the clubhouse for her to feel comfortable with me leaving. In any other circumstance, I would've outright refused. But there was something I needed to deal with. Or more specifically, someone. I asked the old ladies and Tyson to keep her occupied and headed out to the old gas station on the outskirts of town. A good deal of the crew was already there, and I knew they wouldn't finish him off without me.

When I stepped inside, Knox was getting his turn with Hammer. The asshole attacked Allie while she was in California and pissed off one fucked up dude. Knox had a thing for burning people, and based on the look on Hammer's face, he wasn't enjoying it. His teeth were gritted, sweat pouring down his face, his skin all red. Well, what portion of it that wasn't swollen and bruised anyway.

I stepped up beside Croy, my eyes locked on Hammer. "What'd I miss?"

He grunted, his arms crossed. "Plenty. We've been at it for hours." I thought for a minute he was pissed that I wasn't here earlier until he spoke again. "She okay?"

"She'll be alright. She's with the ol' ladies."

He raised an eyebrow at me. "She gonna get her own title?"

A smile pulled, and my lips and I shrugged. "Eventually. She's been through hell. I'm gonna give her a bit before making it official. Is it my turn?"

When he dipped his chin once, I stepped forward, putting a hand on Knox's shoulder. He glanced up at me, smirking when he saw the dark look on my face. "I was wondering when you'd get here. Thought I'd have to drag this out a little longer."

I wouldn't be the last one. That honor went to Croy. This shit all started when Hammer attacked Riley. Sam wasn't the only one who nearly died at the hands of this asshole. But they knew I'd want a piece of him, and when he finally looked up and saw his next opponent, a flash of fear crossed his face.

I shot him a bored look, pursing my lips. "It's been a long time since we've been in this room together. You remember how I liked to do this?"

Based on the look on his face, I could say he did, but I pretended not to notice, a slow grin crossing my face. "No? Well, I'll just have to remind you." I leaned in close while the guys set us up. "This is what you get for coming for my girl. I'm gonna draw this out. Make it last. And when I'm done, you know who comes next, don't you?"

Croy and Reaper stood behind me, glaring down at Hammer. He looked defeated, his chin dropping to his chest. I nodded, a mock frown on my face.

"Yeah. You fucked up big time. But hey, look at the bright side. It'll all be over soon. Well... maybe not soon. A few days? A week. Who knows? I kinda wanna see how long we can drag this out."

His head whipped up and his eyes bulged out of his skull, making me snicker.

"You didn't think this would be quick, did you? Nah, man. You messed with the old ladies. That makes you a walking corpse. Not only that, but you killed Mass. And for that, we're gonna keep you just on the edge of death for as long as humanly possible. This has been a long time coming. Time to reap what you sowed and all that bullshit."

Taking the cattle prod from Brewer, I spun it in my fingers. "I wonder if I shove this up your ass if you'll cry. You told

Sam you liked it when they cried, right? Let's see if we can give you what you want."

SAM

After Clink left to go back to work, Tyson and the girls stayed with me. I hated just how needy I felt, and how much it hurt when Clink walked away. He had things he needed to do, and I couldn't blame him for that. It was just hard after everything that happened.

My memory came back slowly. I kind of wished I didn't remember it, and I woke up twice last night crying from the nightmares. Tyson mentioned getting me some therapy and even though I had a terrible experience with it before, I was willing to try. The one he had in mind was a friend of his, and someone I was familiar with from the NA meetings. She was even willing to come to me, since I was a little freaked out about leaving the clubhouse right now.

I spent most of the afternoon in my room, but when it got close to dinner, I let Riley convince me to come downstairs for a little while. Tyson made dinner, which shocked Riley, Quinn, and Allie because none of their guys cooked. When I mentioned Clink cooking me breakfast, they all looked a little shell shocked. He'd never told them before and I didn't feel bad outing him because there was no way he was going to never cook for me again. They'd see it eventually.

We were just getting comfortable on the couches with homemade quesadillas when the last person I expected walked through the door to the club. Chrissie looked jumpy and anxious, her eyes darting around. When they landed on me, her spine stiffened and she made a beeline for the stairs.

“Hey! What are you doing here?”

Riley rolled her eyes. “There went the hope that she'd never come back.”

I turned my head sharply to face her. “You don't understand. She was feeding information to Hammer. She was the reason he knew about me.”

Riley and Quinn shot me horrified looks, but it was Allie who launched to her feet, storming upstairs. Luckily, Chase overheard me and went after her. We heard a scuffle, and I clutched Quinn's hand nervously, but Allie didn't look hurt when she came back downstairs. She had a gun, which I didn't know she owned, pressed against Chrissie's head and Chase had Chrissie's arms held behind her back.

"Just wait until the guys hear about this. You'll be strapped into a seat right next to Hammer. You know the shit they do to people who cross them?" Allie snarled.

Frowning, I cast a look at Riley. "What is she talking about?"

Riley grimaced. "Well... I don't know how much you've heard about the guys' reputation, and I've never seen them deal with it myself, but..." She trailed off, leaving it to my imagination to figure out what Allie was talking about. My mouth fell open and my gaze darted to Chrissie. She was a bitch, and I knew I was in that house because of her, but I didn't want her getting tortured for it.

"N-No! I thought you'd kick her out, not hurt her!"

Chase grimaced. "That's not how it works around here. She gave information to Hammer. She deals with the consequences of it."

He said that, but even he looked uncomfortable with the idea of torturing a woman. I leapt to my feet, pushing him and Allie away from Chrissie.

"She's a bitch, yes, and she did some really messed up stuff, but she also saved me."

Riley came closer, her brows drawn down. "What are you talking about?"

I kept myself between Chrissie and the rest of them. It was dangerous, she might have a weapon or something, but I couldn't just let them torture her. It wasn't right.

"Hammer was going to rape me. She drew his attention away and let him fuck her instead. I can't let you hurt her."

She sucked in a breath behind me, and when I reached back, she took my hand, squeezing it tightly. I wasn't going to tell them that the only reason she did it was because he was hurting her. It was irrelevant. She still kept him away from me.

Quinn looked uncertain, and Riley was frowning. Even Allie looked like she was wavering. I shot a desperate look at Chase.

“She can leave right now and no one will know she was here. No one will even know she was involved. Just let her go. Please.”

His eyes flicked between each of us before he grimaced. “I'd need to run it by Prez...” My shoulders slumped because I knew once Croy found out about Chrissie's involvement, he'd never let her leave, but Chase continued before I could argue. “But I suppose if the First Lady agrees, it's sort of the same thing. She'd be able to convince him eventually.” He raised his eyebrows at Riley.

Spinning around, I pleaded with her. “Please, Riley. Let her go.”

She sighed, scrubbing her hands over her face. When she looked at Chrissie, I saw Chrissie's spine straighten, her chin going up. Still acting tough even though she knew what would happen if Riley said no. Her hands were clammy and she still gripped mine, giving her away, but I didn't mention it. She kept her mouth shut, though, which was a step in the right direction.

Riley pointed at her. “You agree that you'll never come back? Not just to the clubhouse, but the whole town. You'll stay the hell away from the crew, even the charters, and if we find out you're giving information away again, it'll be even worse for you. Agreed?”

Chrissie's jaw tightened as she nodded. “Agreed.”

Huffing out a sharp breath, Riley crossed her arms with a scowl. “Then get the hell out. I'm telling Croy what you did eventually. You better be several states over when I do.”

She spun, heading straight towards the front door, but came up short, spinning around to face me again.

“Thank you. And... I’m sorry. For my part in it.”

Without waiting for my response, she took off, straight out the front door. When I whimpered, Tyson popped up beside me, putting his arm around my shoulders.

“I’m proud of you for that. I hope you know that.”

Looking up at him, I forced out a pained smile. “Everyone deserves a second chance. Even bitches like her.”

CHAPTER 42

CLINK

It took over a week before we were finally willing to let Hammer go. He begged and pleaded for us to kill him, but even after he was finally gone, I didn't feel satisfied. I talked to Brewer about it. He said none of us would probably ever be satisfied because, dead or not, Mass was still gone thanks to that asshole. No amount of pain and suffering would've brought him back, and keeping Hammer alive wasn't going to fix it. So we let him die and buried him in an unmarked grave outside of town.

Sam eventually told me everything that happened in that house. It took time, and she could only get a little out a day, but her therapist told her not to hold it in and once she finally got it all out, I think she felt better. And she stopped having as many nightmares once I assured her Hammer was dead.

I needed to wait a bit to go to rehab. Things needed to settle around the club first. And Croy wanted to celebrate Hammer being dead before I fucked off for a few weeks. Since I knew there wouldn't be any drugs involved, I decided to wait, much to Tyson's irk. Don't know why, but I still really enjoyed irritating the hell out of him.

The old ladies, Sam included, were the ones who planned the party. Sam finally convinced Croy to let her boss come help her so they could finish up the wiring shit before the party, and two weeks after she was taken, we were throwing the biggest shindig we could muster. Starting with a club run. Everyone was riding together, including Sam.

She shifted nervously from foot to foot, frowning at my bike. The thing was a thing of beauty, freshly cleaned too, and

still she looked like she'd rather eat glass than get on the back of it.

“Come on, honey. I even got you a helmet.”

She bit her lip, wrinkling her nose at the helmet I held out to her. “That covers my head. What about the rest of my body?”

I groaned, dropping my head back. “Your body will be pressed up against me. And the crew 'll surround us. I already checked with Brewer on our position. It's perfectly safe, Sammy.”

She still hesitated until I offered her my hand. She might not trust the bike, but she trusted me, and she let me pull her closer until she was pressed up against me. I slipped my arm around her waist, drawing her closer to me so I could sip her lips. We fooled around plenty in the past few weeks, but I still couldn't get enough of her.

“Come on, honey. Ride with me. I'll protect you.”

She leaned her forehead against mine, a soft smile crossing her face when she finally relented. “Alright, fine. But if we die, my ghost is going to haunt your ghost and I'll make your afterlife absolutely miserable.”

That caught me by surprise and I let out a startled laugh. “Jesus, Sammy. Way to scare a guy.”

She flashed me a cheeky grin as she took the helmet from me. I helped her with the strap and when she finally climbed on behind me, I let out a long breath. It felt like she belonged there, wrapped around me, and even though I couldn't have drugs like I wanted, this was way better. Hell, I'd give up drinking if I could keep her just like this.

Like I promised, we were right in the middle of the pack. She had a death grip on me for the first bit, but she relaxed eventually and even put her arms out at one point, her fingers catching the air as we drove through the desert. The only time the fear came back was when I let go of one handle for a minute to rub her knee. She slapped my shoulder and forced me to grab on again, and I couldn't stop laughing.

After a few hours on the road, we stopped at a rest stop for a break. There was a building with some fast-food joints, including a BBQ place that we'd been to before that we knew was awesome. While the rest of the crew headed inside, I grabbed Sam's hand, yanking her towards the back of the building. I had her pressed against the wall and my tongue in her mouth before she could protest. Not that she seemed overly interested in protesting. Her arms and legs wrapped around me and she moaned, fisting my hair.

"It feels so fucking good to have you pressed up against me. I wanted to fuck you the minute you climbed on behind me."

She moaned again, pulling my mouth back to hers. There had been no more outdoor shenanigans since the first time, and I wanted a repeat performance. It wasn't even dark yet, but we were out of the way and no one ever came back here, so I wasn't willing to wait.

Like the first time, we were both in a fuckin' hurry. I set Sam on her feet and she started unbuttoning my jeans while I attacked hers. She was too practical to wear a skirt on a bike, but that wasn't about to stop me. I spun her around, yanking her pants down to her thighs, and groaned at the sight of her peachy behind.

"Fuck, you're the sexiest thing alive."

Her only response was a whimper and her hips pushing back against mine. I ripped my zipper down, fumbling with my wallet at the same time.

"Clink. I'm on birth control."

My head whipped up and I nearly self combusted right then and there. "Since when?"

She bit her lip, lifting a shoulder. "Last week. I didn't mention it before because the doctor said it'd take a week to be in my system."

Holy hell. "You little minx. Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

She rolled her eyes. “Do you want to chat about it, or do you want to do something about it?”

I still fucking loved her fire. Dropping my wallet and jeans, I shoved my boxers down and fisted my erection. I’d never fucked a woman uncovered, and the minute I ran the tip along her sex, I knew I’d never go back. Her soaking wet folds beckoned me and when I pushed inside, I swear angels started singing.

“Holy... fuck...” I gritted out.

I tried to take it slow, so I didn’t bust before her, but Sam wasn’t going for that. She shoved her hips back, forcing me deeper, and my resolve disintegrated. I growled, grabbing her hips for leverage as I slammed my hips against hers. Like every time we were together, Sam tried to hold back her screams, but when I hit the right angle, she cried out and her whole body tightened around me.

Everything was dialed to eleven without the wrap. I was normally not shy with my own responses, but it was so good I couldn’t suck in a breath. I put one of my hands against the wall of the building, leaning my weight on Sam’s back, and went fucking wild. And thank fuck, Sam loved it just as much as I did, because I couldn’t concentrate beyond the tight, wet grip around my cock.

“Ah, fuck. Come for me, honey.”

I was begging, but my balls were drawn up and I was seconds from blowing my load and I didn’t want to go without her. I released her hip, snaking my hand around to press my fingers against her clit. It took only two circles for her to scream out my name, and when her pussy clamped around my cock, I died and went to heaven, coming so hard I collapsed against her.

We came down together and once I could stand, I pulled her up against my chest, kissing the side of her neck.

“You got any idea how perfect you are?”

She hummed, reaching back to run her fingers through my hair. I felt smug as shit that she was too blissed out to answer

me. After fixing her clothes and mine, I gathered her close, resting my forehead against hers.

“I got lucky when I found you, honey. Who needs drugs when I can have a hit of you?”

She rolled her eyes, a smile pulling at her lips. “Shut up.”

She thought I was teasing, but I was telling the truth. Every time I’d gotten sober before had been hell on earth. There was nothing I wanted more than the next hit. This time, I knew I’d stick with it because I wanted something better than the hit. I was high on Sam, and there wasn’t a better feeling on the planet. And the best part? She’s fucking mine. She wasn’t going anywhere.

SAM

Clink going to rehab was difficult, especially in the first few weeks. He refused to let me go back to my apartment, saying it wasn't safe, and honestly, I was really glad about that part. Just going back to pick up the few things I had left there gave me intense flashbacks of being kidnapped. I would be farther from Tyson, but Tyson promised I wouldn't even notice. We still met up at least once a week to hang out. And I still helped him with the NA meetings and youth club on the weekends.

This time, though, I didn't have to go home to an empty house at the end of each day and mindlessly stare at my tv until I could go back to work. Quinn finished up with her day about the same time I did, and Allie came around soon after. The only person whose schedule was a little weird was Riley, since nurses really didn't do the whole nine-to-five thing. But whatever time wasn't spent working or with Croy was spent with us. I thought maybe I'd have a hard time fitting in with them since those three were such a tight group, but they acted like I'd been part of the group forever and I never felt left out or awkward.

For the first time in forever, I felt like I really had people I could rely on in my life. Even the crew, as rough and tumble as they were, made me feel at home. They caught on pretty quickly that I didn't drink and someone always brought me a soda when I came downstairs to hang out. No one pushed me to drink or act differently. They just accepted me and I loved them for it. Sure, they were technically criminals, but they were all good people, and Riley told me they'd all hit the streets to look for me when I was taken. I had an entire crew of misfits watching out for me after years of being alone, and it meant the world to me. My church going do gooder family would've never done something like that.

My phone rang and when his name came up, a smile pulled at my lips. I answered, tucking the phone between my shoulder and my ear as I kept working.

“Hey, you.”

“Hey, gorgeous. What are you up to?”

“Working. How about you? How’d therapy go today?”

A beep made me pause, and I put my tools down to look at my phone screen again. The video request made me smirk, and I smiled brightly when his face popped up. He had that same mischievous grin that drew me in that first day we met, and I missed it more than words.

“I said I was working, you know.”

He lifted a shoulder. “I like watching you work. It’s hot.”

I couldn’t roll my eyes any harder and it made him laugh.

“What do you want, Clink?”

“I got a surprise for you.”

Raising an eyebrow, I looked around for a place to balance the phone. He knew I wouldn’t hang up unless I absolutely had to, and I really wanted to get this done. It was the last job of the day and Riley and Allie promised they’d teach me to be better at poker tonight. We didn’t play with money, but it was still fun. I wanted to get good before Clink got back so I could win a game of strip poker. So far, I’d lost every time we played.

I was about to set him down against the wall when I noticed the view behind him. He wasn’t in his room, and it didn’t look like the rehab place behind him.

“Where are you?”

He turned around and I let out a startled noise, whipping my head over my shoulder. I’d been working on the fuse box outside a new build, and I hadn’t noticed that he was standing behind me on the edge of the property. With a delighted squeal, I launched to my feet, taking off across the yard. He barely had enough time to tuck his phone into his pocket before I tackled him onto the grass. I’d heard his laugh hundreds of times over the phone, but it was so much better in person.

“What are you doing here? You’re supposed to be at rehab!”

Rolling us over, he flashed me a grin. “Got a weekend pass. I wanted to see you.”

My heart melted, and I yanked him closer. He met me halfway for a toe curling kiss and when he finally released me, it took everything not to drag him inside for more. He looked like he was thinking the same thing, his gaze heated with a hint of a dare there that I knew I couldn’t give in to. I wasn’t looking to get fired.

“Absolutely not. I’m working.”

He laughed, nipping at the finger I had pointed at his face. “Well, hurry up then. I’m not a patient guy.”

He helped me to my feet, slapping my ass when I moved too slowly back to where I was working. When I glanced at him over my shoulder for the third time, he grinned at me.

“Don’t worry, honey. I’m not goin’ anywhere without you. You’re mine.”

It was such a misogynistic thing to say, but for someone who’d been disowned and abandoned, it was my favorite thing to hear. I was his, and he was mine, and now that I had the vest with his name on the back to prove it, the whole world would know. I may not have a relationship with my family, but I had the crew, the old ladies, and I had Clink. And to me, that was way better.

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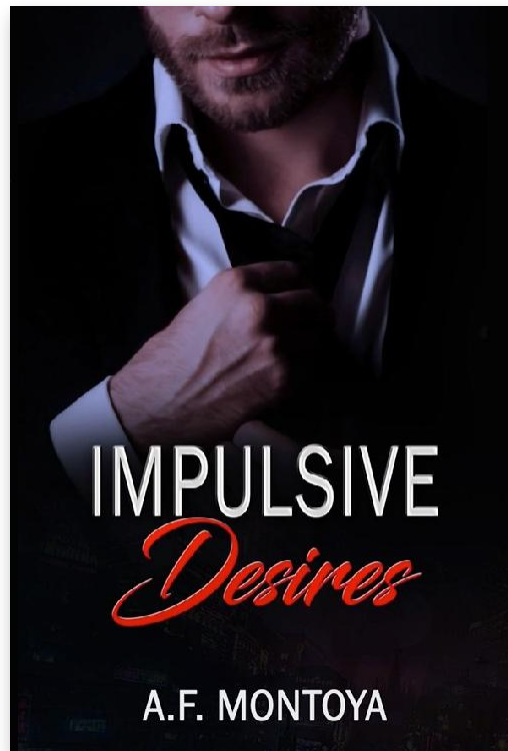
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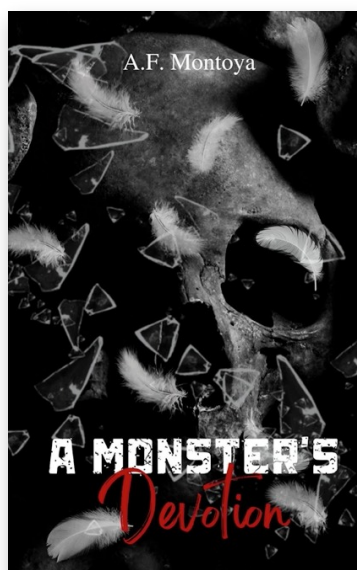
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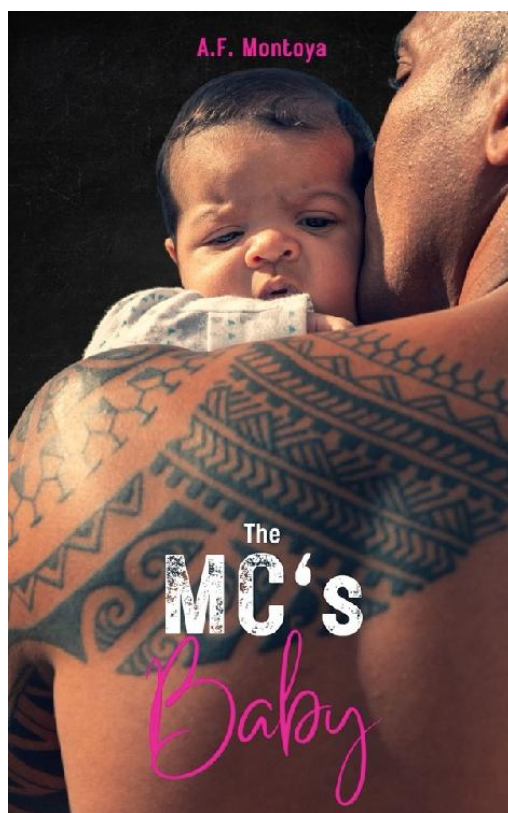
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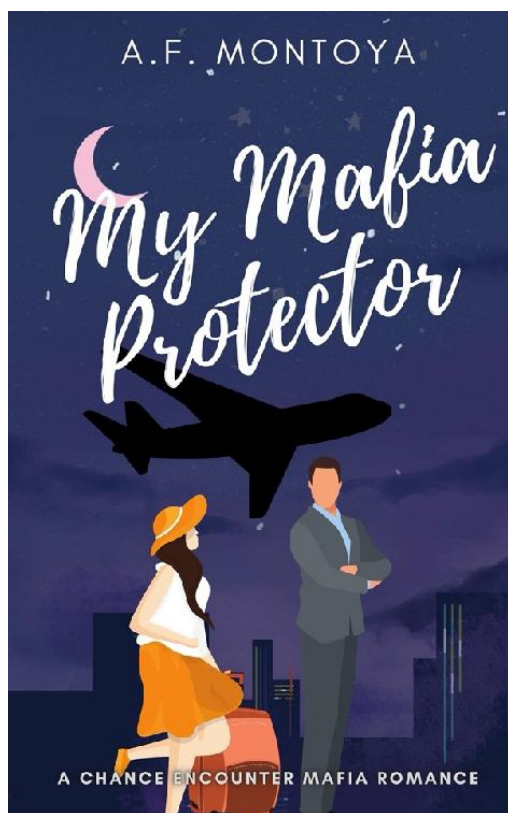
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